

Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom shouts in the street,
She lifts her voice in the square;
At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings:
“How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing
And fools hate knowledge?
“Turn to my reproof,
Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you.
“Because I called and you refused,
I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;
And you neglected all my counsel
And did not want my reproof;
I will also laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your dread comes,
When your dread comes like a storm
And your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
When distress and anguish come upon you.
“Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;
They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,
Because they hated knowledge
And did not choose the fear of the Lord.
“They would not accept my counsel,
They spurned all my reproof.
“So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way
And be satiated with their own devices.
“For the waywardness of the [i]naive will kill them,
And the complacency of fools will destroy them.
“But he who listens to me shall live securely
And will be at ease from the dread of evil.”

In our last review of Proverbs, we saw the Father speaking to his son regarding the wicked men who take advantage of the poor and weak for unjust gain. Because its been a few weeks, I want to remind us of the 3 principles of Proverbs and the 4 parts of the “Philosophy of Proverbs”, as I understand it.

The 3 principles of Proverbs are that

1. Proverbs is Wisdom, not Law
2. Because it is Wisdom, it provides indicatives on how the world is or how God intended the world to work

3. Christ is the point of Proverbs.

The 4 elements of the Philosophy of Proverbs are:

1. Fear the Lord, for this is where all Wisdom comes from. Fear is recognition of and thankfulness to God for what He does and Who He is.
2. Seek Wisdom in all that we do. Find the way of things and learn to act accordingly.
3. Honor Your Parents. This is obedience, but also a way of life that directs the child to take to heart the way of their parents and seek to emulate it in the most righteous way possible. This involves understanding their words and wisdom and wearing that wisdom as jewelry, much like we are told to do with God's commands given in Deuteronomy 6.
4. Teach Your Children. The main goal of this education is that your children fear the Lord, but includes the way of the world and the way of your fathers and family. The mode of this teaching is not, primarily, a systematic education, but a largely "informal" education centered around the daily goings-on.

In light of this, we see that this chapter is a father doing just that. As noted, the first 9 chapters of Proverbs are a series of Treatises that the father is giving to his son, and it is as if we are invited to listen in on the fathers instructions. We are meant to learn from this passage to know not only WHAT to teach to children, but HOW. As a preface to the learning, we see that the authors of the book have taken care to let us know the intent of this lesson: **"To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles."** (1:2-6). Then, to bookend the introduction, the authors state very clearly that, **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."** (1:7) This means that we are fools if we reject what the father is giving to his son and the way in which he gives it. What is being given is real wisdom, sanctioned by God for us.

Last time we looked at proverbs, we noted this first lesson the father gives relates the first psalm and the first chapter of Romans. The warning given before all warnings is that evil men will try to come and entice the son to join in their gang of thieves. With progressing levels of enticement, the wicked men try to entangle the son with them. Since they are wicked men, they cannot abide a righteous man in their midst. Their only two responses then are to make him the victim through subversion or treachery. They will either get you to join their ranks or they will make you a target for their schemes. The father warns against joining

with them, telling the son that merely being in league with them is foolishness that will end with death. Being in league with them will make the son like them. The father even goes further saying, “My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path” (1:15), meaning that to emulate their actions is the path to evil. Being a thief or murderer in competition with thieves and murderers is not a noble path, but just another path to Sheol. Being like them would mean that you would “lie in wait for [your] own blood; [you would] ambush [your] own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its possessors.” (1:18). “Indeed, it is useless to spread the baited net In the sight of any bird” (1:17), but the fool is one who sins despite its consequence. This trap is obvious. To fall into it means that you intend to not listen to Wisdom.

