

Handling matters wisely (Quality: Very good)

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Date: 01 January 1981

Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[0 : 00] to express my appreciation of your coming here, this annual service in this ancient place or meeting house for the worship of God.

And I especially welcome my friend and companion in the gospel in my own town who comes from across the Atlantic, from the United States.

And I would just like to say this before I give out my text. This little place of worship was built and begun five years after the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth to the shores of New England in America.

So we would almost think that this has some connection possibly with that great and wonderful beginning and all the consequences that have flown from that time.

In the Mayflower that sailed on September in 1620, five years as I've just said, five years afterwards, the people here began to worship God in this place.

[1 : 42] Now, my text is found in the book of Proverbs, the 16th chapter and the 20th verse.

He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good, and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.

The book of Proverbs has oftentimes two features about it. The words that the wise man was given by God's inspiration to write have a bearing upon our natural ways and natural things as also they have upon the spiritual life and experience of the people of God.

And both are important. One relatively to the times in which we live and the circumstances and experiences through which we pass through.

The other to our never-dying souls. And all that that means. All the weight and significance and importance. And that is true with the word that I have brought before you tonight.

[3 : 25] There is, of course, in natural life a great many matters that need to be handled wisely. And we have to recognize, and no doubt you all will recognize, that a great many of your troubles and difficulties, personally and in your family it may be, or it may be in the church of God, have been brought about because matters have not been handled wisely.

It's a truth that needs to be deeply imprinted upon our hearts and minds. And it's a matter that has a very great bearing in these days upon our life and personal experience.

He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good. There are matters also that are better left without handling.

Some people are very much inclined to put their hand to things which it would have been far better for them never to touch.

We have the outstanding case in the word of God of Josiah, the king of Judah. When Neto, the king of Egypt, came to make war with Kharkimesh, he keen to show his power and to employ his armies, went out against him.

[5 : 35] There was no quarrel between the king of Egypt and Josiah. But Josiah evidently was a man eager to show his prowess and his equipment that he had gathered together with his army, that he could not resist the temptation to go forth and to meddle with something that he had no right to meddle with.

And the king of Egypt sent ambassadors to him to warn him and to tell him to resist the temptation to go forth.

He had nothing, no conflict whatever with him, his business with another people altogether. But no, Josiah, he was keen to a degree to go forth and to show his mighty power, he thought, against the advancing forces of Egypt.

And we know the result. He was brought home, wounded and died in the evening of the very day that he went forth. Now there was an example that I want to lay stress upon tonight.

We need to be wary and watchful lest we might put our hands to anything that either we have no right to do or it is not prudent or wise even to do it.

[7 : 25] But then on the other hand, we are liable to fail in this woefully at times of failing to do what we ought to do.

There are many matters that are left untouched and unheeded by individuals and perhaps by the Church of God which should have been dealt with.

And if they are dealt with, dealt with in the initial stages, when they arise, there is often, very often, a solution found to the problem.

Now a little thing, as we were reading just now in the epistle of James, a little thing can become a very great thing. But a little thing, if it is quenched or a stop is put to it in the early stages, may never arise or disturb or distress any mind or heart whatsoever.

So our text is a very important one and a wonderful one indeed. And I believe that the word here in the original Hebrew really means this, he that handleth the word shall find good.

[9 : 08] And I thought how important it is for the preachers of the gospel to handle a matter wisely in setting forth the word of God, the glorious truths of the gospel.

There's never anything that needs more wisdom. There's nothing that needs more grace than to handle the word of God.

And one of the great fruits of the work of the divine spirit in the hearts of believers is this.

You'll get it in the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Having received this ministry, the word says they handle not the word of God deceitfully.

That's one of the fruits of God's grace. And how important is that? My friends, we are plagued with men today who handle or mishandle the word of God.

[10 : 20] Take it out of its setting. Add things to it. totally fail to rightly divide the word of truth. They put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

They go in the very reverse way and in the opposite manner to what the Lord in his holy word directs.

and how can you expect the church to be but sickly, anemic, lacking, and poor indeed. We ought to be abundantly thankful for faithful ministers of the gospel, for those who rightly divide the word of truth, who handle it as it should be handled with all the sacred intent and purpose, for it is holy, it is all important, and it is very precious.

There's one thing that I have felt lately, and I'm speaking of my own ministry now, no one else's, I feel there's been a failure of times to fail to put forth the message in the preaching of the gospel, and to seek to prayerfully apply that message to the conscience.

We cannot apply it to the heart, the Holy Spirit only can do that, but to appeal to people's consciences. I feel that I've lacked in this.

[12 : 02] It's been a cause of sorrow and grief in my own heart, heart. And as the Lord may help, I do intend and desire in his great name, and with the help of his grace, so long as life shall remain with me, to ever to seek to set forth before the people a message in the Lord's message, and to seek that the word we speak might be applicable to the consciences of the people, so that they are not left where they were when they entered into the house, but they are either disturbed in their own minds, or uplifted in their own hearts, but they should be under no delusion whatever that what the word of the Lord says, what it speaks.

