

serve the Lord, and walk in wisdom's ways is the emphatic call in our text.

Is it not the same call that is given in Acts 2 with Pentecost, only with more earnestness and emphasis still? When Jesus began His public ministry, we read in Mark 1:15, He went about preaching and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the gospel." When Peter preached on Pentecost, he too called to the people, "Repent...and save yourselves from this untoward generation" [Acts.2:38&40].

When you learn and follow wisdom's way you become convicted of sin and turn from sin to the Lord. In his Pentecost sermon Peter preached in a way that the people knew they were guilty of grievous sin and evil against the Lord, and that God had every reason to condemn them forever in His just judgment for all their sin, not least for their crucifying Jesus on the cross. The people were cut to the heart, pricked in their conscience and heart about their sins and sinfulness, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Repentance won't be there truly if you are not convicted of your sins and sinfulness thoroughly. Your and my sins in life are not simply some mistakes we make, or just a bad decision here and there, but each and every sin is wicked rebellion against God's righteous law and offense against the most holy God, for which, if we don't have perfect deliverance from, will not only mean always being under God's disfavor and wrath, but it will bring us also into certain and eternal punishment! God is emphatic. "Turn you at my reproof".

Are you listening to this earnest emphatic call? Being a Christian means hearing God's call, and indeed, by His grace turning from sin to the Lord, and living a life of ongoing repentance from sin. When you are truly repentant, you confess your sins and abhor them and turn to God for forgiveness and renewal. As someone said, "Repentance is not like the person who sent the government office a cheque for taxes with the remark, 'If I can't sleep, I'll send you the rest.'" No, but it is wholehearted turning from sin and turning to the Lord. It is leaving the world's ways and following wisdom's ways. It is saying no more, "yes" to the flesh, but praying and walking in the Spirit instead.

Wisdom's call to turn from sinful and foolish ways at God's rebuke - are you hearing it? Next week, the Lord willing we will conclude this radio message on Proverbs 1:23, a Pentecost-like proverb indeed! Amen.

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



A PENTECOST-LIKE PROVERB [1]

Listen to this 'Pentecost-like' proverb! I'm thinking here of what we read in Proverbs 1:23. There God's Word says: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." In most translations the word "spirit" here is not in capital letters, for it refers in this context not to the Holy Spirit directly but to the spirit of wisdom. We know, however, that with wisdom here, really it is the voice of Christ that is speaking, and the spirit of wisdom ultimately points to the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament we read in Acts 6:3 the congregation had to seek out from among them seven men for office described to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom". The Holy Spirit sent from the Father and the Son leads in wisdom's way. Therefore listen with me now to this 'Pentecost-like' proverb in Proverbs 1:23, "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

Notice with me here we have a message similar to Peter's on the first Pentecost long ago. Can you think of any parallels? I want to show in at least four ways some lines between this proverb's message and the message of Pentecost, and in doing so, the purpose is to drive home the message of our text, yes, with God's blessing with Pentecostal impact! Hear the Word of the Lord from Proverbs 1:23: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

The first point to be noted about this verse is how earnest it is. What does earnest mean? It means the author of the words is very serious about what he is saying and intent on you hearing him. When you are truly earnest about something you are eager and zealous and enthusiastic about what you have to say. You know what you have to say is so important and you want all to hear that important message you have to give. Look at verses 20-22 of this chapter to see how earnest Wisdom's cry, the Saviour's Word, here is in Proverbs 1:23. Verse 20 tells us Wisdom calls aloud and outside. She raises her voice wanting all to hear and listen. She cries not in some isolated field but along the main highways, where many will be passing by, and at the city gates where people in their daily life have to pass through at different times. You see, Wisdom's call must be heard, this is what comes across, and the Person of Wisdom, which we know refers ultimately to Christ Himself, wants His words, His message, to be heard.

