

Proverbs

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 00] As the Lord may help me, I will speak on the book of Proverbs, the 16th chapter, the first verse.

The preparation of the heart in man and of the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

The 16th chapter of the book of Proverbs, the first verse. The preparation of the heart in man and of the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

It is very noticeable how that the different books of the Bible have their different characteristics, their different ways of expression.

The same principles of truth, of course, run throughout the word of God from beginning to end. But the expression of them varies.

[1 : 16] And we cannot think, see the wisdom of God in this particular consideration. For if the same principles of truth were expressed in exactly the same way, it would become somewhat monotonous to our minds.

It would be something like it is with regard to our natural food. If we always have the same cut off the same joint every day, there's no variation.

However nourishing it might be in itself, it would lose its taste to us. So we need variety in our natural food. And yet always nourishing.

So we need variety in our spiritual food. That is to say, variety in the way in which it is set before us for our instruction and profit in the word of God.

And this is, of course, especially so with regard to the book of Proverbs. The composition of this book is unique.

[2 : 32] It is composed of more or less separate maxims or principles which are often set in distinction and sometimes in contrast, one with the other, verse by verse.

There is not a connecting flow of truth and teaching, neither is, say, in the epistles. And this interest engages our minds with a natural profit and understands by these expressions of truth.

The heading of the book of Proverbs, or the chapters of it, is moral virtue and their contrary biases.

And, of course, there is very much of that teaching and very necessary and never more necessary than today with regard to moral principles and to their contrary biases.

But the book of Proverbs is not just a moral book. It is a spiritual book. And beneath the moral principles of the book of Proverbs, there is set forth deeper and spiritual matters.

[4 : 03] The natural mind would see no more than the moral principles of the Proverbs. But a spiritual mind will desire to see into its deeper meaning and instruction.

Now, here is a word with regard to the heart and its preparation. There is no doubt that with regard to natural matters.

It is good that our hearts should be prepared according to the will of God. If we are called upon to speak, that the Lord would give us the word to speak.

But for the profit of our hearts, we must say something deeper than that. And into the deeper aspect of this word, if the Lord will guide me by his spirit, I desire to guide your mind.

We may take the subject in the three simple points of truth. There is first, the seat or the sphere or the centre of these divine operations that are said to be of the Lord.

[5 : 22] That is, the heart. The preparations of the heart in man. And then secondly, there are the preparations of the heart.

The preparations of the heart in man. And then thirdly, there is this consideration that these preparations of the heart in man are not of man himself.

No man can prepare his own heart. The preparations of the heart in man are of the Lord. And the other part of the text will go along with the points and parallels.

For where the heart is prepared of the Lord, then there will be the answer of the lips according to the preparation of the heart.

That is, the lips will answer to the heart. They will agree with the heart. That seems to me to be the line of teaching in this world.

[6 : 39] And it is a very necessary world. Very necessary teaching. It is very necessary, I feel, at this time. For I have observed that a good deal of what now passes for evangelicalism in some forces lacks a stress on the necessity of the preparation of the heart.

As though men can believe, receive Jesus Christ, trust him and turn to him, just when and where they can be persuaded to do it.

But there is any need of a preparation of the heart. And to my view and understanding, that is, a fatal act. Any teaching that lacks the instruction of the nature and the necessity of the preparation of the heart is thin and shallow and lacks depth and fullness and substance and effect.

My friends, it is a very necessary point of truth to understand that in all spiritual matters the heart must be prepared and the heart must be prepared of the Lord.

First of all, I want to speak a little this morning and it is not on my mind to be longer than this point, upon the heart itself which is, as I have said, the centre of these divine operations of the Lord.

[8 : 32] The preparations are the preparations not of the mind merely but of the heart. For it cannot be too distinctly emphasised and too clearly understood that in spiritual matters the Lord's work is heart work.

And heart work is the Lord's work. Remember that. God's work is heart work and heart work and heart work is God's work.

We may bring to bear some influence upon the mind one of another but may be a good influence but that's as far as we can go.

into the heart we cannot penetrate. That deep, mysterious, inward ring of our inward life we can never offer.

We cannot offer it for ourselves. We cannot offer it in one another. only the Lord can deal with the heart and it is the heart of all things in us that most need to be dealt with.

