

WHY SHOULD WE LIVE BY GOD'S WISDOM?

8 Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? ²On the heights along the way, where the paths intersect, she takes her stand. ³Beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrance ways, she cries aloud, ⁴"To you, O men, I call out; I speak to all mankind. ⁵You who are naïve, gain an understanding of prudence. You who are fools, gain an understanding heart. ⁶Listen, for I will speak of noble things; I open my lips to speak what is right. ⁷My mouth will utter truth; and wickedness is detestable to my lips. ⁸All the words of my mouth are spoken in righteousness, there is nothing crooked or perverse in them. ⁹All my words are clear to him who understands, they are right to those who have found knowledge. ¹⁰Receive my instruction rather than silver; receive knowledge rather than choice gold; ¹¹for wisdom is better than rubies, and whatever may be desired cannot compare to it.

¹²I, wisdom, dwell with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. ¹³The fear of Jehovah includes the hating of evil; I hate pride and arrogance, and evil conduct and the mouth that speaks perversity. ¹⁴Counsel and sound judgment belong to me; I am understanding; I have power. ¹⁵By me kings reign and rulers issue just decrees. ¹⁶By me princes govern, as well as nobles and all the judges of the earth. ¹⁷I love those who love me, and those who diligently seek me shall find me. ¹⁸Riches and honor are with me, durable wealth and righteousness. ¹⁹My fruit is better than gold, indeed, better than fine gold; and what I yield is better than choice silver. ²⁰I walk in the way of righteousness, in the center of the paths of justice, ²¹so that I may cause those who love me to inherit riches—that I may fill their treasuries ... ³²Now then, my sons, listen to me; for blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³Heed instruction and so be wise; do not refuse it. ³⁴Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorway; ³⁵for whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from Jehovah. ³⁶But whoever sins against me does harm to his own soul; all who hate me love death."
(Prov. 8:1-21, 32-36)

Introduction

In the late summer of 1992 Hurricane Andrew destroyed thousands of homes in South Florida. In one area the wreckage looked like a war zone. But in the midst of that wreckage and debris one house remained standing, still firmly anchored to its foundation.

A curious reporter asked the homeowner why his house had managed to survive the storm and had not been blown away.

This is what the homeowner said, "I built this house according to the Florida State building code. ... I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane—and it did." That's the key: You have to build the house according to the building code—and when you do, it really works! (*Our Daily Bread*, 3/2/94)

Jesus told us the very same thing with regard to our spiritual lives:

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (Matt. 7:24-25)

Here in Proverbs 8 this same Biblical truth is being expressed in Old Testament terms. Let us now consider two reasons why we should live by God's divine wisdom.

I. Live by God's Wisdom, Because It is the Truth

According to verse 6 we should pay attention to the wisdom of God, because the divine wisdom (as it is presented in the Scriptures) *"will speak of noble things; I open my lips to speak what is right."*

Evil men have conceived well-formulated plans by which to subvert a society and cause it to collapse, some of their strategy includes the following items (as outlined in the book, *The Naked Communist*, pp.259-262):

- discredit ... culture by degrading all forms of artistic expression. An American Communist cell was told to "eliminate all good sculpture from parks and buildings, substitute shapeless, awkward and meaningless forms."
- control art critics and directors of art museums. "Our plan is to promote ugliness, repulsive, meaningless art."
- eliminate all laws governing obscenity by calling them "censorship" and a violation of free speech and free press.
- break down cultural standards of morality by promoting pornography and obscenity in books, magazines, motion pictures, and TV.
- present homosexuality, degeneracy and promiscuity as "normal, natural, healthy."
- discredit the Bible and emphasize the need for intellectual maturity that does not need a "religious crutch."
- eliminate prayer or any phase of religious expression in the schools on the ground that it violates the principle of "separation of church and state."
- discredit the family as an institution. Encourage promiscuity and easy divorce.

- emphasize the need to raise children away from the negative influence of parents.

In contrast to demonic efforts to subvert and destroy God-fearing society and the individual's moral and spiritual life, the wisdom of God proclaims those things that are "*noble*" and "*right*"—i.e.; the wisdom of God as revealed in the Scriptures provides us with a standard of what is good:

- the Ten Commandments
- the Book of Proverbs
- the lives of God-fearing men
- the life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ
- the exhortations of the pastoral epistles

In verse 7 the wisdom of God declares, "*My mouth will utter truth; and wickedness is detestable to my lips.*" Consider the character of God (the Author of Scripture) as He reveals Himself in the Scriptures:

Jehovah is righteous; he loves righteousness. (Psl. 11:7a)

God is not a man, that he should lie; nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he spoken, and will he not act? Or has he promised, and will he not fulfill it? (Num. 23:19)

God ... cannot lie. (Titus 1:2)

In contrast, consider how the Scriptures identify the character of man and the devil:

... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18)

And this is the reason for the condemnation: the Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil. (Jn. 3:19)

... the devil ... was a murderer from the beginning and is not established in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he is speaking in accordance with his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. (Jn. 8:44)

Verse 8 is expressing the sincerity of God's wisdom: *"All the words of my mouth are spoken in righteousness, there is nothing crooked or perverse in them."*

Verse 12 is expressing the sound depths and reliability of God's wisdom: *"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion."* The wisdom of God does not speak hastily or superficially; it does not judge according to mere appearance; on the contrary, it goes to the very heart and core of a matter, it speaks and reveals what is true:

Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. (1 Sam. 2:3b)

