

The Clear Call of Wisdom Proverbs 1:20-33

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity (doubt, skepticism, unwilling or unable to believe), it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way..." So begins the account of *A Tale of Two Cities* written by Charles Dickens.

That sounds a lot like today, doesn't it? We too, are in those kinds of days, days of wisdom and days of foolishness. Watch the news or read the paper and we are inundated with headlines about people or companies or communities that make decisions, some we applaud because they were wise decisions, others we just shake our head in bewilderment at how foolish their decisions were.

I recently read a story from a county commissioner in Colorado who explained that legislation was passed by the State that cities and counties are now mandated to give money to re-educate local Native Americans in the spirit beliefs of their ancestors, all in an effort to be politically correct. The government is helping people get back into spiritual enslavement.

There was another story about a 15 year old boy in Wisconsin. In one of his classes students were encouraged to submit their views regarding homosexuality for the local paper. He wrote his editorial piece from a Biblical perspective. It created quite a stir among the faculty and staff. He was called to the principal's office and berated for holding such narrow views. The principal even called him "ignorant" for holding such views and was told he could be suspended for such remarks. He was asked to remove his editorial opinion

because it was considered bullying. All this transpired without his parents being informed. A Christian legal group is now advocating on his behalf.

New York City passed a policy that bans churches from being able to meet in public schools. 60 churches serving low income, ethnic congregations are affected. The ban goes into effect February 12. It was upheld by the Supreme Court. State legislation is pending to grant use of public schools for churches.

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." It is the day in which we live, a day that is no different than any other time in history. It is the age of wisdom. It is the age of foolishness.

We are pursuing wisdom through a study of Proverbs. With that in mind please turn in your Bibles to **Proverbs chapter 1**. One of our teens recently visited a church with some friends. She said that no one had a Bible. All the verses were up on a screen. I'm glad you brought yours.

Proverbs 1:20-33

Our study will help us understand three truths.

The Reach of Wisdom

The Rejection of Wisdom

The Retribution of Wisdom

I. THE REACH OF WISDOM – v. 20-21

The first two verses of our Scripture passage reveal about wisdom that

Her call is public

Her call is personal

Her call is non-preferential

Her call is passionate

A. Her Call Is Public

We begin to see in this passage and will see it throughout our study of Proverbs that Wisdom is personified. It's a word that means to give human qualities to. In this case wisdom is perceived as a woman. Now it is not suggesting that men are foolish knuckleheads while women are always wise. Solomon chose to use a feminine personification. It would be like some guy talking about his car when he says, "she can really go." Or when he revs the engine and says "listen to her purr." Wisdom is portrayed as being as attractive as women.

We are given a caricature of wisdom as being feminine. One writer suggested that her name should be "Sofia" because in the Greek the word for wisdom is Sophia. So if we could use his suggestion we'll call her Sophia. In this particular passage she has gone to town to offer her services. In this case she is giving wisdom to any who will follow her. We find her in the public square. Imagine the setting of a large city with lots of people. [As a senior in High school we raised money for a senior trip that took us to Washington D.C. and New York City. Imagine a bus load of kids from little old Fairview going to the big city. That was a trip and I mean that in both the literal and figurative sense. New York City was just like you see on TV. People were everywhere. The streets and sidewalks were crowded. We went to Time Square and to Grand Central Station. It was teaming with people, lots of people.](#)

Here is wisdom going to a place in the city where the most people gather. She does not wait for them to come to her, she goes to them. She has gone to the public square and to the gateway. The city square was a prominent place where people gathered. It was an open space just inside the city gates. Located in this area were merchants selling their wares. Picture tables of produce and pottery and jewelry and cloth lined up all over. [If you have ever been to the Ann Art Fair you know how crowded it is with people moving from vender to vender.](#) Not only was it a place for merchandise to

be sold it was also a place where official business of the city was conducted. The leaders of the city met to discuss and decide current issues. This place was large enough to have both commercial trade and public meetings. Wisdom is in a public setting in the busy streets, the open market, and the gateway. **Proverbs 8:1-11** gives a good description of what she is speaking.

Notice as well that her call is not only public it is also personal.

