

## AN OFFER YOU DARE NOTE REFUSE

*1* <sup>20</sup>Wisdom cries aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public square; <sup>21</sup>at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech. <sup>22</sup>"You who are naïve, how long will you love your simple ways? How long will scoffers delight in scoffing and [how long will] fools hate knowledge? <sup>23</sup>If you would respond to my rebuke, I would pour out my Spirit upon you and cause you to understand my teaching.\* <sup>24</sup>Because you refused to listen when I called—I stretched out my hand, but no one paid attention; <sup>25</sup>you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke. <sup>26</sup>Therefore, I will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when what you dread overtakes you; <sup>27</sup>when what you dread overtakes you like a storm and your calamity sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish overwhelm you. <sup>28</sup>Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. <sup>29</sup>Because they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear Jehovah—<sup>30</sup>they would not accept any of my advice, they despised my rebuke—<sup>31</sup>therefore, they will eat the fruit of their way and be filled with [the consequences of] their own decisions. <sup>32</sup>The aimlessness of the naïve will kill them and the 'security' of fools will destroy them. <sup>33</sup>But whoever listens to me will live in safety and will be at peace, without fear of calamity." (Prov. 1:20-33)

\*Literally, "I would make my words known to you."

### **Introduction**

Free Gold!

That's what was being offered.

"I was on a summer vacation in the Black Hills of South Dakota," writes this gentleman, "and we pulled into the old mining town of Rockerville. Just a few dozen steps from the highway was an abandoned gold mine, and rushing by alongside of the highway was the creek from which had been mined \$200,000 worth of gold in one day. Someone had left behind some old tin plates so that tourists could help themselves and pan for profit."

This gentleman goes on to relate how he took one of the plates, went to the mine, dug up a plateful of dirt, and then swirled it in the fast flowing waters of the creek. He confesses that he kept at the process for several hours, and in the end his efforts were rewarded with a few flecks of gold and even a small gold nugget.

What was particularly striking was he closing comment, "I was surprised," he writes, "that only one other person made use of the opportunity."

The prospect of free gold was an offer most people chose to pass up. Did they view it as not being worth the effort? Did they see it as being too good to be true? Did they have better things to do?

In the passage of Scripture presently before us we are confronted with the offer of wisdom from God. As we shall see, this is an offer we dare not refuse.

## **I. Take Heed to God's Wisdom, So that You May Experience His Blessing**

In verses 20-21 the wisdom of God is described as coming to the busiest intersection of the city and crying out for people to listen. God has a great desire for us to receive and possess His wisdom, and He offers His divine wisdom to us. Historically, these verses may poetically be describing the incident recorded in 2 Chronicles 17:7-9, where king Jehoshaphat sent out the Levites to teach the Word of God:

*"In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, ... to teach in the cities of Judah; <sup>8</sup>With them were certain Levites...and the priests Elishama and Jehoram. <sup>9</sup>They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of Jehovah; they went around to all the cities of Judah and taught the people."*

Personally, we have access to the Word of God, and the LORD is urging us to make use of it: consult it, accept it, trust it, obey it, live by it.

In verse 22 we find the wisdom of God identifying three types of people. First, there are the naïve: *"You who are naïve, how long will you love your simple ways?"* The *"naïve"* (or, the *"simple,"*) comes from a Hebrew root word פְּתָה, which has the meaning, "to open wide;" hence, as applied here, the word has the sense, to be susceptible or vulnerable to any and every influence; to be wide open to anything that may come along. Thus the naïve is the one who lacks discernment (the ability to judge and evaluate alternatives,) the one who even lacks a standard by which to make such evaluations and judgments. The naïve is the one who is impulsive, aimless, without direction; the one who "goes with the flow" of the crowd because it is easy, because he wants to conform, because he doesn't think. The naïve is the one who does not look beyond the immediate actions to the long-range consequences; he does not have a long-range perspective. The words of the Beetles' song, *Nowhere Man*, well sum up the character the Bible identifies as "the naïve": "He does not have a point of view, He knows not where he's going to ... "

The second type of person is the scoffer: *"How long will scoffers delight in scoffing ... ?"* Scripture defines the scoffer as one who refuses to receive rebuke or correction: *"A wise son accepts his father's instruction; but a scoffer does not pay attention to a rebuke"* (Prov. 13:1.) Furthermore, the scoffer is the one who seats himself in the judgment seat, making himself the self-appointed judge and appraiser of truth and values: *"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat* [this appears to be a

reference to the judgment seat, assuming the position of judge] *of scoffers*" (Psl. 1:1.) The scoffer assumes the position of God, (making himself the judge and standard for judgment,) and from that position he cynically and mockingly rejects all that comes from God, falsely assuming that he himself is immune to the judgment of God, note Isaiah 28:14-15a, "*hear the word of Jehovah, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup>... you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and we have made a pact with Sheol; when the overwhelming scourge passes through the land it shall not reach us.'*" The scoffers were confident that they were immune to God's judgment, which is here described as "*the overwhelming scourge.*"

The third type of person is the fool: "*[How long will] fools hate knowledge?*" The fool is the one who refuses to receive knowledge (or wisdom and instruction, note Proverbs 1:7b, "*fools despise wisdom and instruction,*") because he thinks he knows it all: "*The way of a fool seems right to him*" (Prov. 12:15a.)