Jehovah does not see the way man sees; man looks upon the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks at the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7b)

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account. (Heb. 4:12-13)

Verse 13 is expressing the integrity of God's wisdom: *"The fear of Jehovah includes the hating of evil; I hate pride and arrogance, and evil conduct and the mouth that speaks perversity."* The wisdom of God not only knows and teaches what is right, but personally abides by that righteousness. Consider the testimony of the Lord Jesus concerning Himself: *"the prince of this world ... finds nothing in me"* (Jn. 14:30.) Jesus is declaring that the devil has no accusation that he can bring against Him; in other words, the Lord Jesus is a man of complete integrity and righteousness. Consider the testimony of Scripture regarding itself:

The law of Jehovah is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of Jehovah are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸The precepts of Jehovah are right, giving joy to the heart. The commandments of Jehovah are radiant, enlightening the eyes. ⁹The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever. The ordinances of Jehovah are sure and altogether righteous. (Psl. 19:7-9)

Note, also, the testimony of Psalm 119:96, *"To all perfection I see a limit; but your commandments are boundless."* In other words, the commandments of the LORD are the epitome of perfection.

How do you become convinced about the truth of God's wisdom (the truth about God's Word)? Divine wisdom testifies, *"All my words are clear to him who understands"* (vs. 9.) This understanding results from the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit: *"when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all the truth"* (Jn. 16:13a.)

Wisdom goes on to declare, *“those who diligently seek me shall find me”* (vs. 17.) You become convinced of the truth when you receive the truth and experience it:

If anyone desires to do his will, he shall know about the teaching, whether it is from God, or whether I speak on my own. (Jn. 7:17)

Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed him, If you remain in my word you will truly be my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. (Jn. 8:31-32)

Peter testified to Jesus on behalf of himself and the other disciples, *“We have believed and know that you are the Holy One of God”* (John 6:69.) By believing—committing themselves to the Lord Jesus—they came to know the truth of who He is.

The first reason why we should live by God’s wisdom (God’s Word) is because it is the truth.

II. We Should Live by God’s Wisdom, Because It will Bring Us Blessing

Verse 10 urges us to receive God’s wisdom and value it more than silver and pure gold. We are exhorted to do so because the wisdom of God (revealed and offered to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) is incomparably more valuable than all the treasures of the world (vs. 11.)

How is it that divine wisdom is more valuable and more precious than all the treasures of the world? Verses 16 and following explain the reasons. *“Long life is in her right hand”* (vs. 16a.) You can’t buy life with all the money in the world, but the divine wisdom of God offers you *“long life”* (literally, *“length of days.”*) Note: Long life in the Promised Land was the Old Testament form of the covenant blessing: eternal life in fellowship with God.

“In her left hand are riches and honor” (vs. 16b.) When you make riches your number one priority, you do so at the peril of your soul; as the Apostle Paul warns in his first epistle to Timothy:

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with much grief. (1 Tim. 6:9-10)

But when you value the wisdom of God above all else, you shall eventually gain the whole world:

Jehovah God is a sun and a shield. Jehovah will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. ¹²O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in you. (Psl. 84:11-12)

[God] gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to the man who pleases him; but to the sinner [God] gives the arduous task of gathering and storing up wealth so that He may give it to the one that pleases Him. (Eccl. 2:26)

... all things are yours. ²²Whether ... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are yours; ²³and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God. (1 Cor. 3:21b-23)

“Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peaceful” (vs. 17.) The riches of the world cannot buy you peace of mind or peace of soul; often times they are sought after at the expense of those priceless spiritual commodities (note, again, the warning of the apostle Paul given in 1 Timothy 6:9-10.) But divine wisdom (as revealed in the Scriptures) will lead you into the pleasant blessings of God and cause you to walk with God in peace:

The LORD is my shepherd ... ³He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake ... ⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psl. 23:1,3,6)

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. (Psl. 119:165)

Verse 20 declares that the wisdom of God walks *“in the way of righteousness.”* The Word of God instructs us in righteous living; the Lord Jesus Christ leads us in the paths of righteousness. Verse 21 goes on to indicate that God’s wisdom does so in order that *“I may cause those who love me to inherit riches—that I may fill their treasures.”* The wisdom of God directs us in the path of righteous living because it is the life of righteousness that is well-pleasing to God and receives His eternal blessing. Referring to the Lord Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews declares, *“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy” (Heb. 1:9.)*

A second reason why we should live by God’s wisdom is the fact that it will bring us blessing.

Conclusion

In verses 32-33 the wisdom of God makes one final appeal: *“Now then, my sons, listen to me; for blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³Heed instruction and so be wise; do not refuse it.”* By opening our heart and life to the Word of God we become wise; we will be transformed by it into the likeness of Christ.

Verse 34 describes for us the characteristics of the man who is blessed by God: 1) he is a man who listens to (i.e., pays attention to and puts into practice) the wisdom of God; 2) he is a man who watches daily at wisdom's gates—there is a daily reading and studying of God's Word, a meditating upon it and seeking to understand its application to life; 3) he is a man who waits at wisdom's doorway—he waits upon the LORD for His leading and guidance, he refuses to allow impatience, impulsiveness and self-reliance to govern his life.

In verses 35-36 we hear wisdom's concluding word: *"whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from Jehovah"* (vs. 35.) Those who seek after the LORD and His wisdom are the recipients of His blessing. *"But whoever sins against me does harm to his own soul; all who hate me love death"* (vs. 36.) Those who disregard and disdain the wisdom of God do so to their own peril.