I feel this is one of the great things that we need to seek after and to long for and to pray for in the days in which we live.

he that handleth a matter wisely shall find good. I am not going to keep you long tonight, I never do in these services, but I therefore want to come to points, and the great point that I want to lay stress upon is this, the great matter of our souls.

He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good. People will say, of course, well, we can't do anything about our souls.

Only God can do that. But here is the word of God, and the Holy Spirit undoubtedly intends us to believe this, and to follow this, that there is such a thing as handling our hearts, our ways, our thoughts, our persons, and so as to consider the great importance of our never dying souls.

[14 : 20] the greatest thing that we can ever have to deal with is our soul. I never shall forget the moment when I first realized that I had a soul, and all the weight and the solemnity, and indeed the awfulness of that awareness and consciousness was so great and so deep in those days, and more or less has never left me since.

And therefore I can see, and I do commend to you dear people here tonight, how vast and how vital is the life, the health, the condition, the well-being, and the everlasting safety and blessedness of your soul.

It's a matter beyond all compare, and yet people are too much concerned with the matters of this world, taken up with trifles that are all passing away, and will soon be done with forever and ever, and they totally ignore, never think, never consider that they have a soul, and there's nothing there for that they feel they need to handle in regard to their souls.

But oh, what a tremendous matter this is. He that handleth a matter rightly, or wisely, shall find good.

And you see in your margin, I suppose it is in my margin of rendering of this portion, he that understandeth the matter. Well, my friends, we do need to the understanding of the Lord.

[16 : 21] And when the Lord is pleased to give anyone a little of the understanding, they then see in a moment, they see the great incomparable importance of their soul and spiritual things, whether they are right with God, whether they have the life of God within them.

That's the great important matter. Is it a great concern with you? Is this the great outstanding matter? Is this the matter that you want to handle?

Do you handle it? Do you handle it when you come to the house of prayer, when you read the word of God in secret and in private? Do you handle it when you go to the throne of grace and take your matters to the Lord?

Are all these ways, ways in which you handle that all important, highly significant matter, your soul and it's the life of your soul, whether you are alive unto God or still dead in trespasses and in sins?

Then another point is this. what a great matter it is to have liberty, the liberty of the gospel, to know that joyous experience of the word of God coming forth from the Lord himself and setting free his own people.

[17 : 57] If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed. all we want liberty. There are plenty of things to entangle, to bind, to captivate.

Only God's grace and his word of truth can set us free. And it's a matter that we need to handle. You put yourself where there is the no gospel or very faint gospel or whether it is only partially preached as the gospel and you will be handling not wisely but dangerously.

To the jeopardy of your never dying soul, you'll be handling that matter, that great matter of your spiritual life and liberty.

There's nothing to be compared with the liberating mercy of God that is treasured by the dear saints of God more than their wealth, their life, their very treasures that men call so good and great.

Then there's another matter and that is love. You may say, well, I do feel I can follow you in these two points about life and liberty, but there's one thing I feel so tender and so concerned about and that is this.

[19 : 29] Do I really manifest in myself, in my life, that love that I feel I ought to manifest to God and to Christ who has loved me?

You do desire, you hope, indeed you can say that, who loved me and gave himself for me. well, it seems very strange, doesn't it?

It should be. It does to the world, of course. I remember a man I was travelling with, he was a clergyman in the Church of England, some many years ago and he found out what I was and told him.

Oh, he said, you are among those people that never know whether they love the Lord. And he said, now, do you think when I left home this morning and kissed my wife that I was doubtful whether I loved her?

I said, well, now, my friend, you saw your wife and you've been with your wife for perhaps many years. There's no question in your mind, I suppose, that she is your wife.

[20 : 39] And there ought not to be any question whether you love her. But have you seen the Lord? And can you say, whom having not seen he loves?

That's a great question, you see, friends. We want to love him. Oh, that that love might be shed abroad in our hearts. That we might feel drawing of that love in our own souls to the Lord Jesus.

We might feel that he was our chiefest, our greatest joy, our best, our only friend. friend. This is a matter.

It needs handling wisely. And there's no one to whom we can go for handling it wisely but the one who gives us wisdom from above, who sends, who is wisdom, who speaks in the eighth chapter of Proverbs and says, I dwell with prudence.

I love them that love me, he says. And he speaks in that beautiful chapter so wonderfully and tenderly about those who love the Lord.

[22 : 00] Now, oh, how important this word is then. He that handleth matter wisely shall buy fine good.

Let us just try and look a moment or two at this word handling. He that handleth a matter wisely.

You can put it in one or two other kinds of ways which might suggest the importance of it. For instance, there's the term laying hold.

That's a very similar word really or term laying hold. Well, one thing you may find, like a nettle, you know, if you've got a nettle, you might get some very severe stings from it.

But if you take that nettle and grasp it firmly and determinately, you won't get any hurt whatsoever. Now, that is a lesson we need to learn in a great many ways in life.

[23 : 14] There are things that need to be dealt with like that and to be dealt with firmly with a determination with no compromise and without any kind of complacency.

any error that comes to us in our path, any deviation from the way of truth that needs to be dealt with.

