

**“The Fear of the LORD”**  
**Proverbs 8 (selected verses)**  
August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The name of the LORD (*Yahweh in Hebrew*) first appears in the Book of **Proverbs at Chapter 1, verse 7**: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.” This, we noted in the first sermon of the series, is the theme verse for the entire book.

The second appearance of the word LORD is found at **Proverbs 1:29**, “Because they (referring to fools) hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD...”

The third time we find mention of the LORD is in Proverbs is **Proverbs 2:5**, which reads, “Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”

That phrase, “the fear of the LORD” is the title of the message before us this morning. We have arrived at the endpoint of this topical sermon series we’ve studied most Sunday mornings since Sunday, March 18<sup>th</sup> – 4 ½ months ago. Fittingly, a study of any book of sacred Scripture begins and ends with God as the Subject. And, that is the case with this final sermon on the Old Testament book of Proverbs.

Teaching others about God and His ways has been my calling for 20 years as of this past Thursday. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, I retired from the US Air Force with more than 20 years active service. That same day, I began serving as Assistant Pastor with First Presbyterian Church in Prattville, Alabama. The last 40 years have been quite a ride for a 17 year old boy who left home 5 weeks after high school graduation without much clue what might lie ahead.

*When God is the Subject of study, how can we address Him adequately in just 25-30 minutes?*  
It would probably take us all of eternity to adequately study God.

I submit that when we scan **Proverbs Chapter 8**, we find three aspects of God mentioned:

- 1 – God is Holy (verses 13 & 18-21);
- 2 – God is Creator (verses 22-31);
- 3 – God is Sovereign (verses 15-17)

Let’s take a look at **Proverbs 8:13, 18-21** where we see that **God is holy**.

**(8:13)** “The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” Verse 13 is the fourth time we find in Proverbs the phrase, “the fear of the Lord.” In all, the phrase appears 16 times in the 31 chapters of Proverbs.

God hates evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way and the perverse mouth because they are unholy desires and practices. **Proverbs 9:10** and **30:3** teach that God is “the Holy One.” The word translated “holy” means ‘utterly different,’ ‘wholly other.’ I **Peter 1: 16** repeats God’s command to His people in **Leviticus 11:45**, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

Verses 18-21 show us that a holy God must be righteous in all His ways and just in all His doings. **(8:18-21)** “Riches and honor *are* with me, enduring riches and righteousness. <sup>19</sup> My fruit *is* better than gold, yes, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. <sup>20</sup> I traverse the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, <sup>21</sup> that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries.”

God expects each of us to pursue holiness as much in our personal lives as in our public ones. That can be difficult to do in a free-wheeling, hook-up culture that sees the only barrier to sexual involvement as whether it was consensual or not. Nudity and graphic sex are readily accessible. Pornography has become the most powerful assault of Satan upon families. According to an article in *World Magazine* recently, at least 16 states have declared pornography a public health crisis. Studies have shown pornography consumption is an addictive, escalating behavior that affects the brain like drug use, changes sexual taste, and damages consumers’ sex lives, according to the anti-porn group Fight the New Drug.

God sees everything; we grieve Him when we claim His name in Christ, and act as if we’ve never had a saving experience with Him at all. Our actions, public and private, must meet the words we utter. Be holy, dear ones – cut yourself off from access to things you shouldn’t be seeing, and cut yourself off of any relationships that don’t match up with God’s Word.

Having seen that **God is holy**, **Proverbs Chapter 8** also teaches that **God is Creator**.

**Proverbs 8:22-31:**

“The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. <sup>23</sup> I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth. <sup>24</sup> When *there were* no depths I was brought forth, when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. <sup>25</sup> Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; <sup>26</sup> While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust of the world. <sup>27</sup> When He prepared the heavens, I *was* there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, <sup>28</sup> when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, <sup>29</sup> When He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, <sup>30</sup> then I was beside Him *as* a master craftsman; and I was daily *His* delight, rejoicing always before Him, <sup>31</sup> Rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight *was* with the sons of men.”

This teaches that God created all things by His divine wisdom. Wisdom is personified in the Person of Jesus Christ Who we read of in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the **Colossians 1:16 & 17**, “For by Him (Jesus) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (Jesus). And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

So, clearly Scripture reveals that God in Christ is the Maker of the heavens and the earth. **Proverbs 3:19** teaches, “The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens...”

Suppose these three facts were true:

Fact #1 - Books write themselves without the need of an author.

Fact #2 - Cars build themselves without the need of a manufacturer.

Fact #3 - Music composes itself into beautiful harmonies without the need of a composer.

Any kindergartner could testify that those three statements have as much truth to them as the flat-earth theory. Yet, there are *countless* university lecturers and professors who are paid big dollars to promote a fourth fact, "The whole universe came into being through a process of random chance and beneficial mutations, without any need of a Designer." Evidently, Fact #4 is on the same level as all the previously mentioned "facts." The true fact of the matter is that evolution is just a big fairy tale for grownups!

