

CHAPTER 8

The word of God is two-fold, and, in both senses, is wisdom; for a word without wisdom is of little value, and wisdom without a word is of little use. Now,

I. Divine revelation is the word and wisdom of God, and that pure religion and undefiled which is built upon it; and of that Solomon here speaks, recommending it to us as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation (v. 1-2). God, by it, instructs, and governs, and blesses, the children of men.

II. The redeemer is the eternal Word and wisdom, the Logos. He is the Wisdom that speaks to the children of men in the former part of the chapter. All divine revelation passes through his hand, and centres in him; but of him as the personal Wisdom, the second person in the Godhead, in the judgment of many of the ancients, Solomon here speaks (v. 22-31). He concludes with a repeated charge to the children of men diligently to attend to the voice of God in his word (v. 32-36).

~~2081~~ PROVERBS 8:1-11

THE INVITATION OF WISDOM

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation is here largely represented to us as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error, and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

I. The things revealed are easy to be known, for they *belong to us and to our children* (~~599~~ Deuteronomy 29:29), and we need not soar up to heaven, or dive into the depths, to get the knowledge of them (~~601~~ Deuteronomy 30:11), for they are published and proclaimed in some measure by the works of the creation (~~281~~ Psalm 19:1), more fully by the consciences of men and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but most clearly by Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. The precepts of wisdom may easily be known; for, 1. They are proclaimed aloud (v. 1): *Does not Wisdom cry?* Yes, she cries aloud, and does not spare (~~281~~ Isaiah 58:1); she

puts forth her voice, as one in earnest and desirous to be heard. *Jesus stood and cried*, ^{<413>}John 7:37. The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, ^{<674>}Deuteronomy 27:14. And men's own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them; there are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers.

2. They are proclaimed from on high (v. 2): *She stands in the top of high places*; it was from the top of Mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a sermon upon the mount. Nay, if we slight divine revelation, we *turn away from him that speaks from heaven*, a high place indeed, ^{<825>}Hebrews 12:25. The adulterous woman spoke in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered, but Wisdom speaks openly; truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light.

3. They are proclaimed *in the places of concourse*, where multitudes are gathered together, the more the better. Jesus spoke *in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted*, ^{<880>}John 18:20. Every man that passes by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where Wisdom's voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear*.

4. They are proclaimed where they are most needed. They are intended for the guide of our way, and therefore are published *in the places of the paths*, where many ways meet, that travellers may be shown, if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; thou shalt then *hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way*, ^{<321>}Isaiah 30:21. The foolish man *known not how to go to the city* (^{<2105>}Ecclesiastes 10:15), and therefore Wisdom stands ready to direct him, stands *at the gates, at the entry of the city*, ready to tell him where the seer's house is, ^{<308>}1 Samuel 9:18. Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them *at the coming in at the doors*, saying, *Peace be to this house; and, if the son of peace be there*, it shall certainly abide upon it. God's ministers are appointed to testify to people both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot be out of the hearing of while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves.

5. They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we should have

neglected it; therefore Wisdom speaks to us: “*Unto you, O men! I call* (v. 4), not to angels (they need not these instructions), not to devils (they are past them), not to the brute-creatures (they are not capable of them), but *to you, O men!* who are taught more than the beasts of the earth and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation sent. *My voice is to the sons of men*, who are concerned to receive instruction, and to whom, one would think, it should be very welcome. It is not, to you, O Jews! only, that Wisdom cries, nor to you, O gentlemen! not to you, O scholars! but *to you, O men! O sons of men!* even the meanest..” meanest.” 6. They are designed to make them wise (v. 5); they are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are undone without it: “*O you simple ones! understand wisdom*. Though you are ever so simple, Wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but, if you will be ruled by her, will undertake to give you *an understanding heart*.” When sinners leave their sins, and become truly religious, then the *simple understand wisdom*.

II. The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptance. We are concerned to hear; for,

1. They are of inestimable value. They are *excellent things* (v. 6), *princely things*, so the word is. Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are divine and heavenly things, so excellent that, in comparison with them, all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be *excellent things*.

