
Completely with God

Proverbs 2

Daniel Turner

Introduction Today is a special day. Today we are preparing for tonight's baptism of four people; people who have been given grace to flee from sin and flee to the Savior for salvation. These are people who are identifying through baptism with Christ's death, burial and resurrection; identifying with the new way of life – the new people of God. This newness of life can be characterized as completely with God and carried out in the local church. I'm overjoyed with the prospect of baptizing tonight Mahalah Hines, Laura Benton, Alex Rech and Walter Woznick.

As I was reflecting upon and praying for Mahalah, Laura, Alex and Walter, I began to write this morning's message taken from Proverbs 2. I titled the message *Completely with God*. I dedicate it to these four new disciples who need the biblical answer to the question "what does it mean (i.e. look like / feel like) to be completely with God"?

I also commit this message to you today who have little to no understanding of what it means to be completely with God. You are somewhat spiritual. You listen from time to time to sermons. You've read a little bit of the Bible. You may recall what your Grandma use to say. But you are confused with what it means to be a Christian. And so, I submit God's word to you this morning with hope that God will cause you to gladly submit to His Word and enjoy the richness of salvation found in Christ.

I also deliver this message to you today who were converted to Christ years ago, having been baptized and following Christ for many years. And yet, today you sense a cooling off in your love for Him. You are not urgent about the things of the Bible anymore. You turned on "cruise control" sometime back and are mindlessly rolling down the road. Your prayer life, Bible reading and meaningful fellowship with God's people and earnest worship of Christ have slowed way down. Not that you are overtly rebellious. Not that you hate Christ. But you just feel okay with how things are. You have become complacent. What really gets you excited and makes your day sing is not found in the Bible and in Church. It's found on the TV screen or the athletic field or thoughts of your upcoming vacation site.

Oh my friends, I have so much more to offer you this morning!

Today is the Day that the Lord has made (Ps.118:24). Today is a new Day (Lam.3:23). Stepping into new beginnings to understand and appreciate what it means and what it feels like to be *Completely with God* is our topic for this morning.

See this for yourself as you open your Bible to Proverbs 2. <let's pray>

The topic for this morning's message became clear to me as I read Proverbs one and saw in v.32-33 a summary of chapter one. In these verses you can hear the King say to his son:

Complacency with God leads to devastation but completely with God leads to salvation.

I wanted to understand v33 and how it related to Chapter two. I began to notice that our text for today (Pr.2) was an explanation of listening to Wisdom. I began to see that what we have before us in chapter two might be summarized in this sentence.

Completely with God requires all of me (1-4) since God gives me all of Him (5-11) and so saves me from all of evil (12-19) in order to bring me safely to all of paradise (20-22).

There are the four points (aspects of "completely with God") I will be making this morning. These four points flesh out what it means to be completely with God. Think of these points as characteristics/aspects of "completely with God". Follow along in Proverbs 2 as we listen to what it means to be Completely with God.

Completely with God

2:1-22

What it means to be "completely with God" can be understood first by noticing verses 1-4.

requires all of me

v1-4

It requires all of me. We hear the author of Proverbs calling for full participation. Take a listen as I read these first four verses.

*My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,*

ACTIVITY: receive, treasure, attentive, inclined

The beginning of this chapter takes aim at the son's activities. The father exhorts the son to stay clear of complacency as seen in 1:32. He yearns for his son to yearn for wisdom. There is nothing casual about these first four verses. Much urgency and earnestness and passion are witnessed in v1-4.

As we look at characteristics of being completely with God notice with me the verbs found in these verses. **Receive**, **treasure**, **attentive**, **incline** are verbs depicting comprehensive obedience – **receive** = accepting the word, welcoming the entire Bible, yielding to its views. **Treasure** = prizing the word, cherishing its precepts, valuing all its views. **Attentive** = ears perked to wisdom, focusing on its realities, alert to all its ways. **Inclined** = Persuaded by the word, tilted toward its ways, motivated by its depiction of what life is all about.

These activities may be seen in Christian disciplines like 1) Attending with interest to the Bible (v1-2), being much in prayer (v3). Preferring and pursuing God over money and ease and comfort (4)

This is good advice. These are timely exhortations. But is that all that's going on here? Could what we just discussed be a means to a greater end?

FOCUS: *wisdom, knowledge, understanding, hidden treasures*

These verbs need objects. We need to see what we are to be passionately pursuing. What or who is to receive all our liveliness and vigor?