[10 : 07] the preparations then are the preparations of the heart. Now what is the heart?

You know that coarse expression as used in the scripture doesn't mean or very seldom means our physical organs.

The expression is intended to imply the deep inward spring and force of all that constitutes our life other than our merely physical life.

It is the spring of our life and hence you have that word keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

That is the life of the mind with its thoughts its intent its desires the life of the heart with its affection motives emotions the heart is the spring the pounding from whence all our inward life issues out of it are the issues of life.

[11 : 43] For instance all a man's force issues primarily from his heart and so you read of the thought and intent of the heart the heart is like a fountain but continually bending out thought the mind thinks that the mind thinks what the heart can see so as I say you read of the thought and intent of the heart there's a deep reason in every person why he thinks that he does and that reason is because his heart is what it is and the pain with the desires as you read he shall give thee that is as the fear of the Lord prevails in the heart he shall give thee the desires of thine past now the heart of man is continually bringing up desires whatever catches and engages our minds to wish for it and long for it that springs from the heart and of course the heart is also the continual inward spring of all affections love and all emotions of that nature originally spring up from the heart and that characterises the spiritual state and conditions of every man he is what his heart is as I think the Lord

Jesus thinks as a man thinketh in his heart so is he so is he because the thoughts indicate the character in his heart and you know how the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount dealt with it in such a pointed masterly way when he said a good man that is a gracious man a godly man a good man as of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things evil man as of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things now what is the evil treasure in the heart of an evil man it is him him and as that evil treasure in his heart he continually brings forth evil things sinful thoughts sinful imagination sinful purposes sinful notice but a good man has a good treasure of his heart what is the good treasure of his heart it is grace the grace of God is the good treasure of a good man heart for it is in the heart the God of all grace imparts his own sweet pure holy heavenly grace and that man has the grace of

God in his heart to be bringing forth good things spiritually good gracious things gracious thoughts feelings desires and affections and motives and there'll be good things because they will come out of a good trail in his heart so the Lord Jesus Christ taught and there's no question that that was perfectly true it is just like that the heart is the spring of a person's whole life apart from his physical life and this must be further observed that the heart of man is especially open to

God's view and to God's knowledge now it is God's prerogative alone to search a man's heart the prophet Jeremiah puts this in undisguised language and I'm not going to disguise it the heart of man is deceitful above all things that is to say in its fallen unregenerate condition and desperately wicked who can know it and then the question is answered I the Lord thirst the heart and try the reign of the children of men that's the Lord I know it I thirst it I get to the bottom of it there's no secret reception in the heart no deep passages there out of sight but my eye doth not explore no secret truth of evil could escape my discernment and my knowledge and equally true no secret desire after me no longing for my favour no tithe for my mercy no desire no desire towards my name and no hungering and thirsting after me

I know I know it I see it I understand it I see exactly not only what that heart feels but what causes it to feel as it does and hope solemnly as a film it expresses this in the hundred and 39 tell me search me oh God and know my heart are you afraid to say that before God well you need not be afraid to say it freely if you want to be right with him to be honest in his sight as I sometimes think I probably have to you that word used to almost frighten me search me oh

[19 : 24] God and know my heart but I have come to see it differently now if I were accused of a crime that I knew I was guilty of and I was to stand by trial nothing would terrify me more than that the judge could search really into the whole truth of the matter because he would see that I was guilty of it I couldn't say my Lord search this matter out if I could hide it from him in any way I would if then I regard God as a judge and only as a judge a sin hating sin condemning God but only as man I couldn't say search my heart oh God if I could hide it from in my woods but now look at it in another way suppose anyone is conscious that there's something physically wrong with them their symptoms that they fear indicate some grave malady and they go to a physician would they hide any feature of their case from him of course they would not they would tell him all they could and then they would expect him not only to listen to what they say but to examine their case thoroughly and the more the physician examined looked into

Edward Simpson worked into every feature of the case the more confidence they would have that he would do them good they would know that he couldn't do them any good if he didn't search to the bottom of their maladies if he just treated their symptoms casually they wouldn't have any confidence in him now if I regard the God of all grace in Jesus Christ his dear son as the forgiver the healer the restorer of the soul if I can come to him and say heal me oh Lord and I shall be healed save me and I shall be saved Bew in order to save me from it.