2. They are of incontestable equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness. They are *right things* (v. 6), *all in righteousness* (v. 8), and *nothing froward or perverse in them*. All the dictates and directions of revealed religion are consonant to, and perfective of, the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in them that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature, nothing that we have reason to complain of. *All God's precepts concerning all things are right*.

3. They are of unquestionable truth. Wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon:

My mouth shall speak truth (v. 7), the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true; there are not so much as pious frauds in it, nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful witness, is the truth itself; *wickedness* (that is, lying) *is an abomination to his lips*. Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain from it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say as from what God says to us. His word to us is *yea, and amen*; never then let ours be *yea and nay*.

4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those who take them aright, who understand themselves aright, who have not their judgments blinded and biassed by the world and the flesh, are not under the power of prejudice, are taught of God, and whose understanding he has opened, who impartially *seek knowledge*, take pains for it, and have found it in the enquiries they have hitherto made. To them,

(1.) They are all *plain*, and not hard to be understood. If the book is sealed, it is to those who are willingly ignorant. *If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost*; but to those who *depart from evil*, which is *understanding*, who have that *good understanding* which those have who *do the commandments*, to them *they are all plain* and there is nothing difficult in them. The way of religion is a highway, and *the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*, ²³⁸Isaiah 35:8. Those therefore do a great wrong to the common people who deny them the use of the scripture under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people.

(2.) They are all *right*, and not hard to be submitted to. Those who discern things that differ, who know good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all Wisdom's dictates, and therefore, without murmuring or disputing, govern themselves by them.

III. From all this he infers that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world (v. 10, 11): *Receive my instruction, and not silver*. Instruction must not only be heard, but received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this *rather than choice gold*, that is,

1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it that, if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy and

better provided for every condition of life than if we had ever so much silver and gold. *Wisdom is* in itself, and therefore must be in our account, *better than rubies*. It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion; show it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can sit down and wish for of the wealth of this world would, if we had it, be unworthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness.

2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply ourselves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay, we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his life-time *received his good things*.

~~3082~~ PROVERBS 8:12-21

THE ADVANTAGES OF WISDOM

Wisdom here is Christ, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; it is Christ in the word and Christ in the heart, not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the Word, in whom all divine revelation centres; it is the soul formed by the word; it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent thing.

I. Divine wisdom gives men good heads (v. 12): *I Wisdom dwell with prudence*, not with carnal policy (the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, ~~4012~~ 2 Corinthians 1:12), but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering of the conversation, that wisdom of the prudent which is to *understand his way* and is in all cases *profitable to direct*, the wisdom of the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to guide in doing good. *Wisdom dwells with prudence*; for prudence is the product of religion and an ornament to religion; and there are more *witty inventions* found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences and for the effectual countermining of Satan's devices and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers or the politics of statesmen. We may apply it to Christ himself; he *dwells with prudence*, for his whole

undertaking is the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, and in it God *abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence*. Christ found out the knowledge of that great *invention*, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient. We had found out many inventions for our ruin; he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things that we must conclude that he who ordered it *dwelt with prudence*.

II. It gives men good hearts, v. 13. True religion, consisting in *the fear of the Lord*, which is the wisdom before recommended, teaches men,

1. To hate all sin, as displeasing to God and destructive to the soul: *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the evil way*, to hate sin as sin, and therefore to *hate every false way*. Wherever there is an awe of God there is a dread of sin, as an evil, as only evil.