If you take a charitable, what people call a charitable attitude in some of these things, it will only result in the terrible enlargement of the trouble and it will come to a point, it may well do so as it has done in many instances in God's church when it takes almost a mighty avalanche of power and of undertaking to remove it.

Now, he that handleth or layeth hold of things like those things that I have mentioned here this evening.

And then again, laying hold of eternal life. Paul speaks of that in his epistle. Laying hold of eternal life.

[24 : 44] Do we lay hold? Oh, I know people are so fearful lest they might venture where they have no right to venture.

they might put forth something of the creature or of the flesh, which can only be accomplished by the grace of God, but you see, the word of God would not so set forth so clearly and so plainly in its glorious pages, these words that exhort the people of God, the seeking people of God, to lay hold of eternal life.

Oh, if we could only stretch out that hand, that God-given faith, that hand of faith, and lay hold of a precious Christ, what a precious experience that would be.

And what a wonderful matter it would be in our soul's experience, to know that we had him, and that he was ours, and that he will not let us go, even if our poor hold may sometimes felter and fail.

He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good. In another word, taking up, taking up things.

[26 : 15] Oh, yes, there is a tendency, perhaps, to leave everything for other people to do. You get people in the church, they are content and pleased enough to be there, they come regularly, but if there is anything to do, if there is anything to undertake, if there is a stand to be made, they are not the ones to do it.

Let everyone else step in front. Oh, for that grace of God to take up what is we are called upon and what is incumbent upon us as Christians, as believers, as professors, and as ministers of the gospel, to take up whatever the Lord lays before us, and to fear neither man nor devil nor the world.

Now, the chief of methods in this great matter of handling a matter wisely is prayer. Oh, what a precious exercise and privilege that is.

How wonderful it is that God has given to his people the means of grace, the throne of grace, and what a wonderful mercy it is if he puts into your heart and mine real prayer, and keeps us at prayer.

We may wonder sometimes why we have a pathway of tribulation. We're almost tempted at times to think that God is dealing with us differently from what he deals with his general company of people.

[28 : 00] But it may well be this, that he's driving you more to the throne of grace. He's making prayer an essential factor in your life, in your heart.

And there you'll find how matters are handled. To be stretching out things or laying them out before the Lord, before his face, is the right way of handling every matter.

If you've got a problem, if there's a real cross or trial or difficulty in your path, lay it out before the Lord. Take it to him.

do not take it and then decide that you've got a method of your own to handle it. Take it and leave it.

Leave it in his hand. This is one of the greatest ways of handling a matter wisely, is to commit it utterly and completely into the hand of the Lord.

[29 : 05] Yes, prayer and what results from a life of prayer, path of prayer, three things.

First of all, consistency. I hardly can see how a person that is a real praying person can be any other than a consistent believer in the Lord.

Oh, we are so plagued and tried and troubled with inconsistency. It's prevalent everywhere. It's in you. It's in me. I feel it.

I recognize it. I need the Lord to save me from it. And I have to pray, pray hard at times that the Lord might keep me and make me consistent with him and with his word of truth.

Secondly, conformity. Yes, if you pray, if you're a praying person, you will be conformed to the way of the Lord.

[30 : 17] You'll be conformed to his image. You'll be conformed to that likeness that he sets up in his holy word where he portrays his people, the life of God in their hearts.

And then thirdly, you'll be constant. There'll be a constancy about it. You won't go for a five minutes. You won't pray just once or one day and then forget all about prayer and think that it doesn't matter really.

A person was speaking to me the other day and they said, I got to a point in my trouble. It was so great and the trial was so heavy and it seemed to be almost impossible of any solution.

I came to that point just one brief moment at least when I said to myself, there's no more need for me, there's no more purpose for me to pray.

But you see, that was the very point when they had to go on praying and pray more and more, more earnestly. And this is what the word broke that snare in this particular person's heart and mind.

[31 : 35] It was the word in the Gospel of Luke where it speaks about the dear blessed Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. He prayed the more earnestly, being in an agony.

He prayed more earnestly, why all his life was a life of prayer. He was always in sweet and glorious contact and communion with his Father.

And yet in the Garden of Gethsemane, when about to bear the sorrows and the pains and the ignominy and the shame of all his people, it says of him, the Holy Spirit says this, he prayed the more earnestly.

Oh, my friends, when you get a look at sight of a dear blessed Redeemer suffering, treading that path of grief and sorrow, then you see how needful prayer is and how you need to constantly be praying in the season and out of season, in the night seasons as well as in the day, when everything seems fair and pleasant and when it all seems to be against you, pray even if you cannot speak, but pray in faith in Jesus' name.

And then finally, he shall find good. That's the promise, you see, to this. He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good.

[33 : 15] this is a very personal matter. He shall find good and that good is beyond all our comprehension.

It can be summed up in this. It's Christ. His preciousness, his worth, his glory, his presence.

You shall find good. And what can be better than that? What can be more desirable than that? Good in creatures may be found, but all is found in thee.

I can have all things and abound while God is good to me. May God bless his word.

Amen.