

Proverbs Chapter 3

As we follow along with this young man from Chapter 2, we have reached the stage in his life when he is out of the door, facing life, temptation, and deception head on. The only question now is will he follow the wisdom and dictates of the Word of God or allow himself to be carried along by the wiles of the ignorant?

Even though we are later told in the New Covenant that wisdom is indeed the embodiment of Christ, Wisdom now presents itself in the feminine form. I thought about this gender problem a while and finally realized this truth; wisdom protects and watches over her young like a mother, while the male gender boasts a warrior mentality, and more often than not, we plunge boldly ahead, sword and shield in hand. 1st Cor. 1:30: *God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom.* [NLT]

Compiler's note: I have a tagline that says, WE ARE NOT HUMAN BEINGS GOING THROUGH A TEMPORARY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. WE ARE SPIRITUAL BEINGS GOING THROUGH A TEMPORARY HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

Its purpose is to define the truth about the Christian walk. It is a lifestyle; having received the forgiveness mandated by God and Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are baptized in the Spirit. This was a point in our lives, if sincere, we became as those who are truly born anew. We became spirit beings going through a human life, who will depend on Christ's Spirit to guide us in wisdom.

Proverbs 3:1-2: *My son, do not forget my teaching But let your heart keep my commandments;^[2] For length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you.*

➤ **The love of the parents is evident as they implore their young progeny to walk in an upright manner, remembering the lessons and _____s_ of his childhood.**

- **In our day we know that stress is a killer. Adhering to the Word of God will not only remove stress but will add a very much sought after _____ to our lives.**
- **But the mentors say something more profound here; the young adult is to keep the commandments that he was taught by the guidance of his _____. The offspring 's motive for obedience to the commandments is not a duty or obligation; rather it is a form of respect for the parents, instituted by love. It is the same loving devotion that we feel toward our Lord Jesus, which inspires and stimulates us to remain faithful to His wisdom. Psalm 119:11; Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee. [NASB]**

Dr. McGee (**upon whose outline I base this study**) brings up the story of Ezra. Ezra was a young priest who had remained in Babylon after the first group of captives was released to return to Jerusalem. There he practiced and studied the Law. In verse 9 of Ezra 7, we are told that he also departed, leaving Babylon, *because the good hand of his God was upon him.* ^[10] *For Ezra had set his **heart** to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His **statutes** and ordinances in Israel.* Ezra 7:9- [NASB]

- **It wasn't because of a sense of duty or obligation that he went, it was because he had set his _____ to practice and teach God's _____ and ordinances to those who were living in Israel, in ignorance of the Word. He did it out of love for God and his fellow countrymen.**

In John 14:23, *Jesus answered and said . . . , "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My **word**; and My Father will **love** him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.* [NASB]



This is the only reason to keep the commandments and principles set forth in the Word of God. As God loved us and gave His Son as our Redeemer, out of for Him, we keep His _____ . It is not a duty or a burden! When I hear; "Oh! This is the cross that I must bear"; I want to say, "then lay it down, your effort is wasted." Matthew 11:28-30 records these words of Wisdom from our Lord; *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. [29] "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. [30] "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."* [NASB]

Of course, we recall the situation in which Peter found himself; denying knowing or being a follower of our Lord Jesus three times. After the resurrection Jesus met with the group as they were fishing. When they came ashore and were seated around a fire, Jesus confronted Peter! Not with words of condemnation like, "Hey Pete, would you mind explaining to me why you denied me"? Rather, by expressing His love and forgiveness for Peter, asking him if he would reciprocate by spreading Jesus gospel of hope, peace and forgiveness to others.

John 21:15-17: *After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," [16] Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then take care of my sheep," [17] Once more he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep". [NLT]*

Wisdom desires to protect!

Proverbs 3:3-4: *Do not let **kindness** and **truth** leave you; **Bind them around your neck**, Write them on the tablet of your **heart**.^[4] So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.*

➤ _____ of course, speaks of the Word of God; **"Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth".** John 17:17 [NASB]

➤ The word for kindness is the Hebrew word **cheched** (**kheh'-sed**) and is interpreted several ways depending on the context. It can mean favor, good deeds, loving kindness, or mercy. I would accept that the passage at hand wants us to apply it as defining an attitude of _____, allowing His Spirit to retrain and renew our minds [since the head and therefore the mind reside above the **neck**] so that our new godly nature defined as the tablets of our _____, come into agreement. When our minds and spiritual attitudes come into agreement, we will begin to walk out the gospel, and personally be able demonstrate the love of our Savior.

