

Proverbs 3:13-35, July 1, 2024 -Men's Monday Morning Bible Study

Overview:

9 Commands, 1 Positive (v21b) and 8 Negative (v21a, 25a, 27a, 28a, 29a, 30a, 31a&b)

Verses 13-26 are about the benefits of wisdom.

Verses 27-31 are primarily negative commands.

Verses 32-35 reviews the curses and blessings of lifestyle choices.

Commentary:

Blessed (v13) refers to a state of being that is superior to the alternative. He is going to outline what that looks like in real life in the verses to come.

(v14) Wisdom is better than silver or gold both in profit and produce. It is worth more and makes more. Even though it is intangible, it creates tangible outcomes that are better than money. Money in the hands of a fool is like water. He can never grasp it. Wise men know how to make their money make money. They invest. They are keen on the practice of delayed gratification.

Wisdom is better than the outcomes of wisdom (v15). The phrase “nothing you desire compares with her” should motivate us to direct our desires accordingly. “Wisdom is more precious than pearls” calls us to examine our desires and order them in a way that makes sense. Wisdom is the means by which those things are acquired. It’s like having insider knowledge on the stock market. Wisdom reveals what is hidden and unlike insider information that is specific, wisdom shapes a man’s understanding and character. That transformation helps him to interact in the world in a way that is profitable and truly “blessed.”

(v16a) Wisdom brings a long life. It keeps men from doing stupid things that will shorten their lifespan and it also promotes health and longevity. The fool is like the young man having no regard for his life. “He doesn’t give a ____.” He is flippant about the future and is unconcerned. Verse 2 says the same thing.

(v16b) “riches and glory” is the language of kings. Wisdom makes men kings. It shapes their understanding in such a way that transforms their character. This is

the explicit outcome of verses 14-15, namely riches and glory. We know what riches are. Glory is the kind of life that is enviable. Many want the outcome but don't want to pay the price to become wise. They want the benefits but not the discipline.

V17 outlines the pleasures of wisdom. It brings about satisfaction and peace or wellbeing. There is a lack of anxiety when wisdom is present. It drives out unwarranted worry and doubt. It is pleasurable and peaceful.

V18 wisdom is compared to a "tree of life." This reminds me of Psalm 1:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

In v19-20 we get a peek into the inner workings of how God created. It says that YHWH created the heavens and earth by wisdom and discernment. I take this to be an implicit commentary on the outcome of our lives when we align them with Him. We, likewise, will be like our master. We will embrace His ways, namely wisdom and discernment, and will likewise build and create, therefore bearing His image and taking dominion (Genesis).

V21 is the first two commandments. The father tells the son to stay focused on these things. "don't let them deviate from your eyes" is a way of saying "don't lose sight of what matters most. Focus! This means that the son must strategically ignore everything that is not in view. He must not be good at certain things as he is single minded and focuses on the goal. The father further admonishes him to "guard sound wisdom and discretion" meaning that he is to protect it. He is to hold onto it and not let it go. Since it is so valuable (v14-15), once he attains it, he is to maintain it. Guard it and do not let it go.

V22 speaks of the result of this activity. It will "be life for your soul." This verse is transformational. Where else can we get life? We try to find it in so many other

ways. Acquiring and maintaining wisdom will bring deep satisfaction and meaning. It gives us energy and is the opposite of depression, anxiety and lethargy. It puts a spring in our step knowing that our efforts are rightly ordered. Wow!

V23 Wisdom brings with it security or establishment. It not only provides a lack of danger but also has the nuance of permanence. It is able to stand up to the storms of life given that the foundation is built on the rock (Matt 7). The phrase in 23b “your foot will not stumble” is the idea that wisdom provides sure footing to be able to operate with confidence. This is not male machismo bluster but instead a deep and abiding confidence based on God’s truths. This is “standing on the promises.”

V24 speaks to the rest that comes from such a lifestyle. Wise men sleep differently. They can rest in the sovereignty of God and know that they have done their part. They get up rested and ready to do it again each day. I know tons of people who can’t sleep or have restless sleep. They are worried and dreading the coming day or days. Wisdom from God brings about serenity, peace (v17b), restful and recharging sleep.

V25-26 is a command to “not be afraid of sudden dread.” The son is to take hold of his emotions and direct them to confidence in God. He is to align his life in such a way that he doesn’t fear the onslaught of wicked men. He is to indeed, “trust in the LORD with all his heart, and not lean on his own understanding” v5-6. YHWH will be his confidence and will guard him. The phrase in 26b “keep your food from being caught” refers to an animal being free to run with no fear of traps or encumbrances. With God’s wisdom, we are free to run the race with vigor. We are free to run downhill in a straight line. We can hammer down and not hold back.

Verses 27-32 tell the son some practical advice on *how* to do this and contain the majority of commands.

V27-28 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your hand to do it. There is an implication that the “good” belongs to someone else. This means that the son is to be expedient when a debt is owed or perhaps something was borrowed and need to be returned or a favor is outstanding. Don’t unnecessarily hold something back. Be quick to settle accounts.

If you employ people or hire companies to do work, you should pay them quickly and not make them ask for it. This has direct implications for business today. I know that there are some companies that extend their vendors out 90-120 days. This is wrong. I know other companies that pay their vendors very timely, some even immediately. This is the way.

V29 prohibits taking advantage of someone who is unsuspecting. Don't see them as someone to exploit.

V30 prohibits needless violence or strife. Be a peacemaker (Matt 5).

V31 is particularly insightful to me. It forbids envying a man of violence and adds to it the command to "not choose any of his ways." Angry, violent men are to be avoided. They are not to be envied. Dan Pena seems like a prototypical kind of person to me. Despite his success and being correct about many things, he is to be avoided. He is not the only one. The original context probably had to do with those who were robbers by violence.

Verses 32-35 compare and contrast the wicked and the righteous.

V32a God hates the wicked. "the devious are an abomination." YHWH detests them (11:1 & 20:23). We should hate what God hates.

V32b "His secret council is with the upright" means that God supernaturally guides those who are His. He directs their paths.

V33 outlines the contrast between the wicked and the righteous: the curse of YHWH and blessings. It's that simple.

V34a notes that God makes fun of those who make fun of him. Think of Bill Mahr or Richard Dawkins. These men are scoffers. Dawkins calls god "capricious" and Mahr has routinely made fun of Jesus and Christianity.

God scoffs at the scoffers. He will end them. Psalm 2.

V34b He gives grace to the humble. I am amazed at how much we think of ourselves. We constantly compare ourselves to others and always pick someone that we are better than. Instead, we should remember that the standard is God Himself. That is, perfect righteousness. There is no room for the arrogant. He gives

grace to the humble. James (4:10) says to “humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.

V35 the wise have an inheritance. It is glorious and beautiful. It is lasting and outstanding. They have a legacy of magnificence.

The fool has regret and disgrace. His life and legacy are shameful.

Closing Prayer:

Lord God of heaven and earth, make us wise unto salvation, now and forevermore. By your Spirit, give us wisdom and understanding that we may walk with Christ more circumspectly, in His name we pray. Amen