The second half of this lesson is more than an addendum to the first half in its scope, but does tell us of the fate of the wicked men that the father tells us to avoid. Here is Wisdom’s first words to us, given to us by the father. The father says: “Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings:” (1:20-21)

This introduction is mirrored in the other introductions that Wisdom gives us in chapters 8 and 9. In chapter 8, the father says, “Does not wisdom call, And understanding lift up her voice? On top of the heights beside the way, Where the paths meet, she takes her stand; Beside the gates, at the opening to the city, At the entrance of the doors, she cries out: “To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men. “O naive ones, understand prudence; And, O fools, understand wisdom.” (8:1-5) and in chapter 9 he says, “Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: “Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks understanding she says, “Come, eat of my food And drink of the wine I have mixed. “Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding.” (9:1-6).

There are two things here that wisdom is doing here that gives us insight into Her Character.

The first is that Wisdom is going everywhere and actively seeking the naive and foolish. Unlike the Harlot, who sits at her door and waits for a man besides her husband to pass by, Wisdom goes about the world and looks for people who are dumb, foolish, ignorant, and imprudent. She makes herself conspicuous for everyone, standing and shouting in the places common to all and most available to every man. See the places she can be found: in the street, the town square, the

head of the noisy street, the gates of the city, the top of the heights where paths meet, at the city gates, and at your front door. Wisdom means to be found.

The second thing we see is that Wisdom sets up her house and table for those same people. Her invitation is to all men and her table is set in anticipation. Unlike the Harlot who promises pleasure and indulgence, her offerings are that of sustenance, understanding, knowledge, and discipline. Wisdom's motive is for you to be better than you were. Wiser, more capable, more virtuous, more just, and more prudent. She wants you to not be content with simply going along with whatever passion you may have, but to truly understand how God made the world, how the world operates, and how to live in it effectively to the end of Fearing God and Imitating Him.

Wisdom's character then is that of a sister or mother, offering a good meal, some sound advice, and an environment of rest from the wickedness of the world. While the Harlot's advances ask you to set your mind aside and to dwell on nothing but the pleasures of wine and sex, Wisdom asks you to sit, rest, eat, and consider. Instead of a raucous evening, Wisdom offers clarity of mind and chicken noodle soup for the soul. We can understand, then, that Wisdom truly cares for the souls of all men, and seeks to bring them health and life. The recklessness of the evil men and the harlot lead to death, and Wisdom seeks to save you from that way of life and fate.

Wisdom cries out, “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.” Wisdom's offer extends to those who are even scoffers and fools, begging them to turn away from their wickedness and to her ways. Her condemnation does not rest on us for being born ignorant or foolish or simple-minded or even a scoffer. She knows that the young do not have because they have not yet been given, and with that lack comes foolishness. A young man's nature is to act and push against boundaries, and Wisdom here knows that in their ignorance, they will act in ways that are harmful to themselves and others. This offer is meant to remedy that. The book of Proverbs itself is written with this mindset, as it is written for those who simply do not have wisdom or prudence.

And, indeed, Wisdom says, “Turn to my reproof, Behold I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.” The advice of the father in the next treatise asks us to have the reciprocal response. He says, “For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord And discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” (2:3-6) Wisdom is to be sought like a hidden

treasure, not because Wisdom is hidden, but that what lies around us in such great abundance is worth more than anything we can possess. Counter-intuitively, the most common thing and the most accessible thing is exactly that which holds the highest value and worth. Imagine that, under every rock and behind every process there lies a 5 pound diamond just waiting to be taken. In our natural conceptions, we think that rare things are the most valuable, and in some sense this is true, but proverbs teaches us that those rare things pale in comparison to Wisdom. “**How blessed is the man who finds wisdom**” the father says, “**And the man who gains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her.**” (3:13-15)

We can understand that Wisdom is not extravagant or haughty. She does not associate with the proud or haughty. Rich or poor, small or great, powerful or weak—Wisdom associates with any who will look for her as she looks for them. She is no respecter of person. Her gifts are open to everyone who will humble themselves. “**Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” And call understanding your intimate friend; That they may keep you from an adulteress, From the foreigner who flatters with her words.**” (7:4-5) To understand the smallest kind of Wisdom, we must say like Agur, “**Surely I am more stupid than any man, And I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, Nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.**” (30:2-3)