Proverbs 3:5: ***Trust** in the Lord with all your **heart**, and do not lean on your own understanding.^[6] In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths **straight**.*

➤ This passage is as familiar to us as John 3:16. I cannot tell you, in how many sermons I have heard this passage quoted, or how many times it has been quoted to me when I find myself in a tight space. The sad thing is that too often the one who quotes is often not a student of God's Word. They are simply parroting someone else and have no concept of how to flesh this passage out. Trusting God in all ways and learning to apply the Word is a lifestyle learned over time, sweat and tears. It is the difference between always living on the mountaintop, trusting in your wealth and your own wisdom, or experiencing God first hand, as He delivers us from perceivable disaster to a place of _____ and confidence, as our _____ is filled with peace and He

guides us along the _____ path toward the day of redemption.

Someone else put this principle into these poetic words; **'The will of God will never take you where the Grace of God will not protect you.'** As you'll remember, we are following the path of a young man as he begins his journey through life. Paul had a similar young apprentice by the name of Timothy whom he counseled in applications of the Word in ministry. His counsel included such dialog as this; *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.* 2nd Tim. 2:15 [NASB]

Our passage at hand cautions this young journeyman in the Word; *"and do not lean on your own understanding"*. Its application is found in a passage in Proverbs 28:26 *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.* [NASB]

The context of Matthew 6:22-23; is a contrast between a bond-servant of Jesus Christ and a worldly man, one whose eye is on wealth, power and position, rather than God. Jesus said; *"The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. [23] "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the **darkness!**"* [NASB]

- **When He said *But if your eye is bad*, His reference must point to a worldly man [one who chooses not to follow God's wisdom] who is wrong in his first principle; therefore, all of his reasonings and actions must be wrong. The principle can be equally applied to false religion; that which is conveyed as light, yet it is really thick _____.** How many are led off of the narrow way, onto the broad path that leads to destruction by a silver-tongued progenitor of human wisdom and cult theology?

[Proverbs 3:6] ***In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.***

Proverbs 3:7-8: *Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. ^[8] It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.*

- **When we stand firm on the principles found in His Word, then we will, out of awesome respect for our Lord, _____ from the enticements of evil. Have you ever met the thirty-year-old who demonstrates mental lapses similar to a person three times that age because of their drug dependency? Sin wreaks havoc on our bodies. A mantra that I try and live by is: “moderation in all things”, (and by the way, I fail often, especially during the holidays).**

Compiler’s Note: in a Google search the following statistic was recovered from a study by prostitutionresearch.com, 52% of the women stated that pornography played a significant role in teaching them what was expected of by pimps and customers alike. This statistic demonstrates that the sin involved in prostitution is not just one-sided; the women themselves are not the only guilty ones. Girls and women in prostitution have a mortality rate 40 times higher than the national average. (Results of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, 1985).

Proverbs 3:9-10: *Honor the Lord from your wealth, And from the first of all your *produce; ^[10] So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*

- **This brings us to the principle of the tithe! Our tithes and offerings are spiritual sacrifices that are offered by our commitment as bondservants, by faith, trusting in God as our protector and provider. It is not that we are giving or yielding 10% of our income, it is an understanding that our Lord allows us to use at our discretion, 90% of our _____ which was His to begin with. The tithe is a principle that transcends the Law. Scripture records in Genesis 28:22;**

Jacob understood this principle of the tithe more than 400 years before the covenant of Law, and others, even earlier than that; *This memorial pillar will become a place for worshipping God, and I will give God a tenth of everything he gives me.*" [NLT]

Our trust in returning the 10% is a mark of obedience that our God cherishes more than anything else. It is the sacrifice of ourselves, our time and our talents and treasure, as the gifts that he has given, *the first of all of our *_____*. These gifts are what our Lord uses to forward the cause of His kingdom as He prepares to separate for Himself a people, those with whom He will spend eternity. For our God does not wish *for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

Compiler's note: if tithing on our *produce bothers you, the Hebrew word is *t^ebuw'ah*, [*teb-oo-aw*] and can be translated as either income or produce, and used either literal or figuratively; basically, any increase or revenue.