So, **God is holy** and **He is Creator**. Proverbs 8 also teaches **God is sovereign**. Let's read **Proverbs 8:15-16:**

"By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. <sup>16</sup>By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth."

Clearly, no one is on a par with God. He is alone worthy of all honor, praise, worship, and glory. Even so, some Christians have difficulty with the doctrine of God's sovereignty. In part, I think that's because our minds are quite limited compared to His; not to mention our minds cannot grasp certain truths because they've been damaged by the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden.

Some pit God's sovereignty in opposition to human responsibility. They are not contrary to one another, they both are true and exist. As rational human beings, we are free to make choices according to our nature. But, at the same time, we are not free to the point we aren't accountable to God. God is freer than we are. I love freedom; I don't like it when authorities take more liberty than they've been given by the population they serve. But my freedom is limited when it comes up against an ever present, all-knowing, all-powerful God.

God speaks in **Isaiah 46:10** declaring "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not yet done, who says, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'"

The psalmists were also familiar with our sovereign God:

\* **Psalm 115:3** – "But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."

\* **Psalm 135:6** – "Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places."

*How can we possibly apply such knowledge of a God Who at once is near and quite involved in every part of our lives, but at the same time is so far above and beyond our ability to comprehend?* For sure, each of us was created by this one, eternal God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, God created us as either male or female. Despite the culture's pressure, we murmur against God if we grow dissatisfied with the gene set He created in us and self-identify as someone else, or even actually take medical steps to change to another sex.

As this would point out, while all are creations of God's, not everyone is a child of God's. We all are born dead in our transgressions and sins, and we remain dead spiritually unless and until God takes the initiative to save us from the punishment we've incurred by our sinfulness in many, and despicable ways. If God doesn't create in us a new heart and breathe His eternal life-giving spirit into us, we die in our sins. And, that my friends is the road on which we all travel in the sinful nature we were born with.

If you are a Christian, you are because God has stooped down and put His mark on you. He brought you spiritual life so you can now please God in the things you do. Worship your Creator with His people every day, but especially on His special day, the Lord's Day – Sunday. Serve Him by employing the gifts, talents, and skills He blessed you with. You are to use them in service of the Lord among His people, first and foremost, but beyond the household of faith to the communities in which we live.

There are a handful of people I know who need rides to worship and appointments. Some of them are female, and it would be inappropriate for a male to transport them without another person present. There are at least two others looking to work for you to qualify for cash assistance through Department of Human Resources. See me or one of the deacons if you can help with either of those.

In 1932, A.M. Overton pastored a church in Mississippi with a wife and three small children. His wife was pregnant with their fourth child, and when it came time for delivery, there were complications and both she and the baby died.

During the funeral service a few days later, the preacher officiating the service noticed Pastor Overton writing something on a piece of paper. After the service the minister asked him about it, and he handed him the paper with a poem he had just written which he titled, "He Maketh No Mistake".

#### **"He Maketh No Mistake"**

My Father's way may twist and turn; My heart may throb and ache,  
But in my soul I'm glad to know, He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray; my hopes may fade away,  
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead, for He doth know the way.

Tho' night be dark and it may seem that day will never break,  
I'll pin my faith, my all, in Him, He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see; My eyesight's far too dim,  
But come what may, I'll simply trust and leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift, and plain it all He'll make,  
Through all the way, tho' dark to me, He made not one mistake.

There's an amazing story about our closing hymn, "God be With You Till We Meet Again," #386 in the *Trinity Hymnal*.

On September 19, 1945, missionary Darlene Deibler was liberated from a Japanese prison camp, 17 days after Japan surrendered to end World War II. She was in bad shape, subjected to years of physical suffering and mental torture.

Eight years before, Darlene and her husband Russell, had landed as missionaries in New Guinea. They were making solid progress in building a growing church, aided by Darlene's dear friend and mentor, Dr. Robert Jaffray.

Now both Russell and Dr. Jaffray were dead, and Darlene was leaving behind two white crosses on the hillside. As a 28-year old widow, she was returning home without a single possession. All her mementos were gone, her loved ones were dead, and her body was debilitated by exhaustion, starvation, malaria, and dysentery.

For more than 4 years, she witnessed atrocities that can scarcely be described. Prisoners all around her had suffered horrible deaths, and she had seen the inside of death cells. During that time, not one letter or package had reached her.

As the boat carried her from her island prison, she prayed a bitter prayer, "Lord, I'll never come to these islands again. They've robbed me of everything that was dear to me." Just then she heard Indonesian voices from the distance. There on the shore were those who had come to know the Lord through Darlene's mission, raising their voices, and singing, "God be with you till we meet again. By his counsels guide uphold you. With his sheep securely fold you. God be with you till we meet again."

Darlene later wrote in her autobiography, "This song released the waters of bitterness that had flooded my soul, and the hurt began to drain from me as my tears flowed in a steady stream. The healing had begun. I knew then that someday, God would open a way for me to come back.

This is our God. Let us sing His praises!