

The Call of Wisdom

Proverbs 1:8-33

Proverbs 1:7-10 – *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother, for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, does not consent.”*

Background Notes

A very simple outline of the Book of Proverbs would be:

1. Precepts of Wisdom - chapters 1-9
2. Proverbs of Wisdom - chapters 10-31

In the first seven verses of chapter 1 we discussed the author, the purpose, and the theme of Proverbs. In verses 7-10 the **Precepts** of Wisdom are given in concise form. They are then elaborated in the first nine chapters of Proverbs. The **Proverbs** of Wisdom begin in chapter 10.

Although there are proverbs throughout the book, the proverbs in the first nine chapters of the book emphasize **wisdom**. What are the precepts of wisdom? Three are given in verses 1-7, and they will be expanded in chapters 2-9.

a. **Revere God:** *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (v7).*

Remember, to fear the Lord means to honor, worship, and show reverence to God. Fools do not revere God.

b. **Respect authority:** *“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother, for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck” (v8-9).* Jeweled ornaments and golden chains on one’s neck is a figurative way of saying that respect of authority brings moral beauty and honor to life.

c. **Resist temptation:** *“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (v10).*

Doctrinal Points

1. Crime does not pay.

'Crime doesn't pay' isn't a Bible verse, but it is a biblical truth, and it's certainly taught in Proverbs 1.

Proverbs 1:7-19 - *"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us! Let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause. Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who go down to the Pit. We shall find all kinds of precious possessions; we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in your lot among us. Let us all have one purse.'*

My son, do not walk in the way with them! Keep your foot from their path, for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. Surely, in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird; but they lie in wait for their own blood. They lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain. It takes away the life of its owners."

The term "my son" is used a number of times throughout the Book of Proverbs. Who is "my son" in these verses? Considering the mention of the father's instruction and the mother's teaching in verse 8, it's evident that parental instruction is the primary idea. Parental guidance and instruction is so important for young people. The precepts of wisdom are taught in Proverbs, and parents have the responsibility to teach them.

When Solomon compiled these proverbs, he had more in mind than just his son and heir, Rehoboam, and his other sons. In fact, he probably had people of all ages in mind - not just young people. As children in the family of God, we all need instruction in the precepts of wisdom by our Heavenly Father. In addition, all of us are "sons" or "pupils" who need to constantly hear and learn instruction from our literal parents - or from our godly mothers and fathers in the faith. And all of us who are parents or teachers are responsible to teach the precepts to our "sons" - our children, our grandchildren, our pupils, or our sons and daughters in the faith.

In verses 11-19, "my son" is instructed to avoid bad company. In the context, the instruction is to avoid the temptation to run with the wrong crowd. In addition, avoid the temptation to make quick money by ambushing the wealthy – and thus avoid shedding innocent blood. The way of wisdom is: **Choose your friends carefully.** Don't run with the wrong crowd. Avoid temptation. Beware of get-rich quick schemes because they generally involve hurting innocent people. Wrongdoers will reap what they have sown.

Even a bird avoids a net that's visible, but God will ensure that evil schemers will get caught in their own traps. They will ambush themselves. In His moral universe God has declared that, when all is said and done, crime does not pay.

2. Wisdom has the last word

Proverbs 1:20-33 – *“Wisdom calls aloud outside. She raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses. At the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: ‘How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke. Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded. Because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction 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 have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them, but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil.”

In these verses, “Wisdom” is personified. She is calling out to everyone to follow the way of wisdom for their own well-being. Wisdom who is calling out is the Lord Himself, the Word of God.

Notice that Wisdom calls out to everyone on the street - in all the rush and routine of daily life (v20-21). She is particularly calling out to the naïve, the scoffers and the fools: *“How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge”* (v23).

Remember the definition of “fools” in Proverbs. Fools are not people with low IQs. They are people who do not follow Wisdom’s instruction. They do not revere God, they do not respect authority, and they do not resist temptation.

In the rest of this chapter we see that those who listen to Wisdom will live securely and be free from the fear of evil: *“But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil”* (v33). But those who do not listen to the Word of God and the way of wisdom will reap what they have sown: *“Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies”* (v31).

In verse 26, Wisdom is speaking: *“Someday you’ll be in trouble and I’ll laugh. Mock me now? I’ll mock you when disaster overtakes you”* (Living Bible). When it comes to the mockers and scoffers, Wisdom will have the last laugh. Wisdom has the last word.

Practical Applications

1. Don’t get taken in by a “sweet-talker.”

What's a "sweet-talker"? A sweet-talker is a very manipulative and persuasive person who influences people to do something or buy something against their better judgment. In verses 10-14, the sinners are sweet-talkers who are trying to talk the innocent young men into joining them in sinful activity. *"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us. Let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause. Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who go down to the Pit. We shall find all kinds of precious possessions; we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in your lot among us! Let us all have one purse.'"*

The young man is warned to resist temptation, and not be taken in by sweet-talkers: *"My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your foot from their path, for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood"* (v15-16)

Judges 9 tells us of the tyranny of Abimelech, who was one of Israel's bad Judges. He sweet-talked the people of Shechem into making him their ruler. Read the entire story, and you'll see how foolish the people of Shechem were to be taken in by the sweet-talking of Abimelech.

There are a lot of sweet-talkers out there, from fast-talking salesmen to people in ministry - wolves in sheep's clothing, who sweet-talk people into donating money to them. Be warned; don't get taken in by a sweet-talker!

2. Don't reach the point of no return!

"Then they will call on me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me" (v28).

Can a person get to a point of no return with God? Yes! *"They will seek me... but they will not find Me."* But understand this - **the problem is not with God's grace**. The problem is with **mankind's rebellion**. There comes a time when people will not be able to return because their hearts and minds have become hardened to the truth.

In Genesis 6:3, God said *"My Spirit will not contend with humans forever."* And Proverbs 29:1 says, *"Whoever stubbornly refuses to accept rebuke will suddenly be destroyed – beyond recovery."* You can turn away from God and harden your heart and mind to the precepts of wisdom to the point that you become calloused, and you won't have any desire to return.

Don't reach the point of no return!