This next proverb will address the meat of sanctification, but first some clarification. God has given us His Holy Spirit for course correction that we may reflect the image of His Son Jesus in all that we do. God knows that our naturally born old nature is inadequate for this task, so at Pentecost He sent His Spirit to indwell all who will accept the forgiveness offered through His mercy and Christ's propitiation [propitiation means **to appease or conciliate; Christ appeased the Father's wrath held against all sin.**]. We read in John 14:26; *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.* [NASB] John 16:8-10 continues; *"And He, when He comes, will **convict** the world concerning sin and **righteousness**, and **judgment**;* [9] *concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;* [10] *and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me;* [NASB]

- **All that we can do as Christ's ambassadors is to add flesh and blood to the voice of God's Holy Spirit while we walk out the gospel before the unsaved. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to _____ the unsaved world *concerning sin*, _____. As ambassadors it is our job to give out the Word concerning _____ and God's pending _____, which His indwelling Spirit will use in guiding and directing the path of the regenerate along the narrow way of Jesus.**

2nd Thessalonians' 2:13: *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through **sanctification** by the Spirit and faith in the truth.* [NASB]

- **Our salvation is a two-part deal! It is *salvation through sanctification*. First, we are made into clean vessels (forgiven, without sin), so that God can abide in us through His course correcting Holy Spirit, which is our _____ [Baptism with His Spirit for ongoing course correction]!**

Proverbs 3:11-12: *My son, do not reject the **discipline** of the Lord, Or **loathe** His reproof, ^[12] For whom the Lord loves He **reproves**, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.*

- **Our Lord _____ [*towkechah, to-kay-khaw*; to correct or chasten] those He loves, just as a human father would _____ his son. When a trial does come, look for God's purpose and change the way you think, rather than _____ it, as if it were punishment.**

Compiler's note: There is a difference between discipline and punishment and in our American justice system - we seem to have muddled the two. The purpose of discipline is to cause the recipient to change direction or course. This involves repentance, to change the way we are doing things. God loves us enough to continually discipline us through trials and conviction until we reflect the image of His son, He does not

punish us. Our justice system has devolved to a point of convoluted idiocy. Adult criminals are to be punished for their crimes. The purpose of punishment is to instill a fear of retribution, so that out of that fear they will refrain from similar behavior. Instead, we give them mini-hotel rooms; three squares a day, and full recreational facilities in hopes of reforming them. Children are to be reformed; mature adults are to be punished!

Apart from Christ, who has been more tested than Job {ee`jobe}? We are even told that Satan received permission to test him to the point of destroying all that he had. Yet Job 5:17-19 records this; "*But consider the joy of those corrected by God! Do not despise the chastening of the Almighty when you sin. ^[18] For though he wounds, he also bandages. He strikes, but his hands also heal. ^[19] He will rescue you again and again so that no evil can touch you.* ^[NLT]

Proverbs 3:13: *How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.*

➤ ***For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. . .***
1 Cor. 3:19 ^[NASB] The person who remains in the process of sanctification will find that we are _____, regardless of the situation that we may find ourselves in. As our naturally trained mind comes into agreement with the attributes of His Spirit, we find peace through _____.

1st Cor. 1:30: *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.* ^[NASB]

➤ **The principles of God, made available to us through Christ's Spirit that now indwells us, yields heavenly _____.**

Psalms 49:3: *My mouth will speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart will be understanding.* ^[NASB]

- **As we mature in Christ, our thought process must be continually checked by our new nature, our _____ attitudes. Only then we can use the Word of God stored in our minds, coupled with godly attributes, which can be then be applied to the daily situations that surround us**

Psalm 37:30: *The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.* ^[NASB]

- **As we gain understanding in our mind through the interpretation of His Spirit, we begin to change the way we think and modify our behavior. When that occurs, we will begin to express godly principles, _____ and _____ as we speak to others.**

Proverbs 3:14-15: *For its profit is better than the profit of silver, and its gain than fine gold. ^[15] She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire compares with her.*

- **Solomon, who has enjoyed the privilege of possessing everything that his eyes desired, has come to understand this truth; having the wisdom of Christ through the understanding offered by His Holy Spirit is more _____ than all of the gold, silver, or fine jewels, and nothing else that this world has to offer _____ to that.**

Compiler's Note. As I recall the words of Tevye, from the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, he was a poor Rabbi whose words reflected the goals of the naturally born man. In contrast, Solomon found that wealth is insignificant compared to our riches found in Christ.

" Dear God, you made many, many poor people. I realize, of course, that it's no shame to be poor. But it's no great honor either! So, what would have been so terrible if I had a small fortune?" "If I were a wealthy man, I wouldn't have to work hard."