B. Her Call Is Personal

Proverbs 8:17-21, 34-36

Wisdom has gone to the busiest place in the city in order to give her message to as many as will listen to her. She is not silent. She yearns to have people give up their gullible or foolish ways. She has no secrets to hide. Her desire is that people will listen and make good decisions in life. One by one she appeals to them to understand that there is freedom and not restraint in following her ways. There is life instead of death.

[Charles Darwin is a name we all know through his writings regarding evolution. Before he wrote about evolution he had studied for the ministry at Cambridge University. At one point in his education he was attempting to settle an argument using Scripture and was met only with laughter and scorn by the sailors he was speaking to. Disillusioned he abandoned his ministerial pursuit and embarked on a study that would lead him to write *Origin of the Species*.](#)

[A Cambridge geologist, Professor Sedgwick, recognized the motive for his writing the book and described it as "a dish of rank materialism cleverly cooked and served up merely to make us independent of a Creator." As Darwin lay on his death bed the Duke of Argyle went to see him. He hoped that he might be able to rekindle in his soul](#)

his lost knowledge of God. Darwin shook his head and expressed his own spiritual hopelessness and confusion. At the shrine of his false god, natural selection, he worshipped as a fool never coming to a place of repentance and pursuit of true wisdom.

Wisdom goes to public places to speak with the hopes of having individuals accept her personal invitation to follow her.

James 1:5 reminds us that “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

Wisdom is calling out today to you with a personal invitation to follow her.

Proverbs 8:12-21, 32-36 – listen carefully to what wisdom has to offer vs. those who reject her.

Accept her personal invitation and in so doing receive all her benefits. It is a personal invitation to receive life.

Her call is public with a personal invitation. Now I want you to notice something as well from this passage. Her call is non-preferential.

C. Her Call Is Non-Preferential

When it comes to offering wisdom she is no respecter of persons. As we noted in **James 1:5** any man, any woman, any teen, any person who asks for wisdom from God will receive it. It is irrespective of gender or age or race or culture. **Now it doesn't mean kids, that if you didn't study for a test because you were too busy playing your X-Box or spending all your time on facebook that God will give you wisdom to ace your science test.** When we ask God for wisdom, and it's offered to anyone who asks, God will give **“practical insight with spiritual implications.”** God gives wisdom generously.

Proverbs 2:10-15

Proverbs 4:7, 11-14

Wisdom has gone to the open markets, to the places where the most people gather in order to persuade some to follow her. It is an open invitation to all who ask. Her call is non-preferential. This passage also shows us how passionate she is about what she has to offer.

D. Her Call is Passionate

Notice again in **vs. 20-21** the passion in which she pleads with people to follow her.

Vs. 20 “Wisdom calls aloud”

Vs. 20 “she raises her voice”

Vs. 21 – “she cries out”

Vs. 21 – “she makes her speech”

This is an impassioned plea for people to follow her instead of the path that only leads to destruction. It's an urgent call to people to avoid doom.

David has a friend at school who went sledding a couple of weeks ago with his parents. The first time down the hill his Dad was zipping along and realized that at the bottom of the hill was a little girl still sitting on her sled making no attempt to move. Now how do you think he and this girl's parents responded? How did they call out to her so she wouldn't get hit? They didn't just speak in a soft tone – “watch out honey, another sled is coming right for you and if you don't move he's going to hit you.” No. They screamed – “Get up!” “Get out of there!” “Move!” They were passionate in their warning. She moved.

I think you all know that guy Noah in the Old Testament who built that huge boat. I somehow don't get the impression that after a while he just stopped telling people to repent because no one would listen to him. I think that any time someone passed by he was giving them a sermon about the coming destruction. He pled with them to make a wise choice.

Wisdom speaks openly to any and all in an effort to convince them to follow. Her voice is everywhere.

It is clear sounding. It may be ignored but it cannot be mistaken. Those who ignore her call can't say they weren't warned or didn't hear her. Hers is a passionate plea to anyone who will listen. Such is her reach. But sadly many will refuse her, many will reject her. So in **vs. 22-27** we notice the rejection of wisdom.

II. THE REJECTION OF WISDOM – v. 22-27

In **verses 22-23** there is an appeal to those who are rejecting wisdom.

A. The Appeal to Those Rejecting Wisdom – v. 22-23

There are three groups of people she is addressing in order to get them to follow her. Her questioning them is an indictment for their rejection of her, but at the same time pleading with them to give up their ways and follow her.