The wisdom of God directly addresses the simple, and only indirectly addresses the other two: "*You who are naïve, how long will you love your simple ways? How long will scoffers delight in scoffing and [how long will] fools hate knowledge?*" (vs. 22.) This is so because there is hope for the naïve, whereas the other two are very much set in their ways. We are again reminded of a sobering spiritual principle: conscious, persistent rejection of the truth of God (as is the case with the scoffer and the fool,) eventually results in a callousness that prevents one from receiving the truth, note Romans 1:28, "*since they refused to acknowledge God in their thinking, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things that are not proper.*"

In verse 23 the wisdom of God issues to us a command and a promise: "*If you would respond to my rebuke, I would pour out my Spirit upon you and cause you to understand my teaching.*" If you turn to the wisdom of God and heed its command to walk in the ways of God, the Holy Spirit will give you understanding and will help you to walk in the way of God's truth.

When God offers us His wisdom, we do well to receive it. Today the wisdom of God is offered to us in the Person of Jesus Christ the One in whom the fullness of God's wisdom dwells. Writing to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul declares of Christ: "*they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col. 2:2b-3.) Christ reveals Himself in the completed Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Take heed to God's wisdom, so that you may experience His blessing; the wisdom of God declares, "*whoever listens to me will live in safety and will be at peace, without fear of calamity*" (Prov. 1:33.)

## II. Take Heed to God's Wisdom, Because You will Regret Refusing It

Verses 24-26 declare that if we reject God's counsel, God will laugh at our calamity. These verses are speaking about a persistent rejection of God's counsel: *"you refused to listen when I called"* (vs. 24;) *"I stretched out my hand, but no one paid attention"* (vs. 24;) *"you ignored all my advice"* (vs. 25;) *"would not accept my rebuke"* (vs. 25.) Here we may also take note of the LORD's rebuke of Israel at a later time in the history of the covenant nation:

*But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. <sup>12</sup>They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that Jehovah of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. Therefore, there came great wrath from Jehovah of hosts. (Zech. 7:11-12)*

The inevitable result of rejecting God's counsel is calamity (disaster): *"I will laugh at your calamity"* (vs. 26a.) The reference here is to the Day of Judgment. On the Day of Judgment the response of God towards the sinner who has spurned and rejected God's counsel is scornful rejection: *"I will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when what you dread overtakes you"* (vs. 26.)

Verses 26-28 declare that when the Day of Judgment comes, it will be too late to seek God's mercy:

*I will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when what you dread overtakes you; <sup>27</sup>when what you dread overtakes you like a storm and your calamity sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish overwhelm you. <sup>28</sup>Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.*

We would do well to heed the further counsel of Scripture with regard to this matter:

*Seek Jehovah **while he may be found**; call to him **while he is near**. (Isa. 55:6)*

*I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2b)*

*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. (Heb. 4:7b)*

Note the case of Felix as described in Acts 24:24-26;

*Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified and said, "That is enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." <sup>26</sup>He hoped ... that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and spoke with him. (Acts 24:24-26)*

When Felix refused to respond in repentance to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit withdrew, leaving Felix hardened and callous to any subsequent preaching by the Apostle Paul. Whereas initially Felix was terrified by the

preaching of righteousness and the judgment to come, subsequently he could entertain the apostle Paul without conviction of sin and even hope to gain a bribe from him in exchange for Paul's release. As noted above, when Felix refused to respond in repentance to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit withdrew, leaving Felix hardened and callous to any subsequent preaching by the Apostle Paul.

Verses 29-31 warn that if we reject the way of God, we will inevitably suffer the consequence of going our own way: *"Because they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear Jehovah—<sup>30</sup>they would not accept any of my advice, they despised my rebuke—<sup>31</sup>therefore, they will eat the fruit of their way and be filled with the consequences of their own decisions."* We may also take into account the New Testament warning contained in Galatians 6:7-8,

*Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will also reap: <sup>8</sup>the man who sows to please his sinful nature, shall reap destruction from the sinful nature; but the man who sows to please the Spirit, shall reap eternal life from the Spirit. (Gal. 6:7-8)*

The wisdom of God warns, "The aimlessness of the naïve will kill them" (vs. 32a.) That spiritual instability, that spiritual and moral aimlessness and drifting—being like a weather vane atop a roof in a strong and ever shifting wind—the refusal to submit to Christ's yoke and become His disciple, will eventually prove to be deadly to the soul and result in eternal condemnation. Let us heed the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when He says, *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matt. 11:29.) Note, also, Hebrews 5:9; *"[Christ] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."*

Proverbs goes on to warn, *"the 'security' of fools will destroy them"* (vs. 32b.) The Hebrew word (שְׁלוֹמָה) translated "security" has both the meaning of "quietness" and "carelessness," or "negligence." Thus, what is referred to here is that false confidence the fool entertains—namely, the confidence that all will be well with his soul, even though he ignores and rejects the commandments of God and refuses to surrender his life to Christ the Savior—that false confidence will eventually destroy him, consigning him to the righteous judgment of God:

*Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers!" (Matt. 7:21-23)*

### **Conclusion (continued on next page)**

By means of this passage of Scripture, we are confronted with the offer of wisdom from God. As we have seen, this is an offer we dare not refuse.

May we each one take heed to the word of Christ (the One who Himself is the wisdom of God incarnate): *“the words I have spoken to you are spirit [spiritual, pertaining to the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God], and are life”* (Jn. 6:63.)

May God grant us to respond in the same way as the apostle Peter: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>We have believed and know that you are the Holy One of God”* (Jn. 6:68-69.)