Notice the contrast between the actions of the evil men in the first half of this treatise and the way the harlot speaks. The evil men speak of camaraderie, telling the son that he is the “best man for the job”. “Come be one of us”, they say, “we will all share the gains of our actions.” The Harlot, likewise, sees the foolish man and “**seizes him and kisses him And with a brazen face she says to him: “Therefore I have come out to meet you, To seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you. “I have spread my couch with coverings, With colored linens of Egypt. “I have sprinkled my bed With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. With her many persuasions she entices him; With her flattering lips she seduces him.**” (7:13-17). The words of the wicked are sweet to hear, yet cover up many sins to be revealed. Wisdom, in contrast, is honest with you. She addresses you by calling you naive, foolish, and ignorant. She begins by acknowledging all of your weaknesses and failings. Notice, also, that she is shouting with urgency. Far from the smooth buttery words of the wicked, Wisdom speaks with a kind of harshness meant to immediately uncover the source of your failing.

These barbs are not intended to cripple or kill, they are meant to enlighten. If you earnestly seek out Wisdom, who is out in the world, in the most common of places— who is also seeking you— she “**will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over**

you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things; ...from the strange woman, From the adulteress who flatters with her words;...So you will walk in the way of good men And keep to the paths of the righteous.” (2:10-12,16,20) More than this, Proverbs tells us that if you “Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones.” (3:5-8) Wisdom calling you foolish is a rebuke meant to cause you to repent of you foolishness. Her honesty is out of love for you and your soul.

Before we move on, let bring this together to present the fullness of what the father is teaching the son. Wisdom is to be prized above all riches and wealth, and can be found everywhere. Wisdom is the most obvious, plentiful, and valuable commodity you can possess, and She is actively looking to find you and give you all she has. She is loud and conspicuous, standing in your way everywhere you go. Wisdom has a table of understanding, true rest, contemplation, and repentance and has invited everyone to this table with the sole condition that they admit their own ignorance and stupidity. If you will but recognize your own lack of understanding and submit to her teachings, she will give you long life, good health, and lasting peace. She knows you are foolish and ignorant, and is willing to not hold that foolishness and ignorance against you, if you are willing to humble yourself and learn from her teachings. To top this all off, God Himself will acknowledge your actions and bless you for your humility.

But still there are those who refuse to listen. The evil men and harlots of the world, rejecting all her offers for the base and easy gains of this life, assured of their own wisdom and arrogant beyond words. Instead of resting in the ways of God and learning from Wisdom, “even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks,” and are “filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.” (Romans 1:21a,29-32)

The wicked man and the harlot are not ignorant of the way that God created the world. They know that they cannot take fire to their bosom and not be burned. They know they cannot walk on hot coals and their feet not be scorched. Instead of recognizing this very simple and real truth, they turn their eyes from Wisdom, though she begs for their repentance, and turn to their sin anyway. “Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly. Do you see a man wise in

his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” (26:11-12) This kind of fool knows the truth and rejects it to his own harm. So reckless is his desire for his own lusts that he will destroy himself and all those around him as he rushes headlong into evil.

To this, Wisdom responds, “Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord. “They would not accept my counsel; They spurned all my reproof. “So, they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices.”

In Romans, Paul attributes their wickedness to God turning them over to their own degrading passions. Paul begins his exposition of God’s wrath by explaining that God has been made known to them through nature. He says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” (Romans 1:18-21) Just like Pharaoh, who both hardened his own heart and had his heart hardened by God, we see a steady decline of the ability to act righteously. Where Romans shows us to be God’s actions and Exodus gives us insight into God’s motivations behind His workings, Proverbs shows us the mechanics of depravity.

