

Wisdom Warnings

Prov. 1:20-33

Introduction:

1. Let's do some work this evening in the book of Proverbs, from chapter one.

- A. A “proverb” is a wise saying in which a few words are put together – to convey to the reader some needed instruction.
- B. **Condensed instruction for good living.**
- C. Now the idea is not – to be able to read it quickly.
- D. The idea is to read it, then think . . . ponder the application and examine yourself.

2. All kinds of very specific matters of attitude and behavior are brought up in Proverbs.

- A. Very specific instruction about money, speech, parenting, marriage, sex, drinking and violence.
- B. But all through Proverbs there is an underlying theme → **Wisdom.**
- C. And in this context, wisdom is – learning how God wants us to live, and being serious about that way of life.

3. **In chapter one – in the third paragraph, or final section – We are warned about not taking seriously the call to wise living.**

4. I want us to hear the urgency and ponder the meaning of these **Wisdom Warnings: Prov. 1:20-33 (NIV)**.
Body:

I. **WARNING #1 → Don't Wait.**

A. Seems to be very typical – to know what we need to do, but **not do it now.**

1. We use the word “procrastination.”
2. But it is more than just a scheduling issue.
3. It is not just putting something off.

B. **It is a heart issue.**

1. In terms of knowledge – we know we ought to bring our lives into full submission to God.
2. We know what the Bible says, but we get absorbed in present pleasure . . . the emotions of the moment . . . the comfort of appetite . . . we are too busy with this world to think about the other.
3. These are heart issues.

C. Solomon give us this picture – of wisdom trying to get our attention . . . urgently calling out to get us to slow down and make the changes we need to make.

D. Listen again: **Vss. 20-22.**

E. Are we listening?

1. Do we realize how serious all this is, about God's claim on our lives?
2. Do we think we can play with the devil now, and then make things right with God just before death?
3. This kind of postponed participation in God's wisdom – reminds me of the "sluggard" in the book of Proverbs.
4. That's the person who may be very active – but is spiritually inactive . . . never really any sense of urgency, about God and His will.

F. I read this story:

I read a story in the *L. A. Times* a long time ago. A guy goes to the house where he grew up and knocks on the door. Because he hadn't been there for 20 years, he finds himself getting sentimental. He asks the owners if he can walk through the house, and they let him. While in the attic, he finds an old jacket of his. He puts it on, reaches into the pocket, and pulls out a stub. It's a receipt from a shoe repair shop. He realizes he had taken a pair of shoes there twenty years ago, and in the midst of the move, he had never picked them up. On a whim he decides to go to the shoe repair shop. Just to be funny, he takes the receipt out and hands it to the guy behind the desk, saying, "Are my shoes ready?" The guy goes back to the workroom for a minute, comes back to the counter, and says, "Come back a week from Thursday."

That's the mind of the sluggard; they're always saying, "A week from Thursday."

*John Ortberg, in his sermon "Intercepting Entropy,"
PreachingToday Audio, Issue #295*

- G. So – let's determine, when the Word of God calls us to change, we will take ourselves to that task at once.

1. We cannot wait.
2. God is watching.
3. No excuses – now is the time.

II. **WARNING #2 → Be Aware of Consequences.**

- A. Listen to this next part: **Vss. 23-27.**
- B. I want us to look at these words, one after the other: “disaster, calamity, storm, whirlwind, distress and trouble.” **You want any of that?**
1. God calls us through His Word, to discover our sin – come to Christ, and live under His authority.
 2. If we don’t listen . . . if we ignore, reject and put off obedience –
 3. We need to be aware of consequences: **disaster, calamity, storm, whirlwind, distress and trouble.**
- C. This reminds me of a theme that is prominent in the prophets ~ *men like Isaiah and Jeremiah; Joel and Amos.*
1. In the books of prophecy in the Old Testament – a predominate theme is: **Your sin is getting you into trouble!!**
 2. Really, the ideal is – to see where sin leads, then decide you will not sin.

3. And to see the glory of God, and decide you will serve Him – thus show reverence for Him . . . **and avoid the distress and trouble sin brings.**
- D. But the prophets of the Old Testament spoke to people who just didn't get it that . . . or if they got it – they didn't do it.
1. They sinned themselves into disaster, complained that they were in trouble . . .
 2. The prophets of God convicted them of their sin – and the people not only didn't listen to the prophets, but persecuted them.
- E. Solomon is talking about that.
1. Don't listen to God now, and put off obedience . . . and become worldly and indifferent to Christ, **and there are consequences in this life and the next.**
 2. Solomon points to the outcome of sinful, selfish living.
 3. Depending on what translation you have – the words are: *terror, destruction, anguish, distress...*
- F. And notice in verse 31 – **Eating the fruit of their own way.**

1. Have you ever talked to a broken person?
2. I've had that experience – of someone saying to me, “I've ruined my life . . . one by one, I've made wrong choices ... I've wandered away from God, and I am destroyed.”
3. That's a powerful experience.
 - a. All you can do is – use the Word to get the person to the depths of repentance and then share with them the promises of forgiveness.
 - b. You can teach and admonish and help . . .
4. But the grief of sin is overwhelming.