Proverbs 3:16: [Wisdom and understanding] *Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ^[17] Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her **paths** are **peace**. ^[18] She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.*

➤ There is in our day a renowned golfer, who, in the past had always been viewed as a moral man. This man got caught in the snare that is common to young men and especially the well-to-do; wayward young ladies threw themselves at him and in weakness, he disregarded his marriage vows. Because he was famous and wealthy, he constantly faced the trap of the temptress; repentant and ashamed he could not find forgiveness in the religion that he professed. A popular TV commentator dared to suggest that if he would turn to Christ and follow the _____ of Christianity; he could not only find forgiveness, but _____ as well. In our post-Christian culture, this reporter was loudly taken to task. "How dare he suggest that his way is any better than another?"

➤ However, the commentator is correct, as we have already discovered. Wisdom is the personification of Jesus Christ. True wisdom, forgiveness, and peace can only be found through His propitiation, His Word, and through the course correction of His Holy Spirit. It is this path that will lead us into eternity; a path where we are able to take hold of the _____ of life.

Proverbs 3:19-20: *The Lord by **wisdom** founded the earth; by understanding, He **established** the heavens ^[20] By His knowledge the deeps were broken up, and the skies drip with dew.*



➤ I don't think I am being irreverent if I suggest that our God, the epitome of intelligence and _____, didn't just hang out,



doing nothing until he one day set our universe in motion and



_____ the heavens. I can picture him in a heavenly workshop designing the hummingbird or painting the butterfly, creating an



array of wildflowers and the creatures of the deep. We can only discover what he has already designed and created. Ask yourself, where did Orville's inspiration for the airplane wing come from? Obviously, God had already designed and placed it on the drawing board of life for an astute human to find and copy. The largest computer in our world cannot match the Neuro-fuzzy logic [the reasoning ability] of the computer contained in the mind of each person that walks upon this earth.

Proverbs 3:21-23: *My son, let them not depart from your sight; Keep sound wisdom and discretion, ^[22] So they will be life to your soul, and adornment to your neck. ^[23] Then you will walk in your way securely, and your foot will not stumble.*

- Our picture is still that of the young man starting off on his own, and of the father who gives cautioning counsel. When the father warns the son not to let Wisdom and understanding _____, he is implying that it will take diligent effort to _____ that path securely. The application for us is a deep meditation in the Word of God, which will give new _____ to our mindset.

Proverbs 3:24: *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

- The mind is a wonderful thing, but it doesn't ever seem to turn off especially if we are beset with a dilemma. But, as we mature in Christ we are filled with confidence that our Lord will work out all of our troubles, if only we remain submissive to Word and that through His indwelling Holy Spirit, our sleep will be _____ and restful.

Proverbs 3:25-26: *Do not be afraid of sudden fear, Nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; ^[26] for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.*

➤ I can only imagine what the passengers on the Air Bus felt the other day, as they circled Newark's Liberty Airport, waiting on the runway to be prepared for the inevitable, as the landing gear on their plane would not deploy. I imagine that for some they were filled with _____ fear as the captain called, "brace yourself" three times over the intercom.

➤ I am a pragmatist; as I write this, I sense a great testing is about to befall our nation and dramatically disrupt our comfortable way of life by an _____ of evil. For the person who trusts in our Lord, when the trial comes into full view, we will be able to display a _____ that will not only deliver us from the trap, but may well help others to avoid being _____, and bringing them into our fold.

Proverbs 3:27; *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to do it.*

➤ I live in a boating community where I very much enjoy the privilege that God has afforded me of sailing. Now my boat is small and rather plain, with no living facilities, but she is a nimble joy out on the water. Many in our community have much larger vessels, complete with all of the amenities found in a small hotel room. A Christian lady in our community wrote me, suggesting that I use my meager influence, redirecting my efforts to teach the Word into an act of "charity and Christian love." That I should direct my labor toward finding housing for several homeless folks in our area. This was not in my _____ to do this, but it is in hers! Not only does she own a yacht that will sleep 3 or 4 adults, but she wields considerable influence in the local yacht club

and could begin a program where the club members could use their boats as temporary winter quarters for these folks needing help. To date my suggestion has gone unheeded. Hmmm!

