

The Glory and Pursuit of Wisdom

Proverbs 8 (05/28/17)

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“The relentless pursuit of perfection.” That was the tagline for a certain brand of vehicles a few years ago. We should be on “the relentless pursuit of God’s wisdom,” because without this wisdom of Proverbs 8, we know nothing for sure. We walk in darkness. Solomon personifies wisdom here for us as a lady to make it real and attractive. She is the quintessence of divine beauty. Every attribute of God is infused with this infinite wisdom. Lady Wisdom is the mind of the triune God revealed to us in all of creation, the Bible, and God’s great plan of redemption in Jesus Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Colossians 2:3)

You need this wisdom. Either you will hear and receive and live, or you will reject and neglect and die. There are only two choices in this life. So let’s see how Lady Wisdom attracts our hearts to listen to her, love her, and find true and eternal life.

No matter where you are or who you are, Wisdom is calling out to you – vv 1-9.

1 Does not wisdom call, And understanding lift up her voice? 2 On top of the heights beside the way, Where the paths meet, she takes her stand; 3 Beside the gates, at the opening to the city, At the entrance of the doors, she cries out: 4 "To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men. 5 "O naive ones, understand prudence; And, O fools, understand wisdom. 6 "Listen, for I will speak noble things; And the opening of my lips will reveal right things. 7 "For my mouth will utter truth; And wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8 "All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; There is nothing crooked or perverted in them. 9 "They are all straightforward to him who understands, And right to those who find knowledge.

The fact that wisdom is calling to you, lifting her voice, and crying out to you is because of how desperately you need what she has to give you. You need this wisdom for three reasons.

- First, because you were created by God and therefore dependent on God to interpret all of life. Even before the fall of man in Genesis 2 we needed God’s wisdom. Without God’s revealed wisdom in the Bible, we would be in a world of darkness and ignorance.
- Second, because you are fallen in Adam and therefore radically depraved especially in your minds, you are unable to understand God’s purposes for your life. God has to give you new hearts so you can access His wisdom, and without His wisdom you would never fulfill His purpose for your lives.
- Third, you need God’s wisdom to rightly order your ways. Just think about what the Bible teaches about where you came from, why you’re here, where you’re going, about marriage and work and accountability, about servanthood and salvation, that you were made by God, for God, to become like God, like His Son. You need this wisdom now more than ever! The gospel, new birth, Christ in His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost, and the final consummation when Christ returns all flow out of God’s infinite fullness of wisdom.

So wisdom is calling you as you journey down your road. And notice where she calls you in verses 2-3. She is out there in the middle of your life, not hidden away in a corner. She is high, fully exposed, right there where you walk at the crossroads of your life when you are making decisions, on the way to work and the way home, when you go to school and when you go shopping. She is there when you go into your home and when you go out – “At the entrance of the city, at the opening of the doors.” She’s actively calling to your heart, wanting you to hear. You need her and she’s available to you. She is exactly what you need for life in this world as you walk with God and deal with the temptations and trials that you all face. She has the answers for you if you will listen to her. Will you listen? Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, **with all wisdom** teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

"But I'm not a scholar. I don't know much about the Bible. This isn't for me." No, wisdom is calling to people just like you and me, verse 5 – for dummies and fools. God's Wisdom for Dummies! I haven't seen that book, but with the grace and work of God in our hearts, even we nobodies and nothings (1 Corinthians 1:26-28) can listen and as God changes our hearts, we repent, we come to Christ, we become new creations in Christ. Wisdom is for you and me! Will you listen?

Verses 6-9 describe what she brings into your life that you need every day: noble things, right things, true things, righteousness, nothing twisted or perverted, all things right and good. She is flawless in her perfection. You will be listening to someone every day, and most of what you hear will not be focused on pleasing God. That's why you need what wisdom gives. Everything necessary for faith and practice is clearly revealed in this book of wisdom, the Bible, and what you can't understand you leave with God. The wisdom of God brought by the Spirit of God into your heart makes you wise to salvation. Are you listening to her call? You can't live life on this planet as God intended without her.

No matter what your earthly goals and ambitions are, Wisdom's worth is infinitely above anything else – vv. 10-21.