If I look at that word in that life, it's very different. Search me, O God. And the psalmist evidently did so because he goes on to say, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there'll be any wicked way in me and die to lead me in the way ever and last.

Now, my friends, I know that most of you will appreciate what I'm saying. I pray you might all do.

[23 : 00] We have to deal with a God that churches our hearts. Make no mistake about it. Let no man suppose they can hide anything from God or in any way escape his eyes.

Let no man suppose that by any external appearances and ways they can cover the state of their heart.

This is known to God. And now, I've said more upon this point that I have thought to have said.

But my mind is not led that way this morning. Now, secondly, or thirdly, then observe this, that the heart is also the ring and centre of all that is real and spiritual in religion, real religion.

it must be from the heart. For instance, take repentance. Repentance is everywhere exhorted to it in the world of God.

[24 : 16] So what is repentance? It is a heart matter. No one's making any general confession, nor any personal confession, unless they come from the heart.

No one's saying, we've heard and praised my ways like lost sheep, and we've done the things we ought not to have done, and less done done, the things we ought to have done, and so on.

Unless that comes from the heart. But it doesn't come from the heart. It's so much mockery in the sight of God, because he knows that's not the heart.

That's going near to him with the lips. While the heart is far from him. There you know how it was at all. The Lord raised up prophets to call the people to repentance, to set before them the people and idolatrous the place that they had got into.

Do the people respond? In a certain sense, yes. And in another sense, no. You know that here, in the East, and in those days, rending of the garment was an expression of distress, great distress, and sorrow.

[25 : 46] They rent their garments to show their grief. Very good. When the people were called to repentance, what did they do?

They rent their garments. What did the prophet say? The prophet said, rend your heart and knock your garments and turn again unto the Lord.

Rending of the garments was no repentance towards God. what God required was that their hearts should be rent, so they could feel a real brokenness of heart before God.

God be followed, not rent clothes, as what God required of them. Brethren, it is so still. Repentance is a heart, nothing.

Other effects in due course will appear from it, a change in the life and conduct and character, but it begins in the heart.

[26 : 52] I hope it's begun in yours and mine. If it hadn't its time, with the Lord's help, we went back to the wicked gate and thought to come into the way of life, and that is, by true spiritual repentance of sin.

Pain is a matter of the heart, isn't it? It's not just an agreement of the mind with persons who are presented to it with evidence that they are true, but that's good as far as it goes.

And that's as far as we can go, one with another. And then we must pray the Lord will go farther and cause the word to affect the heart.

For we read, with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness. Pain is a heart matter. Now these things of the heart need the Lord.

These separations of the heart are of God. There's nothing one can do in this matter. Only pray, hear the word, see that the Lord will make it effectual in his own soul.

[28 : 20] If you don't do that, you don't do what you might do. But when it comes to the effect of the word upon the heart, that is with the Lord.

Just another word upon that matter of repentance. This is of the Lord. Men do not repent of sin because they are told they are sinners.

They repent of sin because they are made to be painfully conscious of it. in such a way as distresses their spirit, burdens their minds, and makes them long for relief and pardon and peace with God and the application of the Savior's cleansing blood to their filthy souls.

love. I said, a matter goes, when it's of the Lord, men do not believe in Jesus because they are called upon to believe in him.

They believe in Jesus because they need a Savior and feel to need one. And Jesus Christ is made known to them through the words of the gospel by the enlightening teaching of the Holy Ghost and they seem to be just the Savior that suits their needy, helpless, sinful conditions.

[29 : 55] Oh, how precious does it let him come to their souls when the sight of his precious name love and love opens up to their enlightened understanding then they believe all their heart in Jesus Christ.

So if we speak of love is not love a matter of the heart. What is love away at the heart but a cold kind of thing heartless like more warmth and pervency.

When the Lord said Simon Peter Simon Peter lovest thou me he didn't think about it he didn't say I think I do he said Lord thou knowest that I do look into my heart and see if it isn't love there to thy dear name Lord thou knowest all things thou knowest that I love them more.

