



**The Fifth Sunday in Lent, commonly called  
Passion Sunday.**

*The Collect.*

**W**E beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; 2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; 4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: 6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. 8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. (Prov 1:1-9)*

As was discussed in the introductory devotion, this Book is, by Scriptural claim, the proverbs of Solomon, son of David and King of Israel. There is a class of skeptics that developed in Europe decades ago who claim the title of Higher Critics. Just how high these low-swamp dwellers are is a matter of speculation. But one thing is rather certain: they are anything but HIGH on the veracity and infallibility of Holy Scripture –

perhaps whatever they smoke in their pipes may explain why they are considered 'high.' They begin their approach to Scripture in precisely the same manner as that old serpent of the Garden – Satan. They treat the Holy Bible with no greater reverence than any other literary work. They believe they can examine its technical merit, its historicity, style and mannerism in just the same way as a "Dime Novel" of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is one area which they consider unprofitable to investigate in their examination, and that one area is the strongest testimony to its authenticity – the INTERNAL EVIDENCE of the Scriptures themselves.

They have dug up from trash bins and Vatican dumps two manuscripts that are faulty in their compilation (leaving our large sections of Scripture with only a blank space to evidence the missing words) and which do not agree, even with each other in many parts and places. In addition to a reliance on faulty manuscript evidence, the critics who are far less knowledgeable of Greek and Hebrew than the Reformers and translators of the Received Text Bibles, presume to be qualified to render a 'more accurate' meaning than the Church Fathers of old time. In every instance of changes in words, there is a corresponding weakening of the text. Time does not afford a more in depth discussion here on Manuscript Evidence underlying the Geneva, King James, and Luther Bibles other than to say that these Reformed Bibles are based on 95% of all manuscript evidence (Textus Receptus) – all of which agrees with one another. So, instead of approaching the Book of Proverbs with the same question as Satan - "*Yea, hath God said?*" – but with a faith and certainty that God has preserved His Holy Word without error from the beginning. So can we agree, at least from the start, that this Book has for its author, Solomon, son of David and King of Israel? If we cannot agree here, there is no point in reasoning together further. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* (Amos 3:3)

Solomon was a son of David in the royal sense in which Christ was the Son of David. He did not ask of God riches and wealth, but Wisdom. *Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: 12 Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.* (2 Chron 1:10-12) Even this answered prayer of Solomon was wise in itself and may be compared to the very Words of Jesus centuries later: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matt 6:33) God did grant wisdom to Solomon, but Solomon was the first offender in violating that wisdom with the many women with whom he cavorted. The same lure of the flesh that seduced David made Solomon, his son, victim of the same. But it may be concluded that a life lived outside the parameters of natural and carnal wisdom compelled Solomon to write down these Proverbs as a warning and counsel to others who followed. It is full of wisdom and sound counsel particularly for the young.

Solomon employs his counsel as an elder teacher and by the personification of wisdom. He opens the Book under study with an introduction (verses 1-4), 1 *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;* 2 *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;* 3 *To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;* 4 *To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.* At bottom line, it is not Solomon who is the

Author of Proverbs, but God Himself who breathed the inspiration to counsel these words of Godly Wisdom to improve our lives and govern our natures. I have conversed with many men and women who believe they are somehow more holy than others through their frequently reading the Bible through and through many times over. Quite often, these are the more judgmental and harsh-natured Christians I have ever known. While it may be true that they have learned large portions of Scripture, or at least read it, that knowledge of Scripture has failed to mollify their sharp dispositions or rendered their natures more useful to the service of God and His Church. Knowledge without Wisdom is useless. Not only are we profited in knowing good counsel, but we must as well UNDERSTAND its meaning to us. Wisdom been summarized by Plato with the following characteristics: 1) the principle of doing things RIGHT; 2) the principle of justice in doing things with equal enthusiasm in public as well as private; 3) the principle of fortitude in not fleeing danger without confronting it; and 5) the principle of temperance in subduing desires, and living moderately. If we are, indeed, simple-minded, then we also need to exercise humility in all our daily discourse. To the able young man or woman, good knowledge and discretion in behavior should be forefront.

Next, in verses 5-6, Solomon explains the EFFECT of Wisdom on it practitioner: 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: 6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. True Wisdom is dynamic in nature and never stale or motionless. In order for sound to echo, there must be an opposing mountain. In order for Wisdom to be received and acted upon there must be a sympathetic heart to Wisdom. A magnet of iron attracts iron of the same nature. Just as a thirsty man will never perish in the desert with an abundance of drinking water, neither will a wise man go without hearing and understanding the Wisdom made available to him. Wisdom also helps to KNOW wise words when one hears them, and even to understand those words of deep and challenging import. Above all, Wisdom is constantly growing.

Solomon now points out the catalyst for wisdom, and what is it? When we have wrestled in vain with our flesh and know our end can only result in doom and damnation, our thoughts justly turn to the wrath and judgment of God that our behaviors have warranted. In the deep waters of our soul, there arises a nagging fear of the Lord and His righteous judgment. Such a fear can be useful in compelling our souls to the Ark of our Salvation – the Lord Jesus Christ! What wicked man is there that could approach the Judgment Seat without fear and trembling? 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Let us acknowledge that there are different degrees and orders of fear. The fear that arises from our guilt and sin is a formidable and soul-quenching fear. We fear for eternal damnation, for being granted our just rewards for our sinful acts of wickedness in the world. Please read verse seven again. Is there not great mercy and grace to be found there? Those who come to FEAR the Lord have the assurance of getting knowledge and wisdom of the Lord. Knowledge, combined with wisdom, will always lead straight to Christ! What of the fools who disdain wisdom and knowledge? They fear not – even the fires of Hell; but it is to these very fires that they are being driven by their own sins.

Why are any destroyed? My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hosea 4:6) When I read this last verse from Hosea, my heart laments the tragedy of deprivation of moral and religious education which was once a prominent

part of public education in America.

How does Solomon emphasize the merits of wisdom? *8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck* Here we see, as in the Fifth Commandment, a two-edged sword. Forget not that we not only have an earthly father, but an Heavenly One as well. If we have Godly parents who raise us up in the nurture of God's Word, then shall our ears be open to the counsel and wisdom of the Heavenly Father of whom our parents taught us. If we have so received that wisdom, then our appearance will be full of works of grace, and even our thoughts shall follow on the path of grace and wisdom. Our conduct shall be restrained by golden chains of wisdom: *And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck* (Gen 41:42) Remember that it was the wisdom of Joseph that saved Egypt and the House of Israel.