2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceitedness of ourselves, *pride and arrogancy*, are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those who have the Spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them in ourselves. *The froward mouth*, peevishness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion that, however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and sour that there is nothing more directly contrary to it than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

III. It has a great influence upon public affairs and the well-governing of all societies, v. 14. Christ, as God, has strength and wisdom; wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is *the wisdom of God and the power of God*. To all that are his he is made of God both *strength and wisdom*; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful counsellor and gives that grace which alone is *sound wisdom*. He is *understanding* itself, and *has strength* for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain. Wherever it is, it is *understanding*, it has *strength*; it will be all that to us that we need, both for services and sufferings. Where the word of God dwells richly it makes a man *perfect and furnishes him thoroughly for every good word and work*. Kings, princes, and judges, have of all men most need of wisdom

and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore Wisdom says, *By me kings reign* (v. 15, 16), that is,

1. Civil government is a divine institution, and those that are entrusted with the administration of it have their commission from Christ; it is a branch of his kingly office that *by him kings reign*; from him to whom all judgment is committed their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him.
2. Whatever qualifications for government any kings or princes have they are indebted to the grace of Christ for them; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*; and kings are to their subjects what he makes them.
3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so *by it kings reign* over them the more easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so *by it kings reign* as they ought; they *decree justice*, while they *rule in the fear of God*. Those rule well whom religion rules.

IV. It will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that says, *I love those that love me*, v. 17. Those that *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* shall be beloved of him with a peculiar distinguishing love: he will *love them and manifest himself to them*.
2. They shall be happy in the success of their enquiries after him: *“Those that seek me early, seek an acquaintance with me and an interest in me, seek me early, that is, seek me earnestly, seek me first before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek me, they shall find what they seek.”* Christ shall be theirs, and they shall be his. He never said, *Seek in vain*.
3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world, or in that which is infinitely better.

(1.) They shall have as much riches and honour as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them (v. 18); they are *with Christ*, that is, he has them to give,

and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in this world, gains them a reputation, and so increases their estates; and the riches which Wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages: —

[1.] That they are *riches and righteousness*, riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways, and riches charitably used, for alms are called *righteousness*. Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have *riches and righteousness*.

[2.] That therefore they are *durable riches*. Wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got will wear well and will be left to the children's children, and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity is put out to the best interest and so will be durable; for the friends made by *the mammon of unrighteousness when we fail will receive us into everlasting habitations*, ⁴⁰⁶Luke 16:9. It will be found after many days, for the days of eternity.

(2.) They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world (v. 19): “*My fruit is better than gold*, and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass, *and my revenue better than the choicest silver*, will serve a better trade.” We may assure ourselves that not only Wisdom's products at last, but her income in the mean time, not only her fruit, but her revenue, is more valuable than the best either of the possessions or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, v. 20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is *better than gold, than fine gold*, it *leads us in the way of righteousness*, shows us that way and goes before us in it, the way that God would have us walk in and which will certainly bring us to our desired end. It leads *in the midst of the paths of judgment*, and saves us from deviating on either hand. *In medio virtus — Virtue lies in the midst*. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so *leads them in the way of righteousness*, and they *walk after the Spirit*.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, v. 21. *Therefore Wisdom leads in the paths of righteousness*, not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she may *cause them to inherit substance* and may *fill their treasures*, which cannot be done

with the things of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory.

(1.) It is substantial; it is substance itself. It is a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone, without the accidental supports of outward conveniences. Spiritual and eternal things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well-grounded. The promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. They *inherit substance*; that is, their inheritance hereafter is substantial; it is a weight of glory; it is substance, ^{<3974>}Hebrews 10:34. All their happiness they have as heirs; it is grounded upon their sonship.

(2.) It is satisfying; it will not only fill their hands, but *fill their treasures*, not only maintain them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill men's bellies (^{<3974>}Psalm 17:14), but not their treasures, for they cannot in them secure to themselves *goods for many years*; perhaps they may be deprived of them *this night*. But let the treasures of the soul be ever so capacious there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In Wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity; her fruit therefore *is better than gold*.

