

Proverbs – Wisdom That Works - Part 3

Listen and Live – Proverbs 1:8-33

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – May 30th, 2021

Intro:

- So far in this series from the first seven verses, we know who is addressing us (Solomon, son of David, King of Israel). We know some of Solomon's backstory. We know the purpose and benefits of this book (to give us encouragement, hope, knowledge, and understanding by coaching and guiding us in the wisdom of God). We know who this book is for, the simple, the young, the wise, and the discerning. We know the central theme and foundation the book is built upon, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, and only fools would despise wisdom and instruction.
- This morning we are going to tackle the rest of chapter one. From the rest of this chapter, you will receive two vital pieces of information, that if followed, will guard you against harm and grant you success as you live your life here on this earth. I am going to give you the two points upfront, and then we will unpack both of them, one at a time. The first point is "do not be baited by sinful influence," and the second is "listen to wisdom or suffer the consequences."
- Our first point is set up like parents talking to their son, and the second point, wisdom herself, speaks to us. So let's listen to the instruction of these wise parents.

Proverbs 1:8-33 NIV

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. 9 They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

- If you will listen to the instruction of these parents, if you walk in the way they instruct, their teaching and instruction will set you apart from other people. They will highlight you as a person to remember and take note of. They will add value to your life and increase your worth and attractiveness. This teaching is like arriving on the red carpet of the Oscars with a three-million-dollar necklace around your neck and a stunning crown on your head. Their teaching, if put on and used, will really set you apart.
- Another example is like a human resources manager going through a stack of resumes and yours standing out because you have followed your wise parents' instruction and have put together a stunning list of achievements and awards.
- Listen, hear, pay attention, and follow what is being said to you. It will significantly enhance your life and make you stand out like Esther, who listened to and followed the wisdom of her uncle Mordecai who adopted her.
- Here is their first instruction to follow:

Do not be baited by sinful influence

Proverbs 1:10 NIV

My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them.

- There have been and always will be people on this planet who are bound to sin. They have and always will look to entice people to join with them. The word "entice" has to do with "baiting"

people to follow after them. This is the same concept is found in James 1:13-15. This enticement comes today in the forms of people you know and people you don't know, influencers from afar, all of them looking to entice you, influence you, change your thinking, and tempt you to join them. Do not give in to them, do not take the bait.

- And this is how the enticement works:

Proverbs 1:11-14 NIV

If they say, “Come along with us; let’s lie in wait for innocent blood, let’s ambush some harmless soul; 12 let’s swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; 13 we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; 14 cast lots with us; we will all share the loot” —

- Here is the enticement – that you, with them, will be able to enjoy the “good life,” valuable things, pleasures, and freedom and rich reward. They will even help you by taking advantage of others for your own gain.
- The heart of sinfulness is evaluating yourself over others, of thinking of you first and foremost, and then taking advantage of others at their expense. It is breaking the law of love. **“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10 ESV).** Anytime you take advantage of anyone for your own benefit, you are breaking the law of love, which is the law of God.
- This sinfulness takes the form of physically stealing from others, to taking advantage of their wealth, to looking to gain their favor in order to gain from them, or using their bodies, or using them in any way. This world is filled with people who will encourage you to do just these things, either overtly by telling you to do so or covertly by doing these things themselves to normalize and justify this course of action.
- We are then again told not to join with them, not even to take one step in their direction.

Proverbs 1:15-16 NIV

My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; 16 for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood.

- One step down the path of sinfulness leads you in their direction. One step indeed follows another, and the pace quickens. One justification leads to another, and down, down, down you go running headlong into the trap (stealing, lying, anger, greed, lust, power, overspending, overindulging).

Proverbs 1:17-18 NIV

How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it! 18 These men lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves!

- In looking to trap others, they are only ensnaring themselves. The methods they use will only entrap themselves. In the name of freedom, they become slaves. What they look to possess ends up possessing them, be it money, or lies, or experiences, or power.
- And then these godly wise parents draw a powerful conclusion based on observation and insight:

Proverbs 1:19 NIV

Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it.

- All those who go down the path after “ill-gotten gain” will pay dearly for it. It will “take away of the life” of those who get it. Those who go down these paths who think they are gaining more than they are losing, when in fact they lose much more than they gain.
- *Ill-gotten gain* - dishonest gain, valuable things obtained by theft, deception, or other immoral actions profit gained wrongfully. Something you have gained through deception.
- *Takes away the life* - it will capture your heart and destroy you. It will take away your time, your energy, your strength, your focus. It will capture your heart. It captures your heart and drains your life of what matters most. It will gut you and leave you empty, like a shell of a person.

Listen to wisdom or suffer the consequences

- In contrast to sinners, who entice people in the dark, wisdom calls to people in the open, offering an invitation to all.

Proverbs 1:20-21 NIV

Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; 21 on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech.

