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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at
Galeed Chapel, Brighton on
17 July 1926

TEXT: PROVERBS V verses 1 and 2

"My son attend unto My wisdom and bow thine ear to My understanding, that thou mayest regard discretion and that thy lips may keep knowledge"

I am saying no strange thing when I say that wisdom, more or less distinctly, throughout the Proverbs, means the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is no small mercy to have an ear to attend to His teaching. The Proverbs do not simply set forth certain things respecting this life, but, above all things else, the things of God for eternity and this Wisdom. - "Attend unto My Wisdom" is the wisdom of God in Him. "In Him dwelleth all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and His understanding is infinite. There is no searching of it. It exceeds ours, infinitely, is accurate, discerning, discriminating, and to attend unto Christ's wisdom is our wisdom indeed, and to bow down in humble submission to His understanding is that which proceeds from the Holy Ghost. Therefore may we be enabled to keep before us this evening the Person who is speaking in the text, and then notice what He will have His people do, what He will have us do, if we are born again and have the Holy Ghost for our teacher. This wisdom is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought, is not that fleshly wisdom of which the Apostle speaks concerning the world, but it is the wisdom of God. We read of the wisdom of God, that it is Christ. "Christ the wisdom of God" And for this reason first that He is God, that Christ is God, and therefore naturally, necessarily, He possesses infinite wisdom; He is infinite wisdom. And secondly because, in the Covenant of Grace, He, becoming His Father's servant, and the appointed prophet, and the anointed priest, whose lips keep the truth, all that is to be said of God, all that is to be received from God, all that is known of God, all that is enjoyed of God, must be received from, lead up to, and bring union with the Lord Jesus. You will never have one atom, so to put it, of spiritual wisdom

or goodness, or grace, or right experience, apart from Him, and what you rightly receive from God, you receive from Him. And thirdly, being the servant of God, and having His commission in the eternal council of peace and receiving His commandment what He should say, and what He should do, and that He should lay down His life, this Person, Jesus Christ, here speaks of His wisdom. "Attend unto My wisdom". "I wisdom dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions" and the mercy of every child of God is to be brought down to be as a little child, and receive, in that spirit, the kingdom of God. Having no wisdom of his own, having lost it by divine teaching (it has been, so to speak, destroyed) and no knowledge of how to move in the way of peace, or how to strive to enter into rest, the soul must receive wisdom in these particulars from the Lord Jesus.

"My son". Do you think you belong to Him? Have you clear or any real evidences of belonging to Him? Have you had grace to attend unto divine Wisdom? In those early verses - I only distinguish them for the moment because to speak of all would be impossible, those early verses in the chapter which I read - "Blessed are the poor in spirit" Is that you? "Blessed are the meek" Is that you? "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" Does that describe your case? If so, then the promises attached to each of those verses must belong to you, only you may not have much, if any, sweet, present experience of them. But to attend to those words of wisdom is really to look into them, diligently to consider them, to pray that you may be the characters there set forth, that you may have those marks of the Spirit's teaching, that you may possess those very graces - poverty of spirit, not of purse, no, not of purse, but of spirit. A poor spirit, a hungry spirit, a meek, a teachable spirit, as in the sight of God. A spirit of poverty that makes you know that unless you get bread from heaven you must die, you must pine away and have no ground to stand on for eternity. A meek spirit that will make you say "unless God teach me, I am such a foolish creature, I cannot but stray and go wide." A hungry spirit, a thirsty spirit, which will be in you again and again like this - "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Now in these things, there is wisdom, the

infinite wisdom of Jesus Christ, who knows our condition, our native deformity, our personal pollution and transgression, and if He teaches us by His good Spirit, we come right into those words, and also to the words in the end of the eighth chapter of the Proverbs - "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching at My gates", where councils are held, "waiting at the posts of My doors" till I shall come and enter therein. Blessed is that man who so hears, so watches and so waits.

My son, attend to these things, they are your life. You will never live without them, you will never be established without them, never, never enter into rest, without them, never understand what they mean, unless the Holy Spirit be pleased to open them to your attentive spirit. "Bow thine ear to My understanding" which is infinite. Let us then, as enabled, look a little at this - "Attend unto My wisdom". I apprehend that this includes the gospel, the glories of Christ. The gospel is good news from a far country. It is such news as the wisdom of this world can never understand or enter into. You can never see the glory of God in your own wisdom. Speaking of Christ and the mystery of Him in His incarnation, in the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul says - "Which none of the princes of this world knew". This is the wisdom which he spoke there, in a mystery, "even the hidden wisdom which God had ordained, before the world, unto the glory of the church". This is the gospel, and this gospel the devil tries to keep out of the hearts of the people of God, for he says that the minds of them who believe not are blinded by Satan "but to us who believe" he says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (or the Person) of Jesus Christ". This wisdom then consists in the Lord Jesus and what He did and what He is doing. What He did was this - to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". A sight of that by faith, will bring the glory of God into your soul. Not the naked belief of it, not a poor profession of it, but a real sight of it, that will make Him as distinct to you as He was distinct to the Galatians, "before whose eyes He was evidently set forth, crucified among them". You will get it, if ever the Spirit reveals Him, and your faith

