

5 Resolutions For 2018!

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Father, this evening, we just come to You, Lord, the Author and the Finisher of our faith. The work that You began in us, You are faithful to complete it. So, we have come, Lord, for the ministry of the Word, that our souls, our spirit may be fed, that Your work in us would continue, Lord. For faith comes from hearing and we have come for the hearing of faith, O Lord. We just commit this time into Thy hands, O Lord. I pray, Father, that every other distraction, every other concern of life, every other issue we will put aside and be opened to the voice of Your Spirit as You teach us, Lord. Speak, Father. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Do you remember 31st night? It was only ten days ago. It looks like a long time back, right? Ten days. You know in India also, in certain places but abroad, they have what is called retirement homes where older people, when they retire, they live in these really good homes. Older people, they live in these homes and their kids come and visit them once in a while or even if you don't have kids, you can check into these homes. You have to pay, of course, but you are very well taken care of. So, an old widower had moved into this retirement home and there were a lot of them there and he used to sit and talk to an old widow and they got very close and one evening, he proposed to her, they are both old, okay? And he's a widower; she's a widow. One evening, he proposed to her. The next morning, he woke up and he couldn't remember her answer, "What did she say last night?" So, he went to her and say, "I'm really sorry. I forgot. Did you say yes or no?" She said, "Thank goodness!" she said, "I remembered saying yes, but I couldn't remember who had proposed?" You are not in retirement homes but does anybody remember their new year resolutions or have you forgotten it? Therefore, God says, "Remember!" Every time we come to the house of God, it is so that we are reminded of His goodness, of His mercy, of His everlasting faithfulness.

I was talking to Peter yesterday and I was telling him as a praise and worship leader or anybody, Scripture says a word, the psalmist says, "Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord!" Do you know what it means? The only reason you need to praise God is that you are alive. You don't need another reason. The primary reason is this – I am alive today. That means I'm not yet facing His judgment. So, I still have time for mercy; I still have time to put things right; I still have time for salvation. If I do not know the Lord, I still have time to put things right. Do you understand what breath means? Because we always say many who went to sleep last night did not rise. So, what does it mean? Suddenly, there is judgment seat and if they were unprepared like most often are, unprepared; then, they have no praise. So, remember, life is an incredible gift that God gives us. So, forget the negatives; remember those lessons God wants us to remember. So, like we said, don't lose focus. One major struggle we all face, young or old is losing focus. Don't lose focus. Remember, keep your eyes on Christ. So, today, we are going to learn. Usually, Pastor Vijay teaches from the *Book of Proverbs* but today, I'm taking a diversion. I'm going to teach you from the *Book of Proverbs*, how for this new year if we have time, on the tenth day, we can make ten resolutions. God's resolutions for us.

First, let's look at the introduction. Let's look at the introduction of *Proverbs 3:1-2*. This is the preamble, or the introduction to this proverbs and God. Don't think about Solomon writing but God telling us. He used the pen of Solomon but it's God speaking to His children when He uses the term 'son', He means daughters too. So, don't feel offended by the Word, He means all of you too. "My Son, My daughter do not forget My law. Don't forget." There are somethings we need to forget, somethings we need to remember.

Proverbs 3:1-2

¹ My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; ² For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.

If you look at it, this is the introduction to this *chapter 3* of *Proverbs*. Every one of us, every human being, saved or unsaved, everybody longs for these things. Long life and peace – everybody longs for it. "Lord, I want to live long and I want a peaceful life." NIV will use the term prosperity. Everybody longs for long life, for peace and for prosperity. God also says, "That is My desire for you too, that you have long life, you have peace and you have prosperity." That is the desire. That's what the Apostle John also in the New Covenant will write in *3 John 1:2*,

3 John 1:2

² Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

He says, "The key to this is your soul prospering." If your soul prospers remember the soul food is the Word of God and obedience to the Word of God. He says, "If your soul prospers, you can actually prosper in other things also." But if your soul doesn't prosper, even if you prosper in all the other things, you still will be destroyed or wasted away and we know that from Israel's history. So, this is man's desire, and this is God's desire for all His children too, that we prosper; that we live long, we live in peace and prosper in all things under normal circumstances, unless you are chosen to go through persecution and die as a martyr. Now, we will look at it as a tragedy but now. If you ask soldiers, you will see, the highest honor in the army is given to the martyrs. So, the highest honor in the Kingdom of God where we were all enlisted as a soldier is to die for the Lord. So, it is not a bad thing, it is an honor. So, we have to see everything from God's perspective. But God says, if you look *Proverbs 3:1-2*. If He says, this has to happen. God actually set ten spiritual laws. These are His spiritual laws, if you go through *Proverbs 3*, He sets ten spiritual laws. He says "This is My desire." but desire in itself will not come to pass. If horses had wings, we would fly, but that's just a desire. Desire doesn't take us anywhere. Desire has to move into action. So, Scripture here will say ten principles from *Proverbs 3*. First, we will now go to, after seeing 1 and 2, we will go to verse 3, 4. Let's read 3, 4, this is the first principle.