- The wisdom of God is available to all. She is ever calling to those to listen, to learn, and to live. Our response to her invitation reflects our heart, spirit, and essence of who we are. Like good spiritual, mental, or physical physicians, wisdom tells us the truth of what we need to hear.

Proverbs 1:22 NIV

“How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?”

- There are some strong emotional words here. *Loving* simple ways. *Delighting* in mockery. *Hating* knowledge.
- *Simple* – gullible or naïve, anyone weak-minded enough to fall for flattery and temptation. Not only are these people this way, but they also love being this way. Why? Because it is easier. They do not want to do the hard work of thinking and taking responsibility for themselves. This way, if something goes wrong, they can blame others and skirt responsibility.
- *Mocker* – mocker or scoffer describes the person who refuses to take the truth or the advice of wise counselors seriously. Mockers love gushing out words as commentators rather than as players. They delight in being the critic and casting stones at others but never picking up the stones to help them build. By pulling others down, they lift themselves up. They place themselves as superior over those who are actually doing something.
- *Fool* – does not mean someone who lacks mental ability, but rather someone who lacks moral humility. A fool is not a good-hearted person who fails to grasp God’s will with his head but a rebellious person who refuses to submit to it with his heart (straight to the heart of Solomon page 24). These are choices made not because of our ignorance but because of our willfulness. They hate knowledge because knowledge will condemn them. They don’t want to see the truth.

They already know the truth in their hearts, but they would rather have it hidden out of their sight so they don't have to deal with it.

Proverbs 1:23 NIV

Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings.

- So how do you get out of this? The answer is to repent. What are you repenting of? *Loving* simple ways. *Delighting* in mockery. *Hating* knowledge. I have repented a lot in my life, and I have heard a lot of repentance from others. However, I have not nor have I heard of anyone repenting of these things. This is a good time for us to examine our own hearts and to ask God if these things are in our hearts as well. What is keeping you from wisdom? Why do you keep doing the same things over and over and over again? Perhaps the blockage to freedom is found in these heart issues, loving simple ways, delighting in mockery, hating knowledge. Until you release these things, you will never be able to grasp on to wisdom that will set you free. If you do repent, walk away from them in a new direction. Turn towards the path of the wisdom of God and He will continue to pour His thoughts to you and make known what is good, and right, and just and fair. He will lead you in the paths of truly living.

Proverbs 1:24-31 NIV

But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, 25 since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, 26 I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you— 27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

28 “Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, 29 since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD. 30 Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, 31 they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

- If you refuse to listen to the wisdom of God, you will suffer the consequences. Disaster will strike you, calamity will overtake you, distress and trouble will overwhelm you. And when these things happen, don't be deceived and don't blame God.

Gal 6:7-8 NIV

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

- When the wisdom of God told you not to do it, and you did it anyway, who's fault is that? It is the one who did the deed. You do reap what you sow. Everything you place in the soil of your soul will grow.

Prov 19:3 NLT

People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord.

- God's wisdom warns us of these things. The Holy Spirit alerts us of these dangers. You can't blame God for your own choices. And how often is it when people have to face the consequences of their choices, do they then look to turn? They are not turning because they want to do good or want to follow God. They do so because they don't want to reap the consequences of what they have sown. God turns you over to what your heart wants most (see Romans 1) because God wants you and your heart, not just right behavior.
- And He also knows that right behavior only is right when it comes from a right heart, and a right heart can only come through repentance. Repentance only comes from embracing the truth and taking responsibility for oneself in light of a holy and righteous God, who out of His grace and mercy will give us a new heart and pour out His Spirit and pour out His wisdom upon us.
- The last two verses of this whole section give us a summary statement to hold onto.

Proverbs 1:32-33 NIV

For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; 33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

- If you decide to stray from the good and wise path of God, that pathway will end up killing you. It will take your heart and destroy your life. It promises the "good life," but it will end up taking yours.
- The fool will be complacent about the things of God. He will get to them later, or they don't attract him. If you live that way, this complacency will destroy you. It will make you vulnerable, like a city without walls or a house without doors.
- Sinful influence takes our life; Godly wisdom gives us life. Whoever listens to the wisdom of God will live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm. This "good life" is to be free of the fear of the consequences of unwise behavior – the safety and ease that comes from having nothing to hide. The safety and ease that come from not having to worry about being found out. People are never "at ease" or "at peace" when they are afraid of being found out. Wisdom tells us to follow after the ways of God, to do what is right, and to be just and fair. We are to love our neighbor and to love God with all we are and in all we do.

Conclusion

- If you are caught in unwise ways, if you have been baited and enticed by ill-gotten gain, if you are hooked and your life is being drained from you, heed the call of wisdom this day. Come clean, repent, turn to the path of God, seek His way and His wisdom. Seek His face and His heart.
- For those of you who do fear the Lord, who have been seeking after Him, and who have been giving yourself over to wisdom, continue to do so. I commend you for this pathway. Keep becoming wiser, keep seeking after Him, keep learning and growing and becoming.
- Prayer