Proverbs 3:28: *Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will **give** it," When you **have** it with you.*

➤ This principle would hold true whether we are speaking of provisions or spiritual insight. If you _____ it, and it is in your power to _____ it, then do so, trusting in God to restore and replace any deficit created. Col. 4:6; *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.* [NASB] Peter confirms this in 1st Peter 3:15 *but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;* [NASB]

Compiler's note: I can almost hear the objection: "There are professional bums, just as there are apostates and phony preachers that know how to milk to charity of God's People". When dealing with these types of folk, we need to pray daily for discernment that we may be always prepared. Discernment is a gift of His Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:8-10, discloses this. *For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.* [NASB]

Paul's phrase *the **distinguishing of spirits*** is an interesting assemblage of terms. The Greek word interpreted distinguishing is the word diakrisis, *dee-ak'-ree-sis*, and in context means judicial estimation, while the word for "spirits", is the familiar word pneuma *pnayoo'-mah*, and is generally prefaced by whose spirit it is. For example, it would be written "Christ's" or God's Spirit or the Holy Spirit when referring to the Deity. In this context, without an identifying preface, it

figuratively would refer to the human or rational soul, a driving principle of the individual, or his mental disposition.

Paul prays for the Philippian assembly in Philippians' 1:9-10, for discernment, commitment, and knowledge to abound within this group. *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;* [NASB]

Hebrews 5:14 tells us that it is an acquired gift through practice. *But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.* [NASB]

Proverbs 3:29: *Do not devise harm against your neighbor, While he lives in security beside you.*

➤ This goes back to the issue of walking out the gospel of Christ as His ambassador; turning the other cheek if you will. _____ no harm against others. While we are no longer under the penalty of the Law, we are committed to implement and acquiesce to the principle of the "Royal Law"; *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* James 2:8 [NLT] ***And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.*** Luke 6:31 [NASB]

Jeremiah addresses this in Lamentations. 3:26-33; the principle involving sanctification precedes and transcends the gospel. *So, it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. [27] And it is good for the young to submit to the yoke of his discipline. [28] Let them sit alone in silence beneath the Lord's demands. [29] Let them lie face down in the dust; then, at last, there is hope for them. [30] Let them turn the other cheek to those who strike them. Let them accept the insults of their enemies. [31] For the Lord does not abandon anyone forever. [32] Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion according to the greatness of his unfailing love [33] For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.* [NLT]

Does turning the other cheek mean that we should not seek justice when the bent of another is set upon harm to ourselves and others? Absolutely not! Our next passage makes that perfectly clear.

Proverbs 3:30: *Do not contend with a man without cause, If he has done you no harm.*

- **And for my friends that like to glibly toss out the passage “do not Judge,” the phrase without _____ demands discernment and judgment. This also requires self-examination; what is the motive for our contention? If it is revenge, then that should be left to God in prayer; . . . For it is written, “I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it,” says the Lord.** Romans 12:19 [NLT]

Proverbs 3:31-32: *Do not envy a man of violence, and do not choose any of his ways. ^[32] For the crooked man is an abomination to the Lord; But He is intimate with the upright.*

- **God does have a hate list, listing the traits of people who are an _____ to Him. We will go more into detail on that in future chapters. The important thing in this proverb is to put our focus on God, for He is _____ with the upright. Psalm 25:14; puts it like this; *Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear Him. With them he shares the secrets of his covenant.* [NLT]**

The next three passages are direct contrasts.

Proverbs 3:33: *The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.*

- **God _____ the homes of the righteous. Recall the plagues that God placed on Egypt. Pharaoh and all of his citizens were cursed, while the Israelites who were being held in bondage, dwelling in Goshen were protected. The dwelling place of the righteous will be like the land of Goshen in the midst of His judgment upon the wicked.**

Proverbs 3:34: *Though He scoffs at the scoffers, Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.*

➤ **While I do believe that we need to respect the planet over which our Lord has given us, I also believe that the hype over global warming is being used as part of a hidden agenda by powerful forces, to enslave the world's population. Just when the world was willing to submit and yield, God has sent one of the coldest winters so far, on record, to us who live in the northern hemisphere. And climactically, Australia is suffering one of the hottest summers they can remember. God _____ at the scoffers. I think God is in charge of nature.**

Perhaps we can better see this where it is clearly illustrated in the book of Esther; and where there is a story within the story. It involves Esther, Mordecai her cousin, and a self-elevating man by the name of Haman. First some background.

Mordecai, a Jew of the Diaspora, who resided at Susa, the metropolis of Persia. He adopted his cousin Hadassah (**Esther**), an orphan child, whom he tenderly brought up as his own daughter. When she was brought into the king's harem and made a queen in the room of the deposed queen Vashti, he was promoted to some office in the court of Ahasuerus and was one of those who "sat in the king's gate" [Esther 2:21]. While holding this office, he discovered a plot of the eunuchs to put the king to death, which, by his vigilance, was defeated. His services to the king in this matter were duly recorded in the royal chronicles.