^{<4082>}PROVERBS 8:22-31

WISDOM ETERNAL AND DIVINE

That it is an intelligent and divine person that here speaks seems very plain, and that it is not meant of a mere essential property of the divine nature, for Wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent divine person can be no other than the Son of God himself, to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom are attributed in other scriptures, and we must explain scripture by itself. If Solomon himself designed only the praise of wisdom as it is an attribute of God, by which he made the world and governs it, so to recommend to men the study of that wisdom which belongs to them, yet the Spirit of God, who indited what he wrote, carried him, as David often, to such expressions as could agree to no other than the Son of God, and would lead us into the knowledge of great things concerning him. All divine revelation is *the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him*, and here we are told

who and what he is, as God, designed in the eternal counsels to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in the first four verses of St. John's gospel. *In the beginning was the Word*, etc. Concerning the Son of God observe here,

I. His personality and distinct subsistence, one with the Father and of the same essence, and yet a person of himself, whom *the Lord possessed* (v. 22), *who was set up* (v. 23), *was brought forth* (v. 24, 25), *was by him* (v. 30), for he was *the express image of his person*, ^{<30B>}Hebrews 1:3.

II. His eternity; he was begotten of the Father, for *the Lord possessed* him, as his own Son, his beloved Son, laid him in his bosom; he was *brought forth as the only-begotten of the Father*, and this *before all worlds*, which is most largely insisted upon here. The Word was eternal, and had a being before the world, before the beginning of time; and therefore it must follow that it was from eternity. *The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way*, of his eternal counsels, for those were *before his works*. This way indeed had no beginning, for God's purposes in himself are eternal like himself, but God speaks to us in our own language. Wisdom explains herself (v. 23): *I was set up from everlasting*. The Son of God was, in the eternal counsels of God, designed and advanced to be the wisdom and power of the Father, light and life, and all in all both in the creation and in the redemption of the world. That he *was brought forth* as to his being, and *set up* as to the divine counsels concerning his office, before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions, much the same with those by which the eternity of God himself is expressed. ^{<90B>}Psalm 90:2, *Before the mountains were brought forth*.

1. *Before the earth was*, and that was made *in the beginning*, before man was made; therefore the second Adam had a being before the first, for the first Adam was *made of the earth*, the second had a being *before the earth*, and therefore is *not of the earth*, ^{<43B>}John 3:31.

2. *Before the sea was* (v. 24), *when there were no depths* in which the waters were gathered together, *no fountains* from which those waters might arise, none of that deep on which the Spirit of God moved for the production of the visible creation, ^{<00B>}Genesis 1:2.

3. *Before the mountains were*, the everlasting mountains, v. 25. Eliphaz, to convince Job of his inability to judge of the divine counsels, asks him

(~~181E~~ Job 15:7), *Wast thou made before the hills?* No, thou wast not. But *before the hills* was the eternal Word *brought forth*.

4. Before the habitable parts of the world, which men cultivate, and reap the profits of (v. 26), *the fields* in the valleys and plains, to which the mountains are as a wall, which are *the highest part of the dust of the world*; *the first part of the dust* (so some), the atoms which compose the several parts of the world; *the chief or principal part of the dust*, so it may be read, and understood of man, who was made of the dust of the ground and is dust, but is the principal part of the dust, dust enlivened, dust refined. The eternal Word had a being before man was made, for *in him was the life of men*.

III. His agency in making the world. He not only had a being before the world, but he was present, not as a spectator, but as the architect, when the world was made. God silenced and humbled Job by asking him, “*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who hath laid the measures thereof?*” (~~188B~~ Job 38:4, etc.). Wast thou that eternal Word and wisdom, who was the prime manager of that great affair? No; thou art of yesterday.” But here the Son of God, referring, as it should seem, to the discourse God had with Job, declares himself to have been engaged in that which Job could not pretend to be a witness of and a worker in, the creation of the world. *By him God made the worlds*, ~~408B~~ Ephesians 3:9; ~~302B~~ Hebrews 1:2; ~~501B~~ Colossians 1:16.

1. When, on the first day of the creation, in the very beginning of time, God said, *Let there be light*, and with a word produced it, this eternal Wisdom was that almighty Word: Then *I was there, when he prepared the heavens*, the fountain of that light, which, whatever it is here, is there substantial.