10 "Take my instruction and not silver, And knowledge rather than choicest gold. 11 "For wisdom is better than jewels; And all desirable things cannot compare with her. 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge and discretion. 13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate. 14 "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, power is mine. 15 "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. 16 "By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly. 17 "I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me. 18 "Riches and honor are with me, Enduring wealth and righteousness. 19 "My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, And my yield better than choicest silver. 20 "I walk in the way of righteousness, In the midst of the paths of justice, 21 To endow those who love me with wealth, That I may fill their treasuries.

We cannot possibly plumb the depth or scale the heights of the value of wisdom. MacArthur has this note in his study Bible, "The most valuable reality a young person can attain is the insight to order his life by the standard of truth." That has always been true, but how much more today. You young guys are facing a rapidly changing culture with an alarming slide away from God's wisdom into a godless abyss of evil. Lies have become established as truth in our culture. Take evolution as one example out of many others. Isaiah 59:14 pictures our nation, "Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; **For truth has stumbled in the street**, and uprightness cannot enter." Romans 1:25 puts its finger on what is happening, "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Pack your suitcase with God's wisdom as you journey into the future. You'll need it.

God has blessed us with much material wealth. And we hope every young person works hard and is able to provide abundantly for himself and his family. In fact, wisdom teaches us how to be disciplined and prudent and handle finances wisely. But as God says right here in verses 10-11, wisdom's worth is infinitely above any earthly treasure. That's exactly what Christ said in Matthew 6:24, "You cannot serve God and money." Never trade wisdom for even the most valuable of earthly treasure.

Verse 13 gives the password to wisdom – the fear of the Lord. Wisdom does not mean you understand the inner mind of God or why God does all that He does. Wisdom is trusting God when you don't understand. True wisdom is right here: The fear of the Lord and submission to His authority, to depart from evil! It's the opposite of pride and arrogance and thinking you can know what life is all about without God. That's deadly. And notice, wisdom hates evil. You cannot have God's wisdom without hating what God hates.

Drop down to verse 17. Wisdom calls for our supreme love and early (KJV), diligent seeking of her. We should rise every morning pursuing God's wisdom! The fact is that we don't love Christ if we don't seek Him with all our hearts, above all other objects and even people. Jesus said in Luke 14:26 that in comparison to our love for Him, all our other loves look like hate. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own

life, he cannot be my disciple.” Christ doesn’t want a lukewarm love! Wisdom calls for diligent pursuing after her above all - passionate, diligent, up at the crack of dawn kind of pursuit!

Go back to verse 14. You need her counsel – how to live for God’s glory. You need her sound wisdom – firm, unmoving, unchanging. You need her understanding – wisdom for good decisions. You need her power – nothing less than the Spirit of God equipping you and enabling you to live out her calling on your life.

These riches in verses 18-21 are the wealth of God’s sovereign grace given to every believer. Not the clatter and clink of gold and silver to clothe your dead corpse, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account, making you acceptable to God, the wealth of His Spirit within you producing the fruit of wisdom. Wisdom fills the treasuries of those who embrace her.

No matter what this world tells you about the big issues of life, Wisdom’s glory precedes and exceeds them all – vv. 22-31.

22 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. 23 "From everlasting I was established, From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. 24 "When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no springs abounding with water. 25 "Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills I was brought forth; 26 While He had not yet made the earth and the fields, Nor the first dust of the world. 27 "When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed, 29 When He set for the sea its boundary So that the water would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth; 30 Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, 31 Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having my delight in the sons of men.

Now this section blows me away. This is the glory of Wisdom. How interesting that Proverbs takes us back to Genesis 1 and bases her argument on creation! That’s why we make a big deal of Genesis 1 and creation. God wants you to see that all of creation is reflecting His brilliant, dazzling wisdom. Psalm 104:24, “O Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.” You can’t open your eyes without seeing His wisdom.

Not only that, but this wisdom that is calling you and assuring you of her worth is emphasizing that she is paramount, superior, unrivalled by any earthly or human wisdom. She was there in God’s mind, Jesus’ mind, and the Spirit’s mind even before the triune God set out to create the entire universe. Verses 22-26 emphasize this. “I was God’s wisdom before Genesis 1:1, before God through His Son and by the power of His Spirit began creating, I was there.” Who will you listen to for your life’s counsel and direction and wisdom – fallen man in his darkness and ignorance or this divine wisdom from eternity past? This is the glory of wisdom! She preceded all that is. Before there was anything, there she was - the infinite brilliance of the mind of the triune God.