Proverbs 3:3-4

³ Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, ⁴ And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.

First thing he says, "Don't let go of mercy and truth!" Never forget mercy and truth? You see, we will never know how much dependent we are on mercy. The problem is – we will never realize our need for mercy unless we encounter truth. Most people are not aware of their need for mercy, it's because they are not aware of the truth and God says, "Don't let these two forsake you." Be merciful and you shall obtain mercy, be unmerciful. The very moment I am unmerciful, that means I haven't judged myself, I haven't see the truth about myself. That is when I am unmerciful. So, remember, when I am not showing mercy, it is not a judgment. I'm not talking about a judge sitting in a position. I'm not talking about that. In general, day-to-day life, if I don't show mercy to Peter, I'm not actually judging Peter, I'm actually judging myself. I'm unmerciful to him because I haven't seen the truth about myself, about how merciful God has been to me. I'm not aware of my own failings, my own failures, my own sins. That's what God is talking about that unmerciful servant to whom the master had forgiven a huge amount and then he goes and picks somebody who owes him a small amount and doesn't show any mercy at all. So, this is what God is talking about. First rule – He says, "If you really want to prosper, if you really want to live long, if you really want to live in peace, if you really want to live in God's kind of prosperity where your soul prospers, He says the first rule is this – "Do not forsake mercy and truth." It's not just be casually attached to it, bind them around your neck. Be very careful about the words you say because people sometimes say, "I will never forgive that person!" What if, suddenly, you hear the Spirit of God whispering one last time in your ears, "You will never receive mercy again." You don't want to hear that, right? God says, "These two things, if ever decide one day to make two lockets, write one mercy and one truth." He says, "Bind them around your neck." He says, "It's not just a casual attachment." He says, "We should be attached to these – to mercy and to truth." God's people should be a set of people who are addicted to truth, and the pursuit of truth, not the truth about. Like scientist are interested in the truth about, or criminal detectives. No! Truth about ourselves and the truth about God because God is truth.

And we know, by now, from our study of the Scripture that God will allow people to perish only because of one reason – they did not receive the love of truth. It's not that they did not receive the truth; they did not receive the love of truth. There is a difference between these two. Receiving truth and receive the love of truth. I will put it in example, in which young people will understand. Let us say, Sunday, you all finish Church, go to GSS, you had your lunch and you go to Alwal football ground and you played cricket. You like cricket, you played cricket. But one among you is caught by the bug called cricket. Now, he's thinking, eating, drinking, dreaming cricket and before you know, his entire mind is consumed by cricket and he decided, "This is what I'm going to choose as my career." All of us received cricket; one received the passion for cricket. That's what Bible talks about. The love of truth. Only to those people God can continuously keep speaking on an ongoing process. So, till the end, God could speak to Jacob. Till the end, God could speak to David. Till the end, God could speak to Moses because these were people who really understand. Without the pursuit of truth, I can never know Him

because He is truth. Sometimes, we get so casual about our salvation because we think about salvation as relocating – “When I die, I will go to heaven.” We are very casual about it. We never connect salvation with the Person of God, where God says, “I am your salvation.” So, if we do not receive the love of truth, somewhere on the way, we stop our journey. So, God says, “One of the first resolutions you make is this – bind mercy in your dealings with others, mercy and in your dealing with self, truth” in your dealing with others, mercy; in your dealings with yourself, truth. Bind this around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. Yes, you all have your diaries and you have all your books and pens but God says, “That is excellent! But write it on the tablet of your heart.” Ask the Holy Spirit. In the New Covenant, in the *Book of Hebrews*. God says, “He will give us a new heart and write His law in our hearts.” When He writes His law in our hearts, what is the first thing He writes? Mercy and truth. Be merciful and love truth. And then, He says, “If you choose this route every day,” He says, “you will find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and in the sight of man.” Now, we know about favor and high esteem with man. You don’t need mercy and truth for that. There are lots of ways you can impress man but God says, “If you have this as your first principle, you will find favor and high esteem with God and in the process, God will touch the hearts of men too, that you will have favor and high esteem with men too.” That is why and like we keep telling, you read the twelve chapters of the *Book of Daniel*, kings come, kings go but there is one man who will stand before every king because he was held with high esteem by God. Therefore, he was held in high esteem by men. So, God says, “This is actual spiritual principle for long life, with success.” He says, “This is the first principle.” Keep that in your heart, keep that in your mind.

