

## DISCRETION

*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. (Pro 1:1-4 KJV)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Some 58 years ago when I was in my youth, I was given this subject of, “discretion”, perhaps the reason for this was because like many young men at that age, I liked to talk. I had a good education and considered myself quite knowledgeable. As a result my parents and I had frequent disagreements which often arrived at a stalemate, whereby I was told, “You may have head knowledge but we have experience.” Out done every time! After all it was true, I did not have any experience, I had not been around long enough to get what they called experience. There are many young people who find themselves in such a situation.

The Book of Proverbs is designed, among other things, to assist people who have no experience, to be able to make their way through life by making the right choices and the right decisions at the right time, and so avoiding the pitfalls, traps and entanglements that are bound to come your way, as one comes into contact with unscrupulous men and women who are out and out for their own ends.

The apostle Paul warned Titus about our own weaknesses, many of which are latent within us and we do not realize how corrosive they can be to those who would live in a way that is acceptable to God, “For we **ourselves** also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. (Titus 3:3).

The apostle is also quite self-critical of his own younger days, even though he thought he was doing what God required of him. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received

authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. (Act 26:9-10)

So the apostle writing from his own personal experience to the Colossians states, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: <sup>7</sup> In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. (Col 3:5-7)

The Proverbs then is able to help and guide not only those who have no experience, but those of mature years that, notwithstanding their experience still fall short of doing the things they know they should be doing, but somehow always trip over the same obstacles.

There are nine verses in the King James Version of the Bible which mention discretion

Psalm 112:5 "A good man shews favour, and lends: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

Proverbs 1:4 "" My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Proverb 2:11 When wisdom enters into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: <sup>12</sup> To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaks perverse things;

Proverbs 3:21 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: **keep sound wisdom and discretion**: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Proverbs 5:2 "That you may regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb,

Proverbs 11:22 "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so *is* a fair woman which is without discretion."

Proverbs 19:11 "The discretion of a man defers his anger; and *it is* his glory to pass over a transgression.  
"

Isaiah 28:26 "For his God doth instruct him to discretion, *and* does teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, *which* is wonderful in counsel, *and* excellent in working." (Isa 28:26-29 KJV)

Jer.10:12 "But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion."

Psalm 112 :5 presents the concept of a good man and his generosity, but it should be notice that in 2 Corinthians 9:9 where this verse is quoted, **He is applied to God**, which put a different viewpoint on the Psalm as a whole, for the psalm extends beyond material generosity and focusses on God's gift in the sacrifice of His son to provide for the forgiveness of sins. With this example in mind Paul exhorts the Corinthian ecclesia to show material generosity and spiritual fruitfulness. (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remains for ever. Now he that ministers seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness ;) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God.

Here discretion is applied in that individuals who have been requested to contribute to the welfare of others have had their attention directed to the example that God himself has set, in not sparing His own son. The request is considered and weighed, and discretion evokes the spirit of generosity because God is not unmindful nor unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love,

which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb 6:10)

Proverbs 1:4 speaks of the purpose of understanding the wisdom that God has placed in his Word

To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. (Pro 1:4 KJV) The word simple here is naivety. Generally we trust those who are close to us, our mums and dads and siblings, and perhaps we think others outside the family circle can be equally trusted, after all they may be older than us, but we do not have the experience to be able to test their integrity, and we go along with them, and we suffer loss or get into trouble. But the scripture is designed to teach us that there is a very deceitful streak in mankind which sometimes place us in very difficult situations, and a laugh at our expense and shame.

The record of the life of King David describes such characters,. David's son Amnon was a youth without discretion, he had been brought up in wealth and luxury, his Father was a very God fearing man, but his teachers did not seem successful in imparting discretion to that young man. So the record informs us that Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a **very subtil man**. And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? will you not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. (2Sa 13:3-4)

So Amnon was set up by the wicked advice of Jonadab, he had not been mindful of the law of Moses Lust overcame any misgivings he might have had, and when he achieved his ambition, it crumbled into dust and he hated the poor girl. Not only so but Absalom was angry with David his father for not intervening and punishing Amnon, so Absalom planned on killing Amnon, and when he achieved that revenge he fled the kingdom. David thought that Absalom had killed all his sons, but who consoled and comforted him? Why, the wicked Jonadab. If he had had any discretion and applied it, Amnon could have escaped the snare into which his natural desires led him like as a fool to the stocks.

Proverbs 2:11 Discretion is the fruit of wisdom. Wisdom is the principle thing. There is the wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God, and there is the Wisdom of God which is to be found in his Word.

The Bereans received this wisdom, taught by the apostle Paul, with all readiness of mind. The Thessalonians received it as the Truth and it effectually worked in them.

An important aspect of Wisdom is that once learned it needs to be remembered. Today memorising is a fading practice, people do not rely on their memory but on their iPhone. But God's word needs to be

stored up in our minds and to be accessible. Attentive listening, is likewise important, literally hundreds of Bible classes are given and Bible addresses likewise but how much is remembered? It also requires desire, for where desire is there will be persistent prayer for understanding accompanied with diligent study.

If the wisdom of the Scriptures has entered into our hearts and minds the result will be discretion, it helps us to overcome the temptations that arise through the desires of our natures, and will enable us to see how those tempting allurements are fleeting and basically useless, shallow, corrupt and ultimately worthless.

Wisdom is the correct application of facts and the spiritual search as for hid treasure is not only intellectual but at the same time of practical insight into what is right and good.

Joseph had these qualities and they were recognised by Pharaoh, "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, *there is* none so discreet and wise as thou *art*: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. (Gen 41:39-40)

Joseph's discretion led him to search the responses of his brothers to see whether they were mindful of the sins they had committed against him. He carefully weighed their responses to his treatment of them, and he detected that change there had been. Certainly "Discretion I preserved him and ultimately his entire family, and understanding kept him: delivering him from the way of the evil, from the man that speaks perverse things; (Pro 2:11-12)

**Proverbs 5:1-6** My son, attend unto my wisdom, *and* bow thine ear to my understanding: (Pro 5:1 KJV) That you may regard discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth *is* smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword.

Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest you should ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou cannot know them.

To a naïve person the ways of the world are not easily interpreted, but the wisdom of the word of God uncovers the corruption under that lies under the surface of so many of the world's activities. It would be a dereliction of duty for parents not to be aware of the corruption that children face today in regard to sexual matters. Wisdom is not afraid of plain speaking in the Proverbs and describes the ways of sin in detail in order to create a horror and hatred impure practices. The false woman is presented with all the glamour

All the softness and the luxury, and the proverbs show distinctly how these chambers of fleshly satisfaction totally distract the mind from the ways of God and incline to death and therefore even in their younger years, curiosity the mother of desire, must be stifled with wholesome discussion and activities that do not yield to temptation in such matters. In this proverb the word for discretion is plural indicating intensification so that the lips keep knowledge as a protection against those things which are contrary to the law of God. A person whose speech is true. Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man. (Col 4:6) and not be taken in by a specious talker, however beautiful or Handsome and attractive they may be.

DHH