goes out to Him, you will get it just like that. The measure of it, God has in His own hand, but the thing you must know something about, and this brings the glory of God into the soul. This glory impresses its own image upon you, and sheds its divine savour upon you, spreads it over your spirit, and it was that, no doubt, that made the ungodly persecutors of the Apostles take knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him. It was that, that brought them to that point, and in that way the wicked glorify God. Christ said - "They shall see your good works and glorify God". They shall acknowledge it, it shall be extorted from them. They shall acknowledge that there is an influence they do not understand, a power of which they have no experience, and it is in that way that the wicked, the world, glorifies God in the people of God, and this is wisdom.

This wisdom consists in what Christ did. He did two things, on earth I mean, His works are included in two particular things. First of all in His perfect obedience to the law of God. O the length and breadth of the law spread over our being. O the depth of it, penetrating to the depths of our souls, our thoughts, and the imaginations of our thoughts. O, the length of it, running out to all our relationships in life, and claiming us absolutely for God, claiming us for God, and adding one awful sanction, adding this - "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". I have seen this, I have seen it to my own despairing of myself. It is this depravity that deforms our nature, it is this pollution of our transgressions that makes us abominable in the sight of God. If you see this you will die. "I through the law am dead to the law" and that is what some of us can say. Bless God for being chastened out of His law. Now I say that for this reason, to show how, that the Lord Jesus, went into every precept and every commandment of the law, under which He was made, for that very end and purpose. He went through all of it and that is what is intended in the Romans, where the Apostle says, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness (or for justification) to everyone that believeth." If the law had not received such absolute perfection of obedience from the Lord Jesus, the man Christ Jesus, who was anointed for this very end,

you never could have escaped damnation. There is not a person in the world who could have escaped damnation, without that perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus to that law, under which He was made, under which He voluntarily placed Himself, to do which He came, to fulfil which He came, saying - "Thy law is within My heart". It was in His heart, in His eyes, in His hands, in His feet, that is to say, in His whole life, it was there. Ah, and it was a walk. Oh, it was a life. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered". And this law meant to Him more than obedience in His life, it meant obedience even unto death. Being in the place of men who ought to die, He became obedient unto death. That was the first thing, the first of the two things I am to name.

And the second thing is this, that while He was obliged to obey, because He was under the law, and had undertaken to obey, His obedience had another law with respect to Himself - the obedience to His Father's commandment to die. "No man taketh My life from Me, I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." And so it is written and said, concerning Him, in the Psalms "Therefore God, even Thy God hath blessed Thee for ever and ever", God blessed the Man Christ Jesus, He gave Him grace, filled Him with the Spirit. He gave Him an obedient heart; He had faith to say to His Father and of Him - "He is near that justifieth Me, I know that I shall not be condemned" He went out night after night and prayed whole nights, the Man Christ Jesus did this, and then, when He had fulfilled everything His Father gave Him to do, there remained that one commandment and He obeyed it, He laid down His life. Voluntarily, willingly, lovingly, obediently, He laid down His life. This truth is the life of my soul and has been somewhat this week. I would not be without attending to this wisdom for a world. O the wisdom of God in this mystery, Incarnate Deity, in the implicit obedience of Jesus Christ, in the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, in the unquestioning obedience, in the surrender of Himself to His Father's will - "Not as I will but as Thou wilt". Now if this merciful truth be opened to our hearts we shall see its glory;