Now, we go to resolution number 2.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Like you have heard it many times, English classes. Here, I’ve taught you English too, right? You’ve learnt your English too. Whenever you read Scripture, you will see God will always have two parts. One – He will say what we should do and the second part – what we should not do. Usually, we take only one part and that too, casually and the second part, we avoid. First thing, God says, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart.*” All your heart and second – He says, “*Do not lean on your own understanding.*” With God, the thing is that one will only work if two is also applied. You cannot try to. No, no, no; we need to be rational human beings and try to balance between trusting God and my understanding. God says, “It won’t work.” It may work for a season after that, it will fail. It will not work. Trust in the Lord, with all your heart, in the Lord, why? You have to trust in the honesty, in the integrity, in the reliability, in the faithfulness of God. You have to trust. God is not going to reveal Himself completely to any man but we begin with the premise that God can be trust because He is God. Why do we speak so much and teach so much about God and the ways of God with man? So that we can trust Him. To see actually the God who dealt with Adam is the same God who is dealing with everybody through Scripture. His ways have never changed, never changed. He is always the same. Everybody here is trying to find something that doesn’t change because everything is changing. We ourselves are changing one way or the other. The only one who does not change is God. So, God says, “When you trust in the Lord, you are trusting in His honesty, that God will always be honest with you.” Like I said, when you go to a doctor, you want the doctor to be honest with you. You don’t want him to flatter you. When you go to a lawyer, you want the lawyer to be honest to you, right? When you go to God, do you want God to be honest with you? Most people don’t want God to be honest with them. That is why we say ‘amen’ and get up quickly. If we tarry a little, He will speak to us and we may not be very happy with God because God is very honest, He’s absolutely honest with us. He is honest, you can never question His integrity; meaning – He will never take a bribe and change His judgment, “I’m not a God who takes a bribe!” He is absolutely reliable. If He has said something in your life and you hang on to it, it will come to pass, because He is reliable. And He’s faithful. So, when Scripture says, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart.’ As we grow into another year, our trust in God also must increase and therefore, though God’s promises are great, He also pushes us to greater challenges to see whether we trust in Him or not.

So, you see, in the Old testament, a man like Moses for eighty years. He’s pushing to the limits. But ultimately, when he finishes his race, his final song is “Ascribe greatness to the Lord. All His ways are good.” Absolutely. There’s no shadow of turning with Him. Absolutely. All His ways are right. It doesn’t look physically that everything went right with Moses, but that does not mean there is anything wrong with the way God dealt with Him. He realizes, “You know what? God of my fathers who saved me from the watery grave in the Nile. Till the age of 120, every way He dealt with me was absolutely true

to His character. He was honest. He was true. He was faithful. He dealt with me honestly, with integrity, and judged me according to His righteousness. All that has happened to me in my life is perfectly fine. There's not an issue with the Person of God." That's what it means trusting God with all our heart and His faithfulness and His integrity. And Scripture says, "Lean not on your understanding." Our understanding is very limited. We don't even have a three-dimensional view. We only have a single dimensional view of every issue. Only God has a complete picture of every issue. Therefore, God says, "In any situation in life, any decision you have to make, don't lean on your understanding." Lot of young people, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, so many of you will make decisions about courses, about careers, about marriage, about jobs. So many! God says, "You know what? Don't lean on your understanding. Don't." Lean on to God. Because our understanding is very very limited. Our perspective is very limited. Our view is very restricted. Very restricted. In *1 Corinthians 13:9*, says,

1 Corinthians 13:9

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

Even the prophet who prophesies only sees in part. You go to the prophet because you see nothing. And the prophet, by the gift of God, sees a part. So, he can only prophesy in part. The rest is still with God, hidden in God. You don't know nothing about this situation. You go to a prophet, he sees 10%; 90% is still hidden. But at least, you got 10% to start with. When you have a puzzle when you have put 10%, the others start taking shape. Right? So, we only see in part. Even a prophet sees only in part. And in *verse 12*,

1 Corinthians 13:12

¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face...

Do you know? None of us have actually never seen our face well? Because in every mirror and every photograph our face is inverted. You look at it, the other fellow is looking at us not the way we look at him. Can you ever see yourself like this? No, you cannot. Even in a mirror, you don't see yourself clearly. Only God sees us. We see dimly.

...dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Meaning – we actually don't even know ourselves. That day we'll look back and say, "This is what I am." How many of you have read that Charles Dicken's book on that Christmas (A Christmas Carol)? Do you remember the three ghosts? The three ghosts have to come and take him out to show Mr. Scrooge what he really is and what people really think about him. And he thought he knew everything about himself and it was a real eye opener. That's why God says, "Don't lean on your understanding." Because our understanding is faulty. Because our education system is faulty. You see, it is the education system of the fallen man, rooted in sin. God says, "Don't lean on your understanding." Don't lean. I'm not talking about the daily decisions you make. I'm talking really about life. And God says, "Second fundamental rule is this:"

Proverbs 3:5

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

Don't lean on your understanding. Always seek God. Always seek counsel from His word. Always seek godly counsel. Godly counsel, not just counsel. Teenagers are like Absalom. They will always seek the counsel of their peers and they will die. Remember Solomon's son? He also sought the counsel of his own age group. Then, what happened? He also died. God never says, "Seek counsel." He says, "Seek godly counsel." People whom you know are very sure of, that they know God and knows God's ways, not just somebody who has got white hair, no. they are plenty of people on the road with white hair and age. They will say, "I have fifty years of experience." They don't. They have one year's experience, same experience over and over again. They don't. Scripture is talking about godly counsel. Seek godly counsel. Lean not on your own understanding. If you go to the second part of verse 6, Scripture says,

Proverbs 3:6

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

He didn't say in certain ways. Almost all ways. He says, "In all your ways, acknowledge Him." That's one of the reasons why again why we study the Word of God. Because Scripture says in the *Book of Isaiah*, "My ways!" Who knows His ways? Does

anybody know His ways? Does education all our degrees give understanding about His ways? No. Why do you feel guilty when you come to Church? Because you know, I know, we know, that our ways and His ways didn't tally three days into the week. Why do people feel guilty in the Church and feel good in the world? "No, I don't want to go to Church because I want to feel good." His ways. His ways are far higher than our ways. That's why we know now Moses, incredibly educated man in the wisdom of Egypt, stands before God and prays. What does he pray? "God, show me! Teach me Your ways. Teach me ways." The psalmist David will pray, if I'm right, in *Psalms* 25:4, he will say, "Teach me Your ways. Show me Your paths." Because God's ways and God's paths are completely different. We need to pray and we need to acknowledge Him constantly. If you fail, the only reason we fail is because we do not acknowledge Him and His ways. So, God says, "You failed. So, come back and receive mercy and get back onto that way. Get back on to that way." Why? Because said this. It's very dangerous. Jesus said this in *Matthew* 7:13-14, He said,

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ ***"Enter by the narrow gate; (why?) for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*** (He says, "Many go by the broad way." But He said,) ¹⁴ ***Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life...***

Why is it difficult? Let me ask you this question; not the students, but those who are working. All those who are working, tomorrow, you go back to work. When you go back to your company your manager says, "Don't take a single decision without checking with me." Is suddenly tomorrow the job easy? No, it is difficult. Because you realize – in these eight hours I work, ten hours I work, I have to make so many decisions and he said 'don't make a single decision without checking with me.' That, he tells to new comers. Over a period of time, once you have continuously understood and obeyed his instructions, the instructions become part of you. That's what he's talking about. When the gate is narrow and the gate is very difficult which leads to life. It's very difficult. What are we after? We are after eternal life. Jesus says,

...and there are few who find it.

Jesus said, "Few will find it. But many will go in by it." Many will go through by the broad way that leads to death. Few will go through the difficult way that leads to life. The devil wants to lead everybody into the broad way. Everybody into the broad way. Even Jesus. The devil tried to lead even Jesus by appealing to his senses into the broad way. What was Jesus' answer every time? He said, "It is written." What does it mean? "You're showing Me this." My Father says, "This is the way. You're telling Me this. My Father says, 'This is the way.' You're telling Me this. My Father says this. I will stick to My Father's way. I'll stick to My Father's way." And to men and women sitting here, married men and women who are sitting here, I'm speaking to the men. Not to the women, but to the men. What happens is, we selectively use Scripture. Men will tell women, Christian married men. Non-Christian married men don't say that. Christian married men say, "Submit to me." Why? "It is written." He selectively uses that Scripture without himself submitting to the laws of God, which actually gives him the authority. Where does your authority come from? Your authority comes from that you are a man who is submitted to God's Word. That's why we get so offended when we see police men breaking the law. When the police men, you know people will put on WhatsApp and all this guy driving his bike with uniform and no helmet. If you and I drive, nobody is going to put it on the WhatsApp. But when you see a police guy knowing that he will stop you tomorrow on the road and give you a challan for not wearing a helmet while he himself goes without a helmet. Are we getting it? The picture? So, God is saying when we seek the ways of God, we seek the ways of God. We are also constantly walking and seeking God's mercy and truth to stay in that way. That is where our authority comes. I'm not speaking to the women. The same thing applies to the women too. Everything is dependent upon this – do we acknowledge His ways in our life? Do we acknowledge? The second principle God is talking about.