2. He was no less active when, on the second day, he stretched out the firmament, the vast expanse, and *set that as a compass upon the face of the depth* (v. 27), surrounded it on all sides with that canopy, that curtain. Or it may refer to the exact order and method with which God framed all the parts of the universe, as the workman marks out his work with his line and compasses. The work in nothing varied from the plan of it formed in the eternal mind.

3. He was also employed in the third day's work, when the *waters above the heavens*, were gathered together by *establishing the clouds above*, and

those under the heavens by *strengthening the fountains of the deep*, which send forth those waters (v. 28), and by preserving the bounds of the sea, which is the receptacle of those waters, v. 29. This speaks much the honour of this eternal Wisdom, for by this instance God proves himself a God greatly to be feared (^{<24E2>}Jeremiah 5:22) that *he has placed the sand for the bound of the sea*, that the dry land might continue to appear above water, fit to be a habitation for man; and thus he has *appointed the foundation of the earth*. How able, how fit, is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the Creator of it!

IV. The infinite complacency which the Father had in him, and he in the Father (v. 30): *I was by him, as one brought up with him*. As by an eternal generation he was brought forth of the Father, so by an eternal counsel he was brought up with him, which intimates, not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, who is therefore called *the Son of his love* (^{<5U13>}Colossians 1:13), but the mutual consciousness and good understanding that were between them concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake, and about which the *counsel of peace was between them both*, ^{<38E3>}Zechariah 6:13. He was *alumnus patris* — *the Father's pupil*, as I may say, trained up from eternity for that service which in time, in the fulness of time, he was to go through with, and is therein taken under the special tuition and protection of the Father; he is *my servant whom I uphold*, ^{<23D1>}Isaiah 42:1. He did what he saw the Father do (^{<48E9>}John 5:19), pleased his Father, sought his glory, did according to the commandment he received from his Father, and all this *as one brought up with him*. He was *daily his Father's delight* (*my elect, in whom my soul delighteth*, says God, ^{<23D1>}Isaiah 43:1), and he also *rejoiced always before him*. This may be understood either,

1. Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other, wherein consists much of the happiness of the divine nature.
Or,

2. Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son, when he *made the world*; God saw every thing that the Son made, *and, behold, it was very good*, it pleased him, and therefore his Son was *daily*, day by day, during the six days of the creation, upon that account, *his delight*, ^{<0296>}Exodus 39:43. And the Son also did himself *rejoice before him* in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, ^{<5A8E>}Psalms 104:31. Or,

3. Of the satisfaction they had in each other, with reference to the great work of man's redemption. The Father delighted in the Son, as Mediator between him and man, was well-pleased with what he proposed (^{<0187>}Matthew 3:17), and *therefore* loved him because he undertook to *lay down his life for the sheep*; he put a confidence in him that he would go through his work, and not fail nor fly off. The Son also *rejoiced always before him*, delighted to do his will (^{<048>}Psalm 40:8), adhered closely to his undertaking, as one that was well-satisfied in it, and, when it came to the setting to, expressed as much satisfaction in it as ever, saying, *Lo, I come, to do as in the volume of the book it is written of me.*

V. The gracious concern he had for mankind, v. 31. Wisdom *rejoiced*, not so much in the rich products of the earth, or the treasures hid in the bowels of it, as *in the habitable parts* of it, for her *delights were with the sons of men*; not only in the creation of man is it spoken with a particular air of pleasure (^{<013>}Genesis 1:26), *Let us make man*, but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was *ordained, before the world*, to that great work, ^{<011>}1 Peter 1:20. A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought, through his grace, to his glory, and these were those in whom his delights were. His church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, *that the Lord God might dwell even among those that had been rebellious*; and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet, because it would issue in the glory of his Father and the salvation of those sons of men that were given him, he looked forward upon it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, in which we have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him and rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by his glorious undertaking.