we shall feel the unction of it; we shall attend to it. The death of Christ will be our life; His obedience our acceptance; His death our redemption, and our only hope, our only plea, and attending to this wisdom is pleading that pleadable truth - the person, the death of Christ. Attend to this, because if you do, you will come into liberty; if you do you will be well bottomed for eternity; if you do, you will be justified in your spirit, even as Christ, having done the work His Father gave Him to do, was justified in the Spirit and then, as He was received up into heaven, so you, in God's time, attending to His wisdom, will also be received up into glory. It must be so, for this brings such union between Christ and the soul that He cannot be in one place eternally and that believing soul in another place through eternity. They must be together; the Head and the body must be in the same place; the Redeemer and the redeemed must be together one day; the Purchaser and the purchased thing must be together. My son, attend to this. The Apostle, speaking of rest, he says "Labour to enter into it". And this attending to Christ's wisdom; "Attend unto My wisdom". Legal wisdom says "do this and do that". Fleshly wisdom says "well this is weak, you must strengthen it" Fleshly wisdom says - "You have got into this trouble now get out of it". Fleshly wisdom says, "you are foolish, well now study to get wise" and the wisdom of God - "Come with your ruin and your mistakes and your death and your poverty and everything that is evil, come with all this and nothing better and I will give you what is needed." Not difficult to say, but a tearing of the sinner to pieces to experience it, stripping, stripping, stripping, till he has got nothing to be stripped of, that he may enter into the strait gate. O there is much significance in Christ's word - "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom". There is, I say, much significance in it. We often read such solemn and wise passages with little or no understanding of them, but there it is, wisdom, divine wisdom. "Strive to enter into the strait gate", Now the Lord gave a very strict injunction to Moses. Having showed him the pattern of the tabernacle, He said this - "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount". And that did not give Moses any liberty, did not leave

him a bit of scope for his own wisdom. He was not to make square what was to be round, or round what was to be square. It was just this - there is the pattern. Now here is the strait gate, enter into it. Well, one says - of course I believe. That is not entering into it. Entering into it is realised through faith, not only its straitness, but its safety, its blessedness. Do you know the import of that scripture "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God?" It wont be long before we just come to this - "We must needs die" and there is nothing then between us and eternity. There is nothing but a little space between a lost soul and an eternity of punishment and nothing between a saved soul and bliss, but a few moments, Jesus Christ making up everything, being everything, as it is expressed "Christ is all and in all".

"Attend unto My wisdom". Attend unto My wisdom with respect to sanctification. Now I will tell you this. You may strive to get rid of this sin, and to break the power of that lust, and to walk as you should walk, but you will prove that the more you strive against sin's power you will sin and stumble but the more. Then what? Ah this! "Attend unto Christ's wisdom" which is, if you but believe and receive and perceive His glory, that will do more than a thousand stripes laid on you, to sanctify your affections. That will crucify the old man with the affections and lusts thereof; that will kill you to the world; that will empty you of pride for the moment; that will kill your own strength and make you rejoice in what the Apostle says "I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me". What a mercy to know this! O what a blessing! It takes away all the idleness of your hands; it takes away that abundance of fulness of bread of your own, and makes you glad and thankful to live on a full Christ, and to walk after the wisdom of God. It is wisdom, my son, attend to this. See if you can, by the perseverance of faith, in the Spirit's power, attain to this knowledge that the glory of Christ is that power of sanctification in you. It is, through the Spirit, that that empties you, for the time being, of the world, and brings you humbly and thankfully to live by faith on the Son of God. O, what a mercy it is then to have grace given you for this. It is

very hard to flesh and blood. It is the easiest thing you will ever know when the power of faith is in you, strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Attend unto My wisdom in all the precepts of the word; in the ordinances of the house; in the ways of God in respect of His dealings with you. Attend unto My wisdom with respect to this precept - "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him". Now this may be so internal, so spiritual, as for a time, or in some cases, not to have any special affliction in providence. It may be so, it may not be so, God knows what is best. But the chastening is the dealing of God with a person. It may be just in your conscience, when the Lord draws very near to you and lets you know something of your disobedience, your want of conformity to His word, and your conscience receives the light, and you enter into the truth. Happy the man who is chastened of God. But naturally, chastisement seems to say, God is against you; God has left you; He wont hear you; He wont do you good. Naturally then you do one of two things - either you faint or you despise. Against both the Lord Jesus speaks to us. He says - "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him". If you despise, you lift your head up; you wont listen; there is no hearing at all; there is no voice in the rod to you. You lift your head up and go proudly and blindly on until you get into further trouble. If you faint then you give way to a despairing feeling - "I shall never get out of this, or I shall never get good by this, or God has left me to prove what I am". Now listen to wisdom. My son, I love, and therefore I rebuke. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". Listen to that, and when you hear it, when your soul hears it, you will fall down flat before God, confess your sin, own your foolishness and your weakness and lie before Him for forgiveness till He shall speak it on your heart. Then you neither despise nor faint, but you hear wisdom's words. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". And then you will see what an honour it is to be chastened, what a sign of sonship there is in it, what a token of love for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth".