What is the first one? Mercy and truth. Second one – trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge and accept His authority in all, because this is something which you will constantly face. Because people will use authority to make you obey without coming under the Word of God. Why I'm saying this is that, if you go to a court, imagine you're a criminal or not a criminal whatever there is a case against you, when you're sentenced, does the judge say that I feel you should go to jail? Have you ever heard of a judgment like that? What does he say? Under section so and so. "Under section so and so, I hereby, judge you, sentence you." There is a section he refers to always. You cannot have a blanket authority when you're not able to refer to a section. Understand because husbands, wives, employers, parents. In India, that is one thing you will constantly hear when the marriage comes, "You have to obey me."

Why? Because your bible says, "Honour your father and mother." Does the Bible say that? No. God says, "When you are young, honour your father and mother." But Scripture says, "You obey God." When the father or the mother himself/herself is walking in absolute violation of God's commands, and never submits to God's way, he has lost his moral authority to ask his children to obey him or her. But the children have been given the guidance by God to honour them. Honour them, but obey God. Understand how it works. When we actually see His ways, that is what He says, "This way is very difficult." Very difficult.

By the time Enoch walked this way and reached life, he was alone. Everybody left him. He had no father with him; no mother with him; no wife with him; nobody children with him; nobody left. But he reached life. God said, "You have eternal life. Come with Me home." Jesus said, "It is not easy. Salvation is easy. Entering through the gate. After that, it is difficult." It gets more and more difficult on the way and God demands. He says, "If you want to go further into the life then, Jesus is asking us, "Don't lean onto your understanding. Acknowledge Me in all your ways." Otherwise, He says, "You'll always be in bondage. Always be a prisoner."

Rule number three. Or are we at three? Rule number 3: verses 7&8.

Proverbs 3:7-8

⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. ⁸It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.

Don't be wise in your own eyes. Why? In *1 Corinthians 1:18-19*, Scripture says,

1 Corinthians 1:18

¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Can you connect these two? My question to us is this: how do you know you're saved? Or why are we saved? Because of the Cross. If there is no Cross, will we be saved? Is there any salvation without the Cross? Jesus came. Lived. Died on the Cross. Therefore, we are saved. There's no other salvation unless in the Cross. We're saved because of the Cross. How do we know we are being saved? Because of the cross. These are not the same. We know we are saved, because of the work He did on the Cross and we believed Him. We know we are being saved because of the work the Cross does in us. One is what He did on the Cross or what the Cross did on Him. The other is – what the cross does in us. That's how we are being saved. If the Cross has stopped working in us, we are not being saved anymore. Okay? We know the antibiotics has failed. It's not working anymore. The antibiotics have failed. It's not working anymore. Immediately, what do we know? The patient is deteriorating, it's not working anymore. Look at *Galatians 2:20*.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

He loved me and gave Himself of me is the Cross and what He did on the Cross for me. And if the Cross is not doing that, what does it mean? Somewhere, the progress in my salvation has stopped. I'm now living for myself. I'm leaning on to my understanding. I'm very wise in my own eyes. Christ has stopped living in me. And what is taking place? Death is actually taking place. Because salvation is an ongoing process. We are saved because of the Cross and we are being saved also because of the Cross. It has to work. That is why we realise; that's why Jesus has a problem with the fig tree. The purpose of the fig tree is not to give a shade but to give a fruit. If there is no fruit, He says, "Cut it out." So, how do you know that you are growing in your salvation? Because the Scripture talks about the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives this wonderful and beautiful illustrations that even a child can understand. You see, a bud when you see a small fruit, when you see the fruit growing, its ripening. So, the question you ask is that: as I am growing in my salvation, am I a more patient person, am I a more loving person, am I more merciful person? Am I a kinder person? Am I growing in those things? If I am not growing, then life has gone still. Like Shakespeare says, "You've only grown old but you haven't grown up."