^{<018>}PROVERBS 8:32-36

WISDOM'S EXHORTATION

We have here the application of Wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it is to bring us all into an entire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good, not to fill our heads with speculations,

or our tongues with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this, here is,

I. An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of Wisdom, to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent *hearers of the word*; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard? "*Hearken unto me, O you children!*" v. 32. "Read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God for both, and hear him in both speaking to you." Let children age, and what they hearken to then, it is likely, they will be so seasoned by as to be governed by all their days. Let Wisdom's children justify Wisdom by hearkening to her and show themselves to be indeed her children. We must hear Wisdom's words,

(1.) Submissively, and with a willing heart (v. 33): "*Hear instruction, and refuse it not*, either as that which you need not or as that which you like not; it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it." Those that reject the counsel of God reject it against themselves, ~~and~~ Luke 7:30. "Refuse it not now, lest you should not have another offer."

(2.) Constantly, and with an attentive ear. We must hear Wisdom so as to *watch daily at her gates*, as beggars to receive an alms, as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants, with humility, and patience, and ready observance, *at the posts of her doors*. See here what a good house Wisdom keeps, for every day is dole-day; what a good school, for every day is lecture-day. While we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing Wisdom, and learning instruction from her. See here what a dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must *watch at the gates*.

[1.] We must lay hold on all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into, and keep in, a constant settled course of communion with God.

[2.] We must be very humble in our attendance on divine instructions, and be glad of any place, even the meanest, so we may but be within hearing of them, as David, who would gladly be a door-keeper in the house of God.

[3.] We must raise our expectations of these instructions, and hearken to them with care, and patience, and perseverance, must watch and wait, as Christ's hearers, that *hanged on him* to hear him, as the word in the original is (~~☞~~ Luke 19:48) and (~~☞~~ Luke 21:38) *came early in the morning to hear him*.

2. We must be conscientious *doers of the work*, for we are *blessed only in our deed*. It is not enough to hearken unto Wisdom's words, but we must *keep her ways* (v. 32), do every thing that she prescribes, keep within the hedges of her ways, and not transgress them, keep in the tracks of her ways, proceed and persevere in them. "*Hear instruction and be wise; let it be a means to make you wise in ordering your conversation.*" What we know is known in vain if it do not make us wise, v. 33.

II. An assurance of happiness to all those that do hearken to Wisdom. They are blessed, v. 32, and again v. 34. Those are blessed that watch and wait at Wisdom's gates; even their attendance there is their happiness; it is the best place they can be in. Those are blessed that wait there, for they shall not be put to wait long; let them continue to knock awhile and it shall be opened to them. They are seeking Wisdom, and they shall find what they seek. But will it make them amends if they do find it? Yes (v. 35): *Whoso finds me finds life*, that is, all happiness, all that good which he needs or can desire. He finds life in that grace which is the principle of spiritual life and the pledge of eternal life. He *finds life*, for he shall *obtain favour of the Lord*, and *in his favour is life*. If the king's favour is towards a wise son, much more the favour of the King of kings. Christ is Wisdom, and he that finds Christ, that obtains an interest in him, he *finds life*; for Christ is life to all believers. *He that has the Son of God has life*, eternal life, and he *shall obtain favour of the Lord*, who is well-pleased with all those that are in Christ; nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ and be found in him.

III. The doom passed upon all those that reject Wisdom and her proposals, v. 36. They are left to ruin themselves, and Wisdom will not hinder them, because they have set at nought all her counsel.

1. Their crime is very great; they *sin against Wisdom*, rebel against its light and laws, thwart its designs, and by their folly offend it. They *sin against Christ*; they act in contempt of his authority, and in contradiction to all the purposes of his life and death. This is construed into hating

Wisdom, hating Christ; they are his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them. What can appear worse than hating him who is the centre of all beauty and fountain of all goodness, love itself?

2. Their punishment will be very just, for they wilfully bring it upon themselves.

(1.) Those that offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves; they *wrong their own souls*; they wound their own consciences, bring a blot and stain upon their souls, which renders them odious in the eyes of God, and unfit for communion with him; they deceive themselves, disturb themselves, destroy themselves. Sin is a wrong to the soul.

(2.) Those that are at variance with Christ are in love with their own ruin: *Those that hate me love death*; they love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation the more intolerable, and will for ever justify God when he judges. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.*