

Wisdom's Blessing and Benefit

Proverbs 3:13-20

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Introduction

Imagine I told you that I had created a next generation airplane. I decided to ignore previous work of other engineers and do my own thing. In my design, I ignore the basic principles of aerodynamics and lift. I ignore the concept of gravity. I just did, what I wanted, or whatever felt right to me as I built this fantastic new creation.

Finally, I reveal my newly built flying machine. To your shock and horror, it not only looks ugly...but it looks nothing like an airplane. It looks more like a brick. And, I offer you a ride. Would you get in? Would you trust a someone who had ignored the basic laws that govern flight? No, probably not. And you would probably go out of your way to start warning people away from that crazy person who thinks they know better than the proven principles and laws of flight.

But, isn't that sometimes how we can be? God has given us his word in the Bible...its his wisdom for this world. Yet, at times we think we know better. We follow our feelings and hearts straight into sin, rebellion and foolishness, only to experience the consequences of our choices. And, if we continue rejecting it for our entire lives, we will experience the greatest kind of consequence...eternal separation from God under his wrath, and far from his grace.

In Proverbs 3:13-20, we're going to see quite a bit about the way this world works, and the one who created it. Solomon has a lot to say about this world, and the one who created it.

*13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.*

*16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.*

*19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;
by understanding he established the heavens;
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open,
and the clouds drop down the dew.
— Proverbs 3:13–20 (ESV)*

The Blessing of Wisdom

Our passage starts by describing the person who finds wisdom and understanding:

*13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
— Proverbs 3:13 (ESV)*

Prioritizing Wisdom and Understanding (v 13)

Solomon starts our passage by calling the person who finds wisdom “blessed”. This is the first time he uses this word in Proverbs, and the first time our ears should perk up at the connection between the wisdom of God and the impact it has on us. For those who find wisdom, they are happy, joyful, they have received a wonderfully good thing. And not just wisdom, but also the one who gets understanding is considered blessed. Notice here that there seems to be an active sense to these two statements. Both finding and getting seem to imply a striving for and achieving. There’s a searching that it takes to find wisdom, and effort involved in getting understanding. Gaining wisdom and understanding isn’t something we should assume will just happen to us, but rather it’s something we work towards with the help of God. It’s something a person has to seek out and lay hold of, adding it to their possession, and keeping and guarding it.

I don’t think it’s any accident that Solomon puts this here, now in the flow of Proverbs. If you look back to the previous few verses, Solomon reminds us of the loving discipline of the Lord. He disciplines those he loves. He corrects us. It seems as though in the midst of that discipline, there’s an opportunity for us to gain wisdom and understanding through it. We may balk at discipline, but it’s the love of God that brings discipline and correction. That discipline and correction gives us an opportunity to understand the ways of God and apply it by living it out. That’s wisdom and understanding.

Now wisdom and understanding aren’t only gained through discipline and correction. There are plenty of opportunities to seek out and gain it throughout many areas of life. Solomon’s point seems to bring the question of whether or not this is a priority in our lives. Do we seek the to know God? Do we seek to know what his word says? And do we work hard at applying it in our lives to live it out?

Wisdom’s Incomparable Value (v 14-15)

Because Solomon goes on to give us some reasons why it’s important and why we should prioritize it.

*14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
— Proverbs 3:14–15 (ESV)*

Listen to the words that describe wisdom and understanding: “gain”, “profit”, “precious”, and “beyond compare”. These aren’t just any words, they are value statements. For many of you, you’ve seen stock prices and retirement accounts go up, and down. You’ve seen gas prices jump up a dollar a gallon, and prices on everyday food and services get inflated. You feel the pain of what it costs just to keep getting the basic provisions to live in this world. But, Solomon is telling the reader that wisdom and understanding are so much more valuable than any kind of money or financial security.

He compares to silver and gold, two of the most precious raw metals they had at the time. These metals are precious because it takes a lot of effort to mine them, purify them, and make use of them. It's more precious than jewels that were formed under great heat and pressure, and must be searched for and found underground. These are very valuable items that are underground, needing to be found, and had to be dug out with great effort and care. They had to be searched for. They had to be taken possession of.

In the same way, wisdom and understanding are more valuable than these things. Today in our modern era, you can walk into a pristine jewelry store and be disconnected from the dirty and labor intensive mine that gold, silver and diamonds have come from. But they are valuable because of the hard work and labor it takes to find them, refine them, and make use of them. Solomon tells us the wisdom and understanding of God is far more precious, no it's not even worth comparing to those things. We gain and profit from wisdom in ways that aren't measured in earthly terms.

We aren't just blessed when we seek after and obtain wisdom by God's provision, but we are blessed with the most valuable kind of thing. This should put discipline and difficulties in a different light. They are opportunities for us to learn wisdom from the Lord. They are opportunities for us to be refined by him. And even all of life itself is one big opportunity to behold the wonder of Christ and what he has done for us.