First we see those who are simple. They are the naïve, the immature and gullible. They are young, the ones who don't know any better. It may be also that they choose to remain in that state. **Warren Wiersbe says the simple “believe everything and examine nothing.”** They are easily led astray. They have a blank look on their face. That wisdom asks why they are still simple suggests that they are old enough to have made a decision about following wisdom, but haven't yet.

Second are the mockers. They are arrogant and full of contempt and insults. They are cynical and defiant and prone to ridicule those who choose to follow wisdom. They resist correction and continually refuse her pleas. They believe they know it all. You have a hard time teaching them anything. Where the simple have a blank look, the mocker or scorner has a sneer. They're the ones at school or work who laugh at you for praying over lunch or for carrying your Bible.

II Chronicles 30:1, 6-10 (10)

Third group she appeals to are the fools. Our verse says they hate knowledge. They despise what wisdom offers. They lack any desire to seek God. They are godless and ignore her appeal to their own peril. Their hard hearts refuse to fear God.

Ephesians 4:17-18 “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”

Even though they refuse, she still calls out to those who have yet to follow her, to those who reject her, hoping they will change their minds.

These verses provide us with a glimpse at the adversity of those rejecting wisdom. We see it in **verses 24-27**.

B. The Adversity on Those Who Reject Wisdom – v. 24-27

Had they elected to follow her, wisdom would have showered them with guidance to be godly and make right decisions. They would have been refreshed and strengthened. As we read in James they would have received wisdom in abundance. But they refused her, they willingly rejected her. Their rejection was met with their own destruction. Remember from our study last week that Solomon used the imagery of individuals spreading out a net to catch birds only to find that they got caught in their own trap. That is the lot of those who refuse wisdom. They will end up destroying themselves. **Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”**

In the tale of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian has been traveling toward the celestial city. One day he happens to run into atheist. His face is hard and his lips are twisted in a sneer. One arm is outstretched with a scornful jester while the

other is holding a walking stick on which he is about to lean. He is so concerned about poking fun at Christian that he does not notice that the stick is poised over the edge of a cliff. Christian's horrified expressions convey the peril that atheist is about to encounter but to no avail. Atheist ignores Christian's appeal and falls to his doom. They bring adversity on themselves.

The imagery that Solomon uses to depict the calamity of the foolish that ignore wisdom's plea is that of a storm. Sometimes they come in so quickly and with such violence we have no time to avoid its destructive forces. That's the swiftness with which they go to their doom. That these verses speak of wisdom laughing at their peril is not as one author said "an expression of heartlessness," remember, wisdom is attempting to save them from peril, it is "a reaction to the absurdity of fools, who laugh at wisdom and bring disaster on themselves." In the end calamity will overtake them.

Recently I was on the facebook page of my friend that I have spoken of before who claims to be apostate. He wrote about a gathering that he will be attending in March. It's called the "Reason Rally." Here's a statement from its website. The Reason Rally "is a movement-wide event sponsored by the country's major secular organizations. The intent is to unify, energize, and embolden secular people nationwide while dispelling the negative opinions held by so much of American society. (I think they mean us Christians.) It will be held March 24 from 10-4. Non-theists from all corners of the nation will descend on Washington D.C. to deliver the good news: "we're huge, we're everywhere and we're growing." I only know of one source of good news.

They claim secularism is on the rise in every city and school. They promote a god-free lifestyle. It is a celebration of secular values.

In coordination with this event one major university is declaring a "Scarlet letter" day in which all

atheists will wear a red letter "A". Students from other universities hope they can initiate the same kind of movement on their campuses.

Theirs is a conscious, willful and deliberate rebellious rejection of God and wisdom from God. This passage reveals the adversity for their rejecting it. That calamity will be poured out suggests that there will be an uncontrolled gushing forth of destruction, much like a raging river that has crested its banks and is destroying everything in its path. And don't even think that they weren't warned. The end for them will come suddenly and unexpectedly.

The reach of wisdom is far, it is to all who will listen.

The rejection of wisdom is perilous, it will come quickly on those who ignore it with no opportunity to change their ways.

Finally we see the retribution of wisdom.