Well now that is all I can say this morning to set before you with regard to the heart as I have said the heart is the spring of all our inward life with its thoughts feelings desires motives and affections it is the heart that the Lord especially regards has perfect knowledge of and searches entirely and the heart is the fear of all spiritual races and virtues towards his holy name now for a little long this morning I will come on to the next point in the text the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the law the preparations of the heart or as the margin puts it the disposings of the heart

I shall have a word to say about that later on the preparations or the disposings of the heart in man are of the law well now the expression preparations is suggested it doesn't say the conditions of the heart but the preparations it implies that the heart is prepared for something the preparation of the heart in man now there are three distinct preparations of the heart in man that I want to set before you from this word and first of all the preparation for you see the expression is plural it doesn't say the preparation as though there was only one but the preparation which implies that there are more than one to begin with then the preparation of the heart in man to receive the word of the gospel is of the law now the heart needs preparing in order to any spiritual hopefulness towards

[33 : 53] God and all spiritual obedience to his will the heart of man in its natural state is entirely unprepared and it must be prepared before their heart will ever receive the word of truth in a believing saving effectual and fruitful way there are many here the words of truth even today I know that the numbers who pay any regard to hearing the words are in a great minority but still there are thousands of people in this country every Lord's day who hear the word read or spoken but how many ever have seen it into their heart in a spiritual way the

Lord knows how many but is it to be feared that many do not they hear the word but they never receive it they never profit by it now why don't they receive it and profit by it the word of God is spiritual it is true it is profitable it can make our souls and our lives fruitful why then is it not received it is not received because the heart is not prepared no unprepared heart will ever receive the word of life it isn't the matter of how that word is set forth no matter how faithfully or solemnly or affectionately or earnestly the word of life is preached men will not receive it unless their heart is prepared no hear the

Lord Jesus Christ who dealt with these matters so instructively and solemnly dealt with this matter this very matter of reception and fruitfulness of the word in the parable of the sower the sower soweth the word the word of truth all of that forth the word whether preachers or teachers soweth the word now there are different categories of hearers only one category out of four heard the word to any real benefit and were truthful through it there was the wayside hearers the seed fell upon their hearts it made no impression it found no entrance and it was very soon caught away for the hard wayside was not prepared to receive the seed and then there was the stony ground hearers that is those who had a certain amount of emotional ism sentimental feeling shallow and yet beneath that beneath that shallow ground there was rock the stony ground hearers the expression stony ground in that parable doesn't mean ground that it got a lot of stones mixed up with the soil it means ground it was hard and rock underneath with a little surface soil just enough for the seed to spring up in but not deep enough for it to take root they heard the word were immediately taken with it they were filled with joy at once and it seemed as though the word had taken quick effect upon them but it soon told its own sad tale when it was subject to trial when the sun arose it withered away for it was no depth of earth why hadn't any depth of earth because the heart wasn't prepared if the heart had been prepared there would have been depth of earth and then there were the others the complaint about them wasn't that they were either hard and unimpressed nor superficial and shallow there was more earth with them and in due time the word sang up but it was soon choked and why not why was it choked because of the cares and riches and pleasures of this world born

Jesus Christ called them why was the word choked in men because their heart wasn't prepared and in what sense was their heart not prepared there be no ploughing up there been no digging out there been no cutting back of the cares and riches and pleasures of this world there was no proper preparation if the Lord had prepared the heart those thorns would have strung up like that and choked it they would have strung up delight but the Lord would have cut them down and then there was the one who heard the word to their own salvation and to their fruitfulness what of them we read they are on the good ground of age which when they hear the word hear it in a good and honest heart they hear it they understand it they keep it why because their heart had been prepared my time has gone otherwise

I would have taken a little longer to have shown you what that preparation of the heart is to receive the word perhaps I said enough to impress your hearts and minds this morning for I do want to impress your hearts and minds with these things I do pray that the Lord will grant to me the desire and the concern of my heart and that is to see his gracious and his precious work spring up in your hearts and bring forth fruit unto life eternal that the preparation of the heart to receive the word to that blessed fruitful and eternal effect is of the Lord the preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the

[41 : 56] Lord Amen