Can anything truly compare with the cross of Christ? It's foolishness to the world who loves the things of the world. But as the apostle John reminds us, we should be seeking the things of God that are above where Jesus is preparing a place for us. That eternity in the presence of Jesus is truly beyond compare with anything here on earth. How can you even begin to calculate the value of being spared from eternal destruction forever? To discover and submit to the wisdom of Christ, is an immeasurable value for all of eternity.

Life In Wisdom

Solomon continues by expounding on the kind of blessing that wisdom brings in verse 16 through 18.

*16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.
— Proverbs 3:16–18 (ESV)*

Life in the Now (v17-18)

We know from previous sections of Proverbs that living in foolishness brings great risk, and often leads to destruction and death. So, by choosing to live by the wisdom of God, we can prevent the tragic ends that we would bring on ourselves from indulgent foolish living. Living in the wisdom of God will keep us from the disgrace and consequences of sinful living. There's a kind of self-inflicted pain and trouble we bring upon ourselves through foolish living. Solomon is showing us a better way, a wise way of living. A way of living that leads to a better future.

He continues in verse 17 showing us that wisdom also leads to pleasantness and peace. Have you ever met someone who just has a hard life? A person who has no friends? A person who has lived in such a destructive, self-indulgent way that it has ruined them? Solomon is show the opposite of that kind of person. Living out wisdom can also help you prevent the kind of pain and turmoil that a person can experience through foolish living.

Life in Eternity (v18)

But then Solomon continues in verse 18 and begins pointing us both backwards and forwards. He points us backwards toward the garden of eden, and forward to a future hope of what the free of life represents. He says that wisdom is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. This mirrors verse 13 that we started with in our passage, "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom." It sure is a blessing to find and lay hold of wisdom. Not just blessing, but a garden of eden kind of blessing. The garden, where there was no pain or suffering, no curse, no separation from God. It was the place where God formed humanity, gave them everything they needed, and the opportunity to live forever under his kingship.

But, as we read in Genesis 3, humans did not listen to the wisdom of God, and chose foolishness instead. And as a result, humans and the entire earth were put under a curse. Death and suffering entered the world, and set humans on a path for an even greater suffering and punishment in hell forever. We rejected eternal pleasantness and peace, only to be put on a path to damnation. But Solomon gives us a glimmer of hope.

Blessing comes to those who hold tightly to wisdom. To those who eat of the tree of life, they would live forever. Wisdom is shown to be like that. Ultimately the greatest wisdom of all is for a person to recognize their sinful nature before God, and to turn to Christ for salvation from sin's punishment. Wisdom is to live as his disciples in his commands. Wisdom keeps us from experiencing the eternal consequences of foolish living, and the destructive ends of rejecting Jesus and the life he gives us.

This is what we should be striving for. Do we try to hold fast to Christ? Are we easily distracted by the cares of this world, or the shiny trinkets that deteriorate and rust? This is what God's people should be clinging to. We should desperately be clinging to the hope we have in Jesus alone, because in Christ is the highest form of wisdom, his life, death, and resurrection that brings us salvation and a new life in the Spirit of God. This is what will bring blessing.

When we think about the this good news of Jesus, and following his ways, what value to we place on it? How much is it worth? In the book of Matthew, Jesus teaches us about the value of the kingdom of heaven:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
— Matthew 13:44–46 (ESV)

Is this how we think? Do live day to day thinking about eternity? As we parent our children, or love our spouses, or faithfully serve, or go to work, or take care of ourselves...do we do these things with eternity in mind? Do we measure the worth of eternal salvation through Christ, as greater than our own preferences and wants? Solomon tells us that this wisdom is beyond measure. The wisdom of Christ is a

tree of life. Pursue it. Not only for salvation, but for your everyday life, because he goes on to explain why.

God's Rule by His Wisdom (v19-20)

Our author, King Solomon goes on in verse 19 and 20 to show us something very important about wisdom:

*19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;
by understanding he established the heavens;
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open,
and the clouds drop down the dew.
— Proverbs 3:19–20 (ESV)*

Founded on Wisdom (v19)

Do you see it? Do you hear this truth? Wisdom is woven into the fabric of our existence. Yahweh the all-powerful God used wisdom to found the earth. It seems like the earth was built on the idea and concept of wisdom. Wisdom is the foundation of the earth. God built the earth on on top of wisdom. This earth that we live and dwell in, and ultimately where God would come down to save us.

Likewise, the heavens where the realm of angels and spiritual authorities exist, and we see and measure our seasons was carefully arranged, organized and brought into existence through understanding. Our universe and entire existence was founded God's way, on God's wisdom and understanding. Solomon reminds us that this is God's creation, God's world, God's universe. He founded it based on his wisdom and understanding. Romans 1:20 reminds us that the existence and nature of God can be seen in creation.