That is the work of the Cross. This will happen only when the Cross works in us and when self slowly starts dying, the life of Christ starts growing. That is what Scripture is talking about – do not be wise in your own eyes. We don't want to be wise in our own eyes. We want the wisdom of God. We want to, as we are growing in our understanding of God, that it is His life that being manifested. 2018, 10 days, we look back and say 'yes'. I'm not saying we won't fall. That doesn't matter but in other areas of life, we see we actually growing and sometimes, God allows people whom He love to fall so that, through their fall, you can make them more kind and merciful. So, one of the kindest, merciful, loving person in the Bible you will see is David. He is an incredibly kind and merciful. Because he failed, he may have experienced the mercy of God and he rose above his sin, but his character was changed to be like God – kind, compassionate and merciful man. So, don't look at your sin because the Cross has taken care of your sin. See from there and learn, "Lord, You showed me mercy. Now, Lord, help me to be also a person of mercy. You were kind to me. Help me also, O Lord, to be kind. You are not angry. You didn't deal with me. So, help me to have that heart of God so that I grow. You were so patient with me, O Lord. Sixteen months, I was in the Philistines' camp, doing atrocious things; yet, when I came to my knees, I didn't not come to my knees I look back and see You brought me to my knees. You burnt Ziklag. Therefore, I came to my knees and when I came to my knees, when I cried out, You didn't say 'those are fake tears, because of some...' You didn't say anything like that. 'You were forced to get your knees; now, you cry'. You didn't say anything like that. You were kind and I asked You gave me an answer and You gave me victory." David never forgets these things. That is why, when he becomes the king of Jerusalem, king of Israel, the first thing he asked is that – is there anybody from king Saul's household, my enemy who pursued me all these years, is there anybody from his household?" Why? "I want to show kindness." Why? "I remember his father was very kind to me. I want to show kindness. They are all dead and gone but I want to show kindness to somebody." That is what God is talking about – are we growing in those things? If we are not growing in those things, ten days in, we need to ask God, "Change me, Lord. Change me."

Fear the Lord and depart from evil. Jesus taught us to pray something, He said in the Lord's prayer, "Lead Me not into temptation but deliver Me from evil." I know you know it or maybe, you've forgotten it. Sin and evil are not the same. We are all sinners; everybody sins but all are not evil. I don't believe I see any evil person here. I hope not. We fall in sin. Occasionally, we stumble into sin. We are tempted into sin but evil people deliberately harm others. When I sin, I primarily harm myself. When I turn evil, I harm others. That is the difference. When Abel sacrifices and he was accepted and jealousy started eating up Cain's heart, God said, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? You do right and you will also be accepted." Because sin is crouching. Why? "He wants to overpower and make you evil." He didn't deal with that and he became evil and because of that, he murdered his brother. As long as Judas was stealing from the money bag, he was only a thief, he was a sinner but when he betrayed Jesus, he became evil. He sold Jesus for money. So, remember, when I sin, we usually harm ourselves and God says, "Let's pray this prayer – O Lord, lead me not into situations where I fall into temptation and sin, but become evil and harm others. That's what God is talking about. Fear God and depart from evil. The Pharisees and the high priests were evil. They were not sinners; they are more than that. They plotted, planned and murdered and the destruction of Jesus Christ and they were evil, and God says, "Fear God and depart from evil." Do you remember today's daily reading you got? Pastor from Cuba; five years in prison; what are the lessons we learn? Not to fear, not to hate, not to harm. Don't harm others. We sin but don't harm others. Don't go in your sin and harm other people. Don't do that. Because when we move from sin and evil, we knowingly, deliberately harm others and God says, "Fear God, depart from evil," and He says, "You keep this and it will be well to your flesh and strength to your bones." Evil people don't thrive. They will have never peace. Inside, the bones will be rotting away. The mind is eaten away; the body gets eaten away because He says, "It won't last."

But on the other hand, if you choose not to be wise in your own eyes, you say, "Lord, give me the wisdom," that's what David was – he was never wise in his own eyes. He had many opportunities to destroy his enemies but he was never wise in his own eyes. Even his soldiers said, "You got your enemy in your hand. Finish him off." He said, "No, I will not do it. I have the power, yes. But I will not exercise it. I will not become evil. I ain't going to do it." So, Saul could never sleep because of the young boy, but the young boy could sleep even though the army was against him. The entire king and army was searching him, he is always one step ahead. Why? He says, "I will not do evil." It will be hell for you. The minute he did evil when he harmed and killed Uriah, he harmed the woman and the husband, he will say, "My bones are wasting away." He killed him, murdered him. That's what God is talking about. So, learn fundamental principles in God's Kingdom and what He is talking about. He says, "You can live long and you can live well." Learn from these lessons, forsake it and move into God's destiny for us.

When it comes to the fourth one which is in *verses 9-10*,

Proverbs 3:9-10

⁹Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.

Honor God. If you consistently put that harvest of giving himself whatever situation he was in, thirteen years later, he is prince of Egypt. When did he plant? He consistently planted the same seed in his father's house, in Potiphar's palace, in the prison. It didn't matter what location the devil kept on changing. God allowed it. The seed never kept changing. The seed was still the same. What he was sowing was the spiritual seed. He served his father in his father's house. He served his master in his master's house. He served the prison warden in the prison. He kept on serving the same way. He kept on giving himself. He never went into depression, discouragement, anger, bitterness, nothing. "It's all here for a purpose and I'm going to keep on sowing my seed," and he received a harvest. Be consistent that the seeds you sow are the same. Spiritual seeds. And God says, "You will receive your harvest and you will receive."