The focus of the pursuit in v1-4 is oriented toward wisdom, knowledge, understanding, hidden treasures. This is what we are to receive and treasure and be attentive to and be inclined toward. But if we are not careful at this point, we will make a fatal mistake. If we do not understand that these words stand for more than mere notional information, academic knowledge or practical daily living advice we will terminate our energies in the wrong place. Now listen carefully.

When we read Proverbs 1-9 we hear of wisdom as a person calling out to the son. For example reading 1:20f it says, "Wisdom cries aloud in the street...wisdom speaks..." and then throughout the rest of the chapter we hear what wisdom proclaims. This pattern can be traced throughout chapters 1-9 of Proverbs pointing us to Someone who is wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

When we get to the New Testament, we see clearly to whom these words are directing our attention/affection. I'll take just two samples of NT insight to make the point.

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God...
(1 Corinthians 1:30 ESV)

Jesus Christ is personified Wisdom. He is the One to whom all our cries and desires for knowing need to ascend.

Or take Colossians 2:2-3 as a lens to see who is in Proverbs 2.

...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
(Colossians 2:2-3 ESV)

Can you hear the echoes of Proverbs 2:1-4 in Paul's teaching? All the words we noticed in Proverbs 2:1-4 are found tightly packaged in Col.2:2,3 (understanding, knowledge, wisdom, hidden treasure). And they all culminate in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

To be completely with God requires all of us. This means we are to be utterly fixated upon Jesus as our wisdom and understanding and knowledge and treasure. He is the One on whom all our affections rest. He is the One to whom all our cries ascend. He is the One in whom all our yearnings are satisfied.

In light of this explanation of verses 1-4, we come to a most vital shift in the chapter. Starting at v5, the author talks about the results and reasons for all the activity we came across in v.1-4. Please understand. We are not called to work hard for God's blessings as an employee to his employer. Rather we are to believe His promises in an obeying way like a patient to her physician.

Let me try to point this out as you listen to v5-11 read. Picking up in v5 we hear...

result

*then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.*

promise

For the LORD gives wisdom;
*from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints.*

result

*Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;*

promise

for wisdom will come into your heart.
*and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you,*

since He gives me all of Him

v5-11

So the first characteristic of being completely with God we saw in v1-4; it requires all of you. As we continue thinking our way through this chapter we come to v5-11 and find the second characteristic of being completely with God. This section talks about the results of v.1-4 and how these results occur.

Notice that as the conditions of v1-4 are met (as we give ourselves fully to Christ) we experience the results found in v5 & 9 (we will understand the fear of the Lord and understand righteousness & justice, etc.). And the reason for how the results occur is due to God upholding His promises found v6 & 10. In other words, because the LORD gives wisdom (6) and sends wisdom into your heart making knowledge pleasant to your soul (10) you will understand the fear of the LORD (5). You will stand in awe of Christ. You will have the capacity to marvel at His majesty. You will be alive to His glory. How did we get to that point (i.e. tasting the pleasure of knowing Him and standing in awe of Him)? It is because the Lord gives!

Are you following this logic?

It's like what Moses said in Num.10:29. "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, "I will give it to you". Moses was motivated to lay everything on the line because the LORD promised to give everything to him.

Or the same logic is found in 2Timothy 2:7. "Consider what I say for the LORD will give you understanding in all things". Timothy was to study hard because the LORD promised to give him what he sought after – understanding (quite close to the idea found in Proverbs 2:5-6).

In other words, work hard because the Lord gives (cf. Phil.2:12-13; 1Cor.15:10).

and so delivers me from all of evil

v12-19

Alright, so far we travelled together through the first 11 verses of chapter two. We are noticing what it looks like to be completely with God. It requires all of us (v1-4). But now we understand what motivates us to passionately pursue wisdom. We know that God promises amazing things. God gives all of Himself to us (v5-11) – giving His Wisdom, working His Wisdom into our hearts causing our souls to taste pleasure. This act of God transforms our lives so that we can stand in awe of Him (5), grow in knowledge of Him (5), experience protection from Him (7), become more concerned for hurting people (9). And as a result of all this transformation the text ends with protection. He delivers us from all of evil (12-19).

From devious men

v12-15

This evil comes in two forms; male and female.

The first set of temptations from which the LORD delivers His people comes from devious men. Listen as I read v12-15.

*delivering you from the way of evil,
from men of **perverted speech**,
who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil,
men whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.*

The key phrase in this passage is in v12: “men of perverted speech”. These are the powerful and popular guys who have a way with words. They may be false teachers found in the Church (cf. 2Peter 2). They may be politicians promising hope and change. They may be the popular group at school. You find yourself wanting their words to be true and wanting them to want you. But there is something noticeably missing from their lives. The Wisdom of the LORD has not entered their hearts and permeated them with pleasurable insight. They do not stand in awe of Jesus Christ.