To see more how earnest is our text, notice too who wisdom is calling to. Verse 22 mentions wisdom addressing simple ones, scorners and fools. So wisdom is speaking to people at different levels of not caring so much about what Wisdom has to say. Maybe you are in one of these three categories. Some are simply indifferent and unconcerned, others are making a big joke of whatever wisdom says, laughing it off just more or less nicely, and repeatedly refusing to take it seriously, and still others are those who hate the truth and turn their backs on it. But the point now is, wisdom's call is earnestly reaching out to all, not wanting anyone not to hear wisdom's call. All need to hear Proverbs 1:23, "*Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*"

Inasmuch as we see this earnest note with this text in Proverbs, must we not say with Pentecost, the earnestness of the gospel message, wisdom's way, is expressed even so much more? It could be argued that in our text passage in Proverbs the focus still is God's Old Testament covenant people in particular, but with Pentecost that focus changes, doesn't it, to literally all the nations of the world. On that first Pentecost Sunday when Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached in Jerusalem, there were people present from many different nations. The gospel would be spread with them bringing back to their lands the gospel tidings they heard. In Acts 1:8 Jesus told His disciples, "*...But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*"

Behold the earnestness and eagerness and enthusiasm and evangelical outreach of the gospel message with Pentecost just in the way the Holy Spirit came with "*a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind*" and how He enabled the disciples to speak in so many different languages telling the message about "*the wonderful works of God.*" The Lord is so earnest about His gospel Word and call!

How amazing this is really when you think of it. As fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, we have turned our backs on God and, as sinners, are headed in the way of just and eternal condemnation. But the day man fell, God promised a Saviour, His own Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. In all the history of the Old Testament we learn about mankind's natural disinterest and unconcern for the Saviour, and of repeated turning away from that Saviour God coming, but still in the fullness of time the Saviour came as God promised. Jesus fulfilled in His life and death all that is required for the full salvation of sinners, but again of ourselves, who has interest in Him or cares about Him? Yet God goes on, and in His great faithfulness He will make the gospel message known and sends the Holy Spirit also to work mightily to get that gospel message out and to drive it home. The message of Proverbs 1:23 is a Pentecost-like message being so earnest, and its earnestness is so much greater now in view of Pentecost.

Oh, how amazing is the earnestness of God concerning the gospel message for sinners like us! See the Lord pursue, in gracious care, rebellious mankind and covenant breakers and even the very people who took His Son and had Him crucified on Golgotha. Amazing love and tender mercy and grace! Do you see it with me? God is so perfect in the accomplishment of salvation and so pressing and patient and persevering in the proclamation of that message. When you know the Lord in your heart and life, this is something you can't get over, that God should so have reached out to you and keeps wanting to lead you in wisdom's way and not allow you to go your own foolish way. Does God's earnestness in leading us in right ways, out of wrong ways of wickedness and ungodliness in glorious paths of grace and truth melt your heart too? Is there not every reason to be so humbled with God's earnestness towards us, even when we so often show so little earnestness towards Him?

Let me conclude this first point about wisdom's call in our proverb being so earnest giving yet this illustration. Imagine as a young couple with two or three children that your toddler gets through a gate that was supposed to be locked and is headed towards the fast flowing river not too far distant or into that pool in your backyard, or near that bonfire in the field by your place. If you should see your child walking there, maybe running even, wouldn't you be earnest in running after him and even as you are doing so, calling and urging him, "No Johnny, come this way, turn back, and don't go a step further or nearer in the direction you are going. Hear me, Johnny, listen to me!" In our proverb so Wisdom, the Saviour, pursues His audience, and since Pentecost so God calls out through His Word and Spirit to all the world, "How long?" Notice that very phrase is used in verse 22. How long has God been earnestly pursuing and calling to you? Imagine this toddler not listening but going on opposite the way he should, and falling into that river or that pool or into that fire. "No", you say, "I can't imagine it". But is it how you in fact are responding to God? God Triune is so earnest in His gospel call. How long before you stop and listen, or will you perish in the way? Does God by His Spirit have your attention this time?

Listen to this 'Pentecost-like' proverb not only in it being so earnest but also so emphatic. "*Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*" What is so emphatic here is the call to turn, and the word used here to turn is one of the most common words also for repentance. The call here is to turn from sin to God, and truly to listen to God's rebuke and correction and righteous dispute with us, and His holding you and myself to account. You were created for God and His glory and living in sin is dishonouring to God and destructive for us. Earnestly and emphatically God says in all His Word, also through the voice of wisdom in Proverbs, 'Stop! Turn around! Repent, for why will you die!' To stop from following the way of self and this world and evil, and to seek and