Fifth one – *verses 11 and 12*,

Proverbs 3:11-12

¹¹My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; (then, He puts this wonderful rider there,)

¹²For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.

Only if you are truly really spiritual, you will get it. For me, personally, the greatest sign of God's love in my life is when He chastens me and when He chastens me hard, I know He delights in me. You want God to delight in you? Children don't like discipline. That's not what the Bible says.

...do not despise the chastening of the Lord...

See, God doesn't have a stick but He uses people and circumstances as His sticks. He allows it and we don't fight that. What happens if you fight this stick? Will you be disciplined? Are you getting the lesson behind the discipline? No. You are getting whacked and you are fighting the stick. So, your mind is always working to fight the hand of discipline. So, you are not learning the lesson of discipline. That's what God is telling Saul, "Saul, Saul, you are fighting My hand. These gods were to bring you to My hand. You are still fighting it. You are fighting My hand. When My whole hand was to bring you to the point to learn the lesson, all your pharisaical perfectness is worth nothing. I have brought you to this point." Don't despise the Lord's discipline.

Now, young ones sitting over here, God will use people whom He has put over you – for the girls, Sister Mary, Sister Thelma, Sister Esther will tell you, "Peep!" I don't know whether you have a whistle but, "Wake up in the morning!" Boys, Peter Anna, Aaron Anna, Sammy Anna, whoever – "Wake up." But if you really understand the discipline behind that and learn as practice, a day will come when you will leave these homes and you are on your own. If you have got the lesson behind that, you will automatically wake up. You will maximize your time because you have learnt the discipline behind that chastening. There is a chastening and there is a lesson God wants us to learn behind it and that's why He says,

...do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction;

Don't detest. People detest God's correction often. It's like children. Children are like that. They get grumpy; they scowl. "I won't talk to Papa; I won't talk to Mama. I don't want!" God says, "You are childish!" God says, "No." Don't despise. Don't detest His correction. Don't. That's what happened to Cain. Cain didn't like God's correction. "Your punishment is too much for me!" "Your brother is lying dead over there. And I just put a small sentence. What? You will wander." He said, "My punishment." That is how you know your spiritual discernment. When you see the tough situations which have come into your life because of God's chastening hand, do you see the punishment or do you learn the lesson? Those who never learnt the lesson are always looking at the punishment and they will never learn the lesson. They go from bad to worse, to worse and then, one day, they wake up and it's the Day of Judgment. All the lessons God tried teaching Lot, he never learnt. He's taken captive; seeing there, this is what happens when you leave the house of God and the man of God, this is what

happens. You are in captive, you are in chains, your uncle has come, rescued you. You've seen it all. Nothing makes any difference. He keeps on going back. Then, one day, the Day of Judgment comes. It is too late. He is rescued from the fire. Only he. The rest have gone because he never learnt the lesson. The same thing with the kings of Israel – king Saul, Ahab – all these kings; you look at God's mercy and God is an incredible merciful God. Ahab's son is there. His name is Ahaziah. He falls from lattice. Like a wooden framework, he falls through that and gets injured. He knows about his father, about Elijah. His father is dead; Elijah is alive. He sends to Ekron, to Baal to find out whether he will be healed." God sends a word to that man saying, "Is it not that there is a prophet or God in Israel that you go to Baal?" What a merciful God! This man was wicked and evil. Still, God says, "Do you have to go there? Can't you come to Me?" And he is so angry, he sends fifty soldiers with a captain to get that prophet. "Go, get the prophet." That's when Elijah says, "These guys haven't come with good intentions. God, let fire come and consume them." Fifty gone. Does the king's heart change? No. He sends fifty more. Fire falls. They are also gone. He sends another fifty more and that captain is a nice man. He says, "Please, lord. Don't kill me." But ultimately, what does Scripture say? God's Word came through – You will die in your bed. You won't recover because you will never accept God's discipline. You will die in your way." He says, "You will die." That's what God is talking about. Even Ahaziah, God loves because he is the king of Israel and God is the God of Israel. He never sends a prophet to the king of Babylon and king of Persia, king of India – nothing. He says, "You, I love because I have a covenant with your father, Abraham." You forget, God correct only those whom He loves. So, this year, make a decision – "Lord, I will not despise Your discipline. I will not resent Your rebuke."