Now to be clear, these men are having the time of their lives. They are happy and put on great parties (14). But evil lurks in their hearts and moves out into their paths.

We are called this morning to be completely with God. And as we see in these verses this will deliver us from all of evil.

From deadly women

v16-19

The second temptation from which we will be delivered as we are completely with God is found in v16-19. These temptations come from deadly women.

Take a listen as I read for us v16-19.

*So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with her **smooth words**,
who forsakes the companion of her youth
and forgets the covenant of her God;
for her house sinks down to death,
and her paths to the departed;
none who go to her come back,
nor do they regain the paths of life.
So you will walk in the way of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.
For the upright will inhabit the land,
and those with integrity will remain in it,
but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.*

The key phrase to understand this section is: “her smooth words” found in v16. This woman shows up in many places in Proverbs 1-9. She is smokin’ hot in appearance and seductive in speech. She entices men with her sensuousness as she makes herself available to the fool.

Yes, you find her down on Brown St. You will catch a glimpse of her at Diamonds. But she is craftier than just showing up in strip joints and on dark streets. She will show up at Kroger’s on the newsstand. She is in most bookstores. She is all over the internet. She will pop up on smart phones and step into your living room out of steamy beer commercials. She can even show up at church according v17.

What a relief this passage gives us men! We are delivered from all of evil – even when evil seems so beautiful and promising. Notice in v18-19 where deceptive beauty ends. Her destination is found in damnation from which there is no return.

Completely with God requires all of us since we are given all of Him so as to be delivered from all of evil. Praise the Lord for his merciful rescue.

and brings me with others safely into all of paradise. v20-22

As we come to the end of the passage and message, we notice the LORD’s salvation does not merely deliver his people from evil. It delivers them to all of paradise. Listen once more to God’s word as I read v20-22.

*So you will walk in the way of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.
For the upright will inhabit the land,
and those with integrity will remain in it,
but the wicked will be cut off from **the land**,
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.*

The key term in this passage is: the land. This phrase dominates the Bible’s teaching. We see it prominently in Genesis (Gen.1-2; 12). It is paramount in Revelation (Rev.21-22). This is the place God has promised to fully and forever bless His people.

The N.T. interprets this term as the entire world (Rom.4). We who have the New Testament have the light to see that the Land ultimately refers to Christ (Heb.3-4) and the entire New Heavens and New Earth (Rev.21-22). Paradise is what you are to hear as you hear the term "The Land".

Lastly, notice that we who are completely with God are brought to paradise ultimately to remain. We will never be exiled or banished or driven from paradise restored. We will be with God's people in God's place happily under God's reign. This is the destination to which all of God's people are taken.

So what is all this to mean to you?

Conclusion Do you want to change more than you want to stay just the way you are?

Are the promises of God attractive to you this morning?

Do you find in your heart strangely pulled to this passage hoping it is all true?

Then here are some questions for you to take home and seriously consider.

1. Do your daily lives (disciplines/habits) indicate that biblical wisdom is important to you? Be honest. Be humble. Locate places of complacency.
2. Confess complacency to God. Be vulnerable. Be earnest. He already knows.
3. How do we go about developing the wisdom that finds its fulfillment in Christ?
 - a. Look carefully at v1-4. Glean disciplines and lifestyles from these vv. Develop a plan for Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, worship, ministry. If you do not plan you are remaining complacent.
4. How are we to motivate ourselves to give all of ourselves to God?
 - a. Reread v5-11. Notice the promises. Believe the promise that He gives. When people believe He gives they are unstoppably motivated to get.
5. What are things that will distract us and bump us off path?
 - a. Carefully with great seriousness read v12-19 (take a ½ hr. and read reflectively Proverbs 1-9. Watch where temptations occur and how they allure their victims. Stay far away from the path of perversion and evil.
6. Where is all this heading?
 - a. Think much on paradise. Read more than a few times Revelation 21-22. Whet your appetite for premium and permanent joy found in the presence of Christ in paradise. Reflect often on the destination of all who are believers in Christ.

Ultimately Proverbs 2 finds its fullest expression in Jesus showing us what it means to live as God intended. Let us this morning embrace Him with all the earnestness we see in v1-4 and become wise as v5-11 and be delivered from all the evil we see in 12-19 and wait with expectation the glorious destination of v20-22.