Sustained by Wisdom (v20)

In verse 20, Solomon continues from the foundation of the world, to the operation of the world. It begins to focus on how God rules over it and guides it.

This idea of the deeps breaking open could point to two different ideas in Genesis. The first could be pointing to Genesis 1 where the word of Yahweh tames the chaotic waters to bring form to a formless earth. The idea that the deeps burst forth with creation as God speaks things into existence. The second is the idea that the deeps burst open in Genesis chapters 6-8 as Moses records the flood waters bursting from the deep to judge the earth with the worst kind of destruction this earth has ever seen. Personally, I am leaning towards the judgement of the flood because of the strong clear language of the 'deeps bursting forth' and how it relates to the second half of this verse as a contrast.

By the very same knowledge that God judges the earth, he also blesses the earth. God uses water as a blessing to water the earth as it sustains and gives us life! In our modern day, we take water for granted. It's everywhere. The invention of indoor plumbing has made water completely normalized. The listeners would have known water as life itself. Water brings life! Humans need it to survive by drinking it. Plants need it to grow and thrive. Human and animals alike need the water to sustain ourselves and our food. Without water, there is no life. So water in this part verse is seen as an incredible blessing!

So then, by the knowledge of God, he uses the water he created for judgement to destroy life. (Except the family of Noah and what he took with him.) In contrast, that same knowledge that brings the

blessing of dew on the ground to provide give life. God knows how to use his creation for both judgement and blessing, and Solomon shows one example by reflecting on how God uses water as he sees fit and need to rule and govern this earth.

This world is God's, founded on God's wisdom.

Reflection

What joy and comfort knowing this is the kind of God we have. And that he has revealed his words to us in Scripture so we can understand the wisdom, understanding and knowledge that this world was built on, that leads us to him, and ultimately to salvation in Christ.

We can read these Proverbs and think, great, if I live in wisdom all the days of my life then I'm guaranteed a long life full of riches, honor, pleasantness, and peace here on earth! Yes, God has created the world in a way that we experience outcome of our choices. So, if we make wise choices and follow God's ways, then generally we won't have to suffer the hardship we'd bring upon ourselves through foolish living. But, that doesn't mean there's a way of living a suffering free life. We will experience hardship. Because we still live under the Genesis 3 curse.

But, there's a future reality that Solomon is also pointing us to. And, if we stop with the here and now, we're missing the bigger, and arguably more important picture that Solomon is pointing us to.

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."
— Revelation 21:1–4 (ESV)

This is the end result of salvation. Salvation comes only by the hand of God, for he is the one who formed the earth for his purposes. He is the one who made it possible for us to be saved. We were created by him and are completely under his ways and purposes. So, how should these proverbs shape our lives?

God's Wisdom as Supreme

Do you truly believe that God's word is truth? Or, maybe a better question is: Where do we fail to believe his word? In our reading of Scripture, where do we refuse to submit to it, or disregard it as something that "doesn't apply to me"? Who do we choose not to forgive in our lives, despite the forgiveness we have experienced? What interpretations, opinions, or preferences do we defend as if they are equal to Scripture? When do we *know* what God says, but work to reshape and bend it to our own desires?

Or, when do we go through suffering, and question God's wisdom in giving us what are going through. Or we may be tempted to question his self-proclaimed character of a good Father?

Or, where do we work hard to provide for our own salvation, or to add to what Christ has done because it's insufficient? Jesus has done it all, so let's rest in the life we have in him...living out the wisdom we have been given through the Bible.

This is God's world, built on his wisdom. He know's what is best and has given us wisdom for life. Life here in this world as believers, and life to come through the wisdom of Christ.

God's Wisdom as Most Valuable

Do we pursue God's wisdom as the most valuable thing we could possess? In Psalm 63:3, the psalmist reminds us that the love of God is better than life itself! Could we say that and genuinely believe it by how we spend our time? Do we study his word and meditate on it more than other things? Whether it's sports scores, professional development, the latest fashion trends, conspiracy theories, the hottest technology, the truth about COVID, scrolling the latest facebook feed updates, or even the latest financial outlook...what do we spend our time trying to find and gain? What we prioritize says a lot about what we value. So, what do your priorities tell you about what you treasure?

How do you know the wisdom of God? It's in his word. Are you regularly in the word? Are you submitting to it? Are you working hard at knowing it, understanding it, and living it out? After all...it's leading us to an unimaginable life of blessing and honor with our king. And this world was built on the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of man or what feels right.

It's far to easy to drift away from the wisdom that this world is was founded on and for. It may feel best to abandon it, and pursue our own way. But, let's hold firm to the wisdom of God. May we live in wisdom of Jesus, accepting him as the only salvation and receiving the greatest blessing of all. May we also continue on in him as the only way to be saved.