My son attend to My wisdom in My promises. The promises are to characters, and to certain afflictions. There is no promise that has not some relation in it. It is a relative term more or less distinctly. There is a promise of shoes of iron and brass; that promise relates to a rough way. There is a promise of perseverance; that relates to our weakness, our inability to hold on. There is a promise of divine guidance; that relates to our ignorance and blindness, and if we only look at the evils and the weaknesses and the ignorance that we have in us, then we are apt to give way. If we look only at the promises as an absolute word, then we are apt to forget what they mean. The promises mean something, but when we attend unto wisdom, a promise may make us say - "This means trouble. If the Lord is to sustain me, then I have got to have weakness; I must feel weak". There must be a place for a promise; there must be an experience that will make the promise necessary and sweet to you. There must be something that will make it a great word to you, as big as your troubles and bigger; as strong as you need; as wise as all the circumstances call for, that you are brought into. Attend to these things. Now all this means this, if we have grace to attend unto Christ's wisdom, we shall be exercised. There is a diligence implied here, implicit. There is a diligence, not idleness, not slothfulness, not indifference, not sleep, but a real diligence of spirit. How slack I am here, how condemned I am in myself. My conscience tells me how little I have ever known of this, and therefore my lean condition is explained to me and my failings and weaknesses are all set before me. Do you follow me? May the Lord give us grace to attend unto Christ's wisdom and to forsake our own, to take up the cross of self-denial and follow the Lord Jesus.

"And bow thine ear to My understanding". His understanding is infinite, it respects Himself. He knows Himself; He knows His purposes; He enters into all that. His understanding reaches us in the depths of our guilt, in the length and breadth of our wanderings, and running away from Him. It enters fully into our weaknesses; it enters perfectly into all the changes of providence that we may get into, that we may have experience of.

And look at our understanding of Him. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself". I have thought that, you have thought that. It is natural to us. Because I would not do this, that seems unkind, my understanding, that is to say my profound ignorance, makes me say - "God ought not to do such and such things". O what a fool sin has made of man, what a brute it has made of him. What injustice we do to God, what injustice. I do grieve over my sin sometimes to think how I have sinned against Him, and there it is in my nature. And when a trouble comes what is the understanding you have about it? Very bitter, very bitter. How can a man understand his own way? And the question asked there is in connection with a truth - "A man's goings are of the Lord, how then can a man understand his own way?" Do you understand your way, these winding, duplicitous, wicked thoughts and carnal schemes, the length and breadth of evil of which you have but little knowledge? Do you understand your own ways? Do not you devise evil sometimes on your beds? Now says Christ "Bow thine ear to My understanding" I understand My own purposes concerning you; I mean to do you good at your latter end. You are looking just at the moment, I look to the end. I know what I design. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end". If Jesus Christ thinks His thoughts into our hearts by His Spirit then we bow our ears to His understanding, that is, we fall flat in prostrate obedience and faith at His footstool and, for the moment we are just there, little children, trusting Him, looking to Him, leaning on Him, and seeking grace to follow Him.

Bow thine ear to My understanding of your way, and lift not up your heart to your own understanding which is only ignorance. Bow down thine ear to My understanding of what I mean when I am dealing with you, either in a way of chastisement or in a way of comfort. There is an end. We little look to it for the most part. It is this, it is the present trouble, the present state, when Christ has quite another understanding of the matter. He is guiding you. If you were rowing in a boat, you start out for a certain place, your back is to that place, but you have in the boat one who steers, and if you know him well and have confidence

in him, you go on rowing. You know he is guiding, he is steering the boat, and if you are in a right way you may sometimes seem to have your back to that destination which you designed for, and started out to reach, but there is one who will guide and if you can bow your ear to His understanding you will say, the way is right, it cannot be wrong, for I have got a sense of His mercy in my soul, and I believe He is too wise to err and too good to be unkind. "Bow down your ear to My understanding". And this will keep you exercised, O you will be watching, to use His own words in the eighth chapter, you will be watching at His gates, waiting at the posts of His door. Will He come now, will He use this means, will He own that reading, will He bless the sermon? Every one and any one in which you have a hope that He will come, there you will be watching as the watchman waiteth for the morning. So says the Psalmist "I wait for God. I wait for Him more earnestly and crane my neck more diligently and hopefully to catch the first rays of the Sun as they bend themselves from the east to the west. " I watch for God, more than they that watch for the morning." What a mercy to be exercised. May God show us His glory. We shall leave self then; we shall leave self if we get a glimpse of His glory and we shall be willing to be clay in the hands of the heavenly Potter, to be instructed by Him, who says - "Attend unto My wisdom and bow down thine ear to My understanding". This way of life is a mortification of the flesh, but it is a blessed life, O a blessed way of living, because it brings you into contact with Christ and what so good as that? It takes you away from that self that you have been brought to hate from time to time, and what is better than that? It takes you off your own strength to lean on Him and out of your wisdom to follow Him, and what so good as that? ✓ God give us a heart to understand, to enter into this injunction of Christ "My son attend to My wisdom and bow down thine ear to My understanding."

AMEN.