

June 23

Scriptures: Read Proverbs 1

Key Verse: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...” (Proverbs 1:7)

Overview

From the beginning of the Book, we read of the author’s intention to give “instruction of wisdom”, and who better to teach it than Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. This first section of the book is specifically addressed to “the young man”, yet even one who is older and wiser could benefit from following Solomon’s wise counsel (v. 5). He gives practical advice to all who read with open minds and hearts. Before Solomon deals with moral issues, he gives the motto for all the proverbs: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (v. 7). The first principle for learning knowledge that is of any significance is to believe in God, respect Him, and stand in awe of Him. Also, this important verse is understood as teaching that the first step to a person’s morality is his relationship with God.

When a young person fears the Lord, he will also be obedient to his parents. The instruction of both the father and mother in the area of spiritual things is very important for a child’s spiritual well-being. The teaching is not meant to be a burden, but rather a pleasant thing that will cause the young person to be honoured and respected, as well as giving him inner beauty and life to his soul (vv. 8-9; 3:22).

The “fool” stands in sharp contrast to the one who fears the Lord. The “fool” does not fear God. He is a sinner who lives his life as though God did not exist, and he is one who does not heed advice; as such, they are the most unwise people (v. 7b). The author warns his student not to be like them nor fall into their temptations: “If sinners entice you, do not consent” (v. 10); their ways lead to self-destruction. They are self-willed and greedy and enjoy doing evil. They prey on innocent victims to become rich by dishonest gain. These professional thieves are more stupid than birds, for even birds at least have the sense to stay far from a net that is set in their view. The fools, however, set the net to catch others, and although they are aware of the trap, they themselves fall prey to it and die (vv. 11-19).

Solomon’s plea for his student to attain wisdom continues by illustrating his lesson with the person of wisdom, who in this section appears as a woman. Wisdom calls out to three types of people: the simple who are naive and can easily be swayed to sin; the scorners who mock at the righteous and take pleasure in evil; and the most wicked of people, the fools who hate the truth or anything having to do with God. Even these people can be turned from their path of destruction. If they would only turn away from sin and seek the truth, then wisdom would gladly and graciously pour her spirit upon them. If they stubbornly refuse the mercy she extends to them and do not heed her calling unto them, then the period of grace will be over (v. 28); it will be too late for them, since they did not choose to fear the Lord, and their own self-reliance and life without God will lead them to destruction (cf. Romans 1:18-32). Wisdom promises, however, that those who do turn to her will dwell safely and securely, without having to fear evil. Our Lord Jesus was the true personification of divine wisdom (Col. 2:3; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30), and all who turn to Him will dwell safely in everlasting life with Him, where there will be no presence of evil.

Prayer

Oh Lord, like Solomon, we ask for Your divine wisdom to be given to us liberally, for it is only through such wisdom that we can handle life’s circumstances and help others through godly counsel.