And then as God began creating, she was right there – verses 27-31. Every bit of God’s creation displays the overwhelming wisdom of God and all her glory. Remember the days of creation? Day One – light. Day two – atmosphere. Day three – land and veggies. Day four – sun and moon, and, oh yes, He threw in a few untold trillion stars to impress us with His power. One author said all the stars would be like a pile of dimes as high as Chicago’s Sears Tower and cover the entire North American continent at that height (Steve DeWitt, *Eyes Wide Open*, p. 66). Day five – fish and fowl. And Day six – animals and us! And then on Day seven He took a rest. How amazing! Everywhere you look - up, down, in, and out - you’re looking at brilliant, superior, unrivalled, glorious wisdom.

It took Isaac Newton, born in 1643, to figure out why the moon keeps traveling at 2,288 mph around the earth and why the earth keeps traveling at 67,000 mph around the sun. Why don’t they fall in or fly out? For all these centuries they’ve continued on their journey. He wrote, “Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who set the planets in motion. This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.”

Verses 28-29 tell us God made just the right amount of water for the earth and made the mountains just the right weight and packed all we'd need for our voyage on this God-designed space vehicle! The trees keep giving us oxygen and we keep feeding them CO2 at the rate of 2 pounds a day. Hearts keep beating and babies keep being conceived and growing from a dot into a magnificent display of God's wisdom as that baby develops lips, eyes, little fingers and toes, and everything else.

This is but a hair's breadth of God's wisdom on display for us to study and marvel. We should be thrilled at the perfect balance and glory of the wisdom of our awesome God! Now listen to our friend John Calvin, "As soon as we acknowledge God to be the supreme Architect, who has erected the beautiful fabric of the universe, our minds must necessarily be ravished with wonder at his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power." Why would you not listen to her call?

Let's look at something else in verses 30-31. God in His wisdom thoroughly enjoyed Himself as He created everything! God isn't a cosmic robot or machine. Look at God in His wisdom here, rejoicing, delighting. God made us in His image and that's why we should find joy in whatever we do that is beautiful or useful or just helpful, even fixing the toilet. What joy when you finish the job! I carefully stained and polyurethaned six panel doors for a year. I found joyful satisfaction in seeing them hung in new homes we were building and feeling the smooth as satin finish. There's that godlike inner satisfaction with a job well-done that God Himself knew. On day six of creation He saw that "It was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

God especially delighted in the creation of man, the apex of the entire creation week. Who is man, this little speck of biped dust walking across the surface of the earth, that God is mindful of him? Of course, in His eternal wisdom He had decreed to make man, for Adam to fall into sin, and to come as the second Adam to redeem fallen man from the curse and condemnation of sin and take this innumerable host of people from every nation and tribe along with Him to eternal glory! But from the very beginning the wisdom of God delighted in the creation of human beings made in His own image.

No matter what else you choose to do with your life, pursue God's Wisdom above all - vv. 32-36.

Proverbs 8:32-36 "Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, For blessed are they who keep my ways. 33 "Heed instruction and be wise, And do not neglect it. 34 "Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at my doorposts. 35 "For he who finds me finds life And obtains favor from the LORD. 36 "But he who sins against me injures himself; All those who hate me love death."

You have a choice. Watch daily at her door like a lover eagerly waiting for an opportunity to spend time with his loved one – waiting, watching, ah, here she comes! Meet with her, listen to her, take her with you and apply all she says to your life! This is the only way to human flourishing. Verse 35, "He who finds me finds life." This blessed man seizes every opportunity to hear wisdom, from daily time in the Word to every other opportunity to learn and grow and pursue Wisdom. Watching daily. Waiting. Listening. As Bridges says "I will wait at the post of his doors, missing no opportunity of a means of grace; I shall not wait in vain."

Or, you can pursue your own condemnation! Verse 36, "All those who hate me love death." Who in their right mind would choose darkness and death and hell when light and life and heaven are right here? Who would drink from the stinking sties of depravity when the sparkling water of life is available? Who would eat rotten, godless garbage when delicious foods of all sorts are right there in front of you? Who would jump into the arms of a murderer and traitor of your soul when you could rest joyfully in the arms of the loving, wise, and powerful Savior? Why will you die when life is offered to you? God takes no delight in the death of the wicked, but that they may turn and live! Will you listen to wisdom? Will you choose blessing or cursing?