When wicked men love their sin above all else, Wisdom sees their stubbornness and lets them have their sin, with all its consequences. She will laugh at their calamity. This laughter can be seen in two different ways. The first is the laughter of the Almighty in Heaven as the nation’s rage against Him. The Psalm says, “Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!” He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”” (Psalm 2:1-6) Just as Pharaoh raged in his heart and rode out against the people of God and was consumed by the sea, so too will the wicked be consumed by the consequences of

their own idiocy and God will laugh as they struggle against what was obviously coming. Wisdom will join Him. As these fools reject reality itself, they close themselves off to the benefits of being in the flow of how things work and function. This is the man so enraged at his burnt feet but refusing to step off of the coals. The second way to understand this laughter is like unto the first: a rejoicing of the vindication of righteousness. As Wisdom says, “**When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting.**” (11:10) These wicked people have no excuse for their wickedness. They were told by Wisdom in every way imaginable and they still refused to listen. They are a terror to themselves and all those around them, and the rejoicing that comes from their destruction is that of a great illness being healed, or a great weight being lifted. And we as believers are to share in that rejoicing, not because we just want them to suffer, but because goodness, wisdom, and justice has been vindicated.

Wisdom will also hide from them. It will become inaccessible to them. In contrast to the obvious shouting in the street that is given to all men ordinarily, Wisdom now runs when she sees them, hiding from them as they approach. They may seek her after their rebellion, but she will not be found. As Wisdom says, “**Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord.**” (1:28-29) While the righteous man is like a tree that bears fruit in its own season, the wicked “**shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices.**” (1:31) Since they desired to be foolish for easy gain, their gain will be taken from them and given to the diligent man.

The father shows his son these truths after having told him of the wicked men who seek to get unjust gain, showing what will happen to those who prey on others. But this truth is greater than this one context. It applies across all of life—from how we use our money, how we deal with our own health, how we treat those around us, and how diligently we teach our children. What the father is teaching his son is that evil deeds, when doubled down on, will bring you fruits of evil. In her wrath, Wisdom will bring you the fruits of your own sin, forcing you along the path you chose in your own depravity.

In the context of this first treatise, we now see why the father tells his son to avoid even walking in their way. Avoid entirely their way of living. If you match their evil for evil, you will suffer the same punishments, since their very mode of living is abhorrent to God and Wisdom. When evil men seek to lay traps for the innocent and make money from their suffering, don’t open a competing industry to lay traps for the innocent. Refuse to associate with them and refuse to be like them.

In broadest context, this means that it is our duty to not be fools. God has made Wisdom so accessible to us that we are without excuse. As the Psalm says, “**The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.**” (Psalm 14:1-3) This is the passage that Paul quotes when referring to sinful man. These fools here are not atheists as we know it, but are men who act as if God will not punish them for acting against Wisdom. When you know that the shortcut your about to take in your work will create a poor product, don't take the shortcut. When you know that something is not working, but you dont feel like changing it, make the change anyway. When you know a thing you are doing is sinful, but you like to do it, stop doing it. The punishment for your shortcut, or bad decision, or sinful action will come to haunt you, and it will be just when it does.

As Christians, we are expected to begin our thoughts with “what does God love.” But it is not enough for us to be Redeemed and in the Kingdom. When we act like fools, we are acting like atheists. When we set aside wisdom, we are saying that we love God but are acting as if we don't. God expects of us Wisdom. To know the world, how it works, and how to live in it. Not to to its own end, but that we can further show His Glory through nature. This wisdom is not a high and lofty wisdom. It is not isolated to the ivory towers or grand estates. It lives around us, stands next to us, and shows itself in our daily lives. This call for wisdom is not a call to be intellectuals, but to be skilled in life for the Glory of God. Our fear of God, and diligence to act according to it, is the source of all our Wisdom. To reject either is to reject both. This principle scales from the most important issue, your communion with God, to the lowliest thing that you do in your life.

Do not be the fool. Do not reject wisdom. Sow the seeds of righteousness. Fear the Lord and Pursue Wisdom in all that you do.

Amen