G. We need to determine to listen to God
before calamity overtakes us like a storm.

III. **Warning #3 → Someday, it will be too late.**

- A. We don't like to think about this, but listen: **Prov. 1:28-32.**
 1. Listen to verse 32, as rendered in the CEV (Contemporary English Version).
 2. Prov. 1:32

Sin and self-satisfaction bring destruction and death to stupid fools.

3. That may really seem to be too bold...
to much of an edge.
 4. But in defense of that rendering – when
the subject is “sin” and “self-satisfaction,”
the language needs to get our attention.
 5. Now to the main point about this aspect
of Solomon’s warning . . .
- B. *We are anxious to tell people – As long as
you are alive, you can repent and obey the
Lord and be saved.*
1. Well, I believe that is true.
 2. And could be – you have witnessed
this very thing.
 3. After years of rebellious living, someone
decides they will give up all their sin.
 4. They hear the gospel, believe in Christ,
come to Him in baptism – and begin
a new, changed life – perhaps a few
years or months before death.
 5. That happens – and may we pray and
work toward that good result.
- C. But let’s not overlook something else we have
seen → people going through life, not giving
heed to God’s call to wise living . . . postponing
repentance over and over . . .
1. And in the process of that postponed

repentance – **the heart changes.**

2. In fact there is a biblical expression – ***the hardening of the heart.***
 3. See – if you ignore God today, and you ignore God again tomorrow . . .
 4. Every day you ignore God – it becomes that much easier to ignore Him . . .
 5. Then – you deny Him . . . and the more you deny Him, the easier it is – and your heart hardens . . . the conscience suffers a burn out –
 6. And eventually – when good people appeal to you – **it becomes a joke!**
 7. You laugh the truth away.
- D. And so while it is true – in theory – one can turn from sin and be saved at any time . . .
1. In practice – prolonged sin eventually puts the sinner into such depth of complacency and indifference . . .
 2. The experienced sinner has no interests in repentance – and in reality, it is too late.
- E. Let's look at this, through a New Testament passage: **Heb. 6:4-6.**
1. As long as people oppose Christ, or as it says here – crucify Him again – **there is no disposition of heart to**

repent.

2. Thus, in reality, while that hard heart is active – it is impossible to get them to repent.

F. Now listen to this in Prov. again: **Prov. 1:28-32.**

G. What do I need to take from this?

1. As soon as I see myself taking even small steps away from the Lord, I need to turn around.
2. In the reading and study of the Word...
In Worship . . . In Bible Study . . .
In singing spiritual songs . . . In prayer;
in association with Christians . . .
3. As soon as I discover I'm beginning to turn away from wisdom – I need to wake up, humble myself, pray and get back where I need to be.

H. We do not have unlimited time.

I. **Ecc. 9:10** says – “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.”

J. God calls us to wise living – Are We Listening?

1. Don't wait.
2. Be alert to the consequences of sin.

3. Understand, someday it will be too late – either because of a hardened heart, or a hardened body.

[But let's take this to a positive level, in the final verse of Prov. 1]

IV. **Listen To This:**

“Whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm,” (v.33)

- A. Wisdom provided by God through His Word, is personified as “me.”
- B. And the message is – **Listen to me, and look at the blessings: you will “live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.”**
 1. This doesn't mean you will never get sick, have a problem or suffer any disappointment.
 2. This is about your spiritual welfare, that is – your relationship with God, and all the strength and hope that comes from that.
- C. And this is in contrast to the terror, distress, anguish of shunning wisdom, and living for what this world has to offer.
- D. If I will listen to the voice of wisdom from God – learn the truth about myself, and answer that call – **I dwell safely with God, secure because of what Christ did.**

Conclusion:

1. Listen Again: **Prov. 1:20-33.**
2. I read one time – about the book of Proverbs – **the book is about what you put in your mind, and how that content disciplines your life.**
 - A. We need God’s wisdom in our minds.
 - B. That mental content – with all the reverence for God that He deserves – can provide the discipline we need daily.
 - C. Christ can transform us and redeem us, and lead us to that kind of living.
3. But we have to listen, learn and live – as Scripture teaches.
4. Do you need to do anything about this? We invite your good responses, as we stand to sing.