How many of you know one sister called Bala Samson? She is here in Hyderabad. She is a wonderful lady. She teaches well, really well. I've never heard her but I've read some of her articles. In one of her articles, she says, "This thumb is your Pastor, is your Church that disciplines you and those who do not like that discipline are like Adino-Bezek – they cut the thumb off and they walk in life with no discipline." You take your thumb off, you can't hold anything. It doesn't matter how wonderful these other four fingers are; that hand is useless. I was casually reading and this morning, I saw her speaking – small article somewhere where she was saying, "We hate the hand of discipline in our lives." God disciplines through His servants and Israel and Judah always rejected the counsel of God. They despised.

On the other hand, God says, "Look at the benefit of listening and learning from My discipline." In *Proverbs 1:23*,

Proverbs 1:23

²³ Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

I would my spirit and then, suddenly, my word will become very interesting to you. And then, you realize – God is speaking to me. That's all.

²³ Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit...

On the other hand, if we continuously keep disregarding what God says, God says, "This will be your end."

Proverbs 1:25-30

²⁵ Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke,

Now, this is talking about king Saul's kind of people; not king David's kind of people. Don't feel condemned. Everyone who is struggling and crying over your sin, you are not in this category.

²⁵ Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, ²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity;

"One day, your calamity will come; harvest will come. Harvest or calamity. That day, what will I do? I will laugh at your calamity."

...I will mock when your terror comes, ²⁷ When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. ²⁸ "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer...

The Philistines have surrounded Saul. He is desperate. Everything he knows, according to Scripture, he is trying. God says, "No answer." God says, "You go die. I'm not answering you. That's it, Saul. I gave you so many chances. You just threw My Word behind. You just disdained on My prophets. You tried to kill every voice I spoke in your life."

...They will seek me diligently, (suddenly, in calamity, they will seek Me,) **but they will not find me.** (These are calamity-seekers. They only seek God in calamity. God says, "You will not.") ²⁹ **Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord,** ³⁰ **They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke.**

Therefore, God says, "Do not despise the Lord's discipline." Don't discipline when God is chasing you. So, Uzziah will die a leper. Ahaziah will die in his bed. So many kings of Israel will die in their sickness when their prophets, anointed prophets are walking through the land with healing under their wings. But they will all die the way they are because God says, "That's the way they lived. They will not turn; they will not change." So, that's the way they will die. So, God gives us the fifth principle in *Proverbs 3* – to live a long life and prosperous. He says, "Don't despise My discipline when it comes. Humble your heart, turn at My reproof and I will give you My Spirit. I will keep on pouring My Spirit and My Word will become life in you."

And then, we will look at the sixth and we will stop at six. Or, we will stop at five because we will, maybe, look at the next five next week. Agli hafte baki baath. There are ten. But let us just quickly go through this so that we will know. We don't go into six because six is very large. You have to seek, search and find wisdom and gain understanding. Wisdom and understanding. Wisdom, knowledge, understanding – God says, "You have to seek, you have to search and you have to find it." And if you don't, God says, "Ultimately, again, your ultimate life in eternity's weighing scale will be a waste." It will be a waste. We need to have spiritual wisdom, spiritual understanding. We all have. Everybody have. You have different people working in different processes. You have understanding in your process. Therefore, you are able to work in that company. If you don't have that understanding, they won't take you in that company. But God's Kingdom is not a company; it's a spiritual entity; it's a spiritual Kingdom. God says, "You need that spiritual wisdom, spiritual knowledge and spiritual understanding." And if you don't, He says, "In My Kingdom, ultimately, you will be useless." We will like the man who was given a talent and he hid it and what was his condemnation? Was he a bad man? He says, "You are a wicked, lazy fellow. You are unprofitable." You may be profitable for the nation of India. But totally, unprofitable for God's Kingdom. God says, "I want you to be profitable for My Kingdom." It doesn't matter how profitable you are to the society, how profitable you are to your company or your institution, God says, "If you are not profitable to Me, ultimately, you did not have My wisdom. You did not seek My knowledge. You did not seek My understanding."

We will stop there and we will come back, God-willing, next week. Let's look to the Lord.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just thank You, Lord. We just praise You; we just worship You, Lord. Thank You, Father. Thank You, Lord. Father, teach us, Lord. Where we have failed in 2017, even in these 10 days, we come to You, knowing You are a merciful God and we are alive for the very reason because You are merciful. You didn't want us to die in Your judgment, in Your wrath. So, You extended Your hand of mercy. You kept all of us alive so that we would continue to obtain and continue to seek the precepts of Thy Kingdom and keep those precepts and walk in Your Kingdom which is of power, Lord. I commit Your people into Thy hands and all Your children who came, Lord. I pray You continue to teach us, continue to speak to us. As we turn away at Your rebuke, Lord, from our sin; not from You; continue to pour Your Spirit into us and make known Your Words to us, Lord. Even when we go back, let Your words ring in our ears, O Lord. Thank You, Father. Thank You, Lord. We praise You; we worship You; we glorify You, Lord. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.