III. THE RETRIBUTION OF WISDOM – v. 28-33

In **verses 28, 31 and 32** we see the response of wisdom for those who reject her.

A. The Response of Wisdom – v. 28, 31-32

When calamity does come on them, they will call out for wisdom to help them out of their mess, but they will be met with the same silence that they gave to wisdom when she pled with them to accept her gifts. They ignored her offer to provide them with a path comprised of wise decisions and godly living. Their sentence is just and they must suffer the consequences for their rejection.

Read through the Old Testament and you will see occasions when God would not listen to the cries of His people because they had rejected His leading and refused His help. In these verses we see that those who spread their nets will be caught in them. The consequences come because of their own actions. It is the law of sowing and reaping.

In the Old Testament law God established that every seventh year the land was to have rest. Just as they were to rest on the seventh day, so the land was to have rest in the seventh year. No plowing of fields was to take place. If they observed that law God would honor them with abundant crops in the sixth year that would carry them through the harvest when the cycle started over, through the first year of the new cycle. Israel didn't listen. They disobeyed. Because they refused to obey and accept the wisdom of God in the harvest God brought in the Assyrians and the Babylonians as instruments to mete out His justice so the land could have rest. For every year the land did not get rest, they were in captivity. For 70 years they were under the oppression of Babylon.

II Chronicles 36:21 “The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.”

Jeremiah 25:8-11

Wisdom will not be patient forever. She will respond for ignoring her. Notice in **verses 29-30** her reasoning for the calamity that is brought on those who reject her.

B. The Reasoning of Wisdom – v. 29-30

She gives two reasons for her actions toward those who have rejected accepting her counsel. The first is that they hated knowledge. They want to do their own thing and go their own way. The sentence is fair because they refused her counsel. Now they must bear the consequences for their own willful rejection and disobedience.

The second reason given for wisdom responding as she does and that her sentence on them is just is because they did not fear God. They have no reverence for Him. They reject Him.

A colleague of Lennon expressed his attitude of the Soviet Union toward God when he exclaimed “we shall grapple with the Lord God in due season, we shall vanquish Him from His highest heaven, and wherever He seeks refuge, we shall subdue Him forever.” 75 years later the folly of their godless ideologies was toppled when the iron curtain fell. Just as is noted in our passage desolation comes suddenly and often violently. They continue to reap the consequences of their actions.

Wisdom responds as it does because of rejecting her. Don't think for a moment that your dismissal of wisdom today will somehow pass over the all-seeing eye of God. What you sow you reap. Ignore His wisdom from Scripture and you will bear the consequences for those actions. Be sure your sins will find you out. God says that what you do in secret will be made known in public.

To reject wisdom is to hate wisdom.

To reject wisdom is to reject God.

To reject God is to hate God.

Wisdom's reasoning for its response to those who reject her is sound. Just as those who reject wisdom will experience her retribution, so those who follow after wisdom will receive a reward from her.

C. The Reward From Wisdom – v. 33

Proverbs 8:35 “For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord.”

Notice from our verse the benefits of those who follow wisdom. There is safety, there is ease, and there is no fear. The idea of being at ease doesn't life will be easy but rather speaks about confident trust. It's what we will learn when we consider

Prov. 3:5-6.

Jeremiah 29:10-14

II Chronicles 28:22-25 – foolishness

II Chronicles 29:2-3; 30:10-11 – wisdom

Are you seeking after Him today? Wisdom would ask you to consider one more thing. In **Hebrews 3:7** we read **“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert...see to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”**

The voice of wisdom is speaking today, calling out to follow her. She may be asking some of you to follow her to understand and receive the gift of salvation. She may be asking others of you to put away foolishness, to stop rebelling against her call, to follow after godliness. She may be telling some of you to stop being rebellious and start being responsive. Decisions to follow or forsake her call are both choices we make. We willfully respond or willfully reject. The wisdom that she wants to provide will help us live godly lives in a godless society. To respond to her is to receive a great reward, one we will receive in heaven. To refuse her is to reap her wrath and retribution. The retribution for those who refuse her as Charles Dickens stated is to go to the other place. She is calling. **How have you responded?** It is not too late to follow her. Do it today while you still can because there may come a day when it's too late and she won't respond to your pleas because you refused to respond to hers. Pursue wisdom.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness..."