

WISDOM & NEIGHBORS

Friday, November 14

Reading: Proverbs 3:13-35

Proverbs 3:21 *My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion*

Solomon interrupts his instructions with a hymn about wisdom (3:13-18). For a person to be blessed or happy (see Psalm 1 & Matthew 5) they must seek after God's wisdom. It is more precious than any treasure or wealth we could ever gain (14-15). Following wisdom gives "long life"; not just length of years but a rich and fulfilling life (16-18). The Hebrew word *shalom* ("peace") means wholeness, well-being, security, and harmony. "The tree of life" takes our thoughts back to the garden of Eden when everything was perfect and whole. Following God's wisdom brings life and communion with God. If God used wisdom as His tool in creating the world (3:19-20), how much more will He do in our lives if we seek after His wisdom and ways!

Solomon now continues with his instruction to his son (3:21-35). He begins by reminding us to "not let wisdom...out of your sight." It is easy to hear a lesson and then forget it. "Out of sight, out of mind!" as the old saying goes. We must constantly think on and practice the wisdom of God in our lives. It is the source of our life (21-22)!

LIFE OF SECURITY (3:23-26) – This is a repeat of the promise that God will "make your paths straight" (3:6). The word "safety" has the meaning of secure and confident. We can live our lives in confidence when we follow God's wisdom. We will be able to sleep in peace knowing that God is in control (Psalm 4:8). We need not fear the "sudden disaster" that overtakes the wicked. This is not talking about the trials of life (we all experience those) but the judgment on the sinful acts of those who do not follow God. The same God who "laid the earth's foundations" and "set the heavens in place" (3:19) will "be at your side!"

LIFE OF HOSPITALITY (3:27-35) – Solomon now describes the wisdom of being a good neighbor. God has given us life and security and we are to share His life with others.

(1) We are to be Generous (27-28). Since the Lord is at our side, how could we not come to the side of others and help in any way we can (see 1 John 3:17; James 2:15-16). We should not procrastinate when we have the ability to share God's love with those in need.

(2) We are to be Trustworthy (29-30). Community is built on trust. Without it, it is every person for themselves. We are to be looking out for the interest of others, not working against them. The Hebrew word translated "accuse" means to dispute or argue. We are not to get involved in meaningless, petty quarrels with others. We should not be looking to "pick a fight." Spreading gossip would fall under this warning.

(3) We are to have Integrity (31-32). The word "violent" carries the idea of wrong, cruelty, and injustice. In our sin-warped world it seems that often these "wrong" people seem to prosper! Sadly, their very success tempts us to admire or envy them. And worse yet, imitate them! But God uses the strongest term possible to describe his opinion of them – abomination ("detest" NIV). But "the upright" enjoy the friendship ("confidence") of God.

Solomon concludes with a series of opposites that describe the fate of the wicked versus the righteous (3:33-35). He encourages us to look beyond the "here-and-now" and see the end results of the way of wisdom and the way of foolishness.