Now we come to the fool, Haman, the Agagite, who had been raised to the highest position at court. Mordecai refused to bow down before him; and Haman, being stung to the quick by the conduct of Mordecai, resolved to accomplish his death in the wholesale destruction of the Jewish exiles throughout the Persian Empire [Esther 3:8-15]. Tidings of this cruel scheme soon reached the ears of Mordecai, who communicated with Queen Esther regarding it, and by

her wise and bold intervention, the scheme was frustrated. The Jews were delivered from destruction, Mordecai was raised to a high rank, and Haman was executed on the gallows he had by anticipation erected for Mordecai [Esther 6:2-7:10]. In memory of the gestured deliverance thus wrought for them, the Jews to this day celebrate the feast of Purim [Esther 9:26-32].

And now the story within the story: Prior to the edict of destruction being issued, and in an effort to protect Mordecai from the evil intent of Haman, Esther reminded Ahasuerus the king, that the man responsible for revealing the plot against him had never been honored. This conversation was unknown to Haman who at that point happened to enter the chamber.

So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" [7] So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, [8] he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as the king's own horse with a royal emblem on its head. [9] Instruct one of the king's most noble princes to dress the man in the king's robe and to lead him through the city square on the king's own horse. Have the prince shout as they go, 'This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!'" Esther 6:6-9 [NLT]

Ahasuerus responded to Haman; *"Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Hurry and get the robe and my horse and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Do not fail to carry out everything you have suggested."*

[11] So Haman took the robe and put it on Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!" [12] Afterward Mordecai returned to the palace gate, but Haman hurried home dejected and completely humiliated. Esther 6:10-12 [NLT] where, with the help of his wife, he hatched the plot to destroy all of the Jews of the Diaspora. [Those Jews that God has put out of His Land]

Proverbs 3:35: The *wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor.*
[NASB]

- **In 3rd John 1:9-10 we read of Diotrephes, a man obviously driven by position and power. Today we continue to read about John, whom God honors, but what do we hear of Diotrephes, a man who became a _____.**

I [John] wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. [10] For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church. [NASB]

ⁱ Taken from a portion of the Bible study, "Footprints of Jesus in the Tabernacle."

Leviticus 2:5 *'And if your offering is a grain offering made on the griddle, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil; Have you noticed that this is a recipe for unleavened bread? It is a portrait of Jesus. Jesus said of Himself in John 6:48 "I am the bread of life. John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever (eternal life); and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."*

- ◆ Jesus identifies His Humanity as bread. The bread is His life or life that He gives for those who remain in this world that they may have life and eternal life __, not sinful life, filled with leaven, but new life, mingle or mixed with the oil (Holy Spirit).

Leviticus 2:10 *'And the remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most Holy, of the offerings to the Lord by fire'.*

- ◆ This is the Lord's provision for His priest, you and I are priests, and the Lord does provide. The first part of all provision should be made as an offering of thanksgiving, a tithe if you will, and the remainder __ belongs to those for whom God is providing. The teaching of the doctrine of the tithe is so often fraught with leaven. The principle of the tithe goes back to the time of Cain and

Able but is clearly defined in Genesis 28:20-22 *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will **be with** me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me **food** to eat and **garments** to wear, [21]. I return to my father's house in **safety**, then the Lord will be my God. [22] "And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a **tenth** to Thee."*

- ◆ Jacob was looking with foresight, but we can appreciate with hindsight, the marvelous, miraculous, provision of our heavenly father. God wants to bless those and **be with** those that are His with **food** to eat and **garments** to wear and provide for our **safety**. Giving a **tenth** is our way of showing our faith.

Compiler's notes: (remember that faith requires action) When we truly trust the Lord for our provision, by faith, in thanksgiving, we will render a tithe to the Lord and keep the remainder.

I mentioned the leaven: It is a popular teaching in so many assemblies to extract a tithe from its membership using such passages as are found under "law." The favorite, in Malachi 3:8 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings."*

Because the tithe is a principle of God, God required it under the Law and the tithe was mandated for those under the Old Covenant. Romans 7:6 *But now we have been **released** from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit.*

- ◆ Believers are **released** from the penalty of the law but the principles of the law still stand. The tithe was before the Law. The tithe is our way of showing thanks for the Father's ongoing provision by living in the **new way** by the Spirit, by faith, through action - not because we have to but because we want to.