

Part 3: Satisfaction Worth Listening To

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"Come sit beside me, my only son. And listen closely to what I say, and if you do this, it will help you some sunny day. --Take your time, don't live too fast, troubles will come and they will pass. You'll find a woman and you'll find love. And don't forget that there is someone up above. --Forget your lust for the rich man's gold. All that you need is in your soul. --And you can do this if you try, all that I want for you my son is to be satisfied."

"And be a simple kind of man, oh won't you do this for me son, if you can."

Perhaps you've heard this song before. It is one of my personal favorites, written by Lynyrd Skynyrd. And the song is a mother pleading with her son to not forget what she has told him. To remember the simple things in life as the central things. And why does she plead with him? Because all she wants for him to be satisfied.

Now this song is not only a legend in its own right it's also been covered by all sorts of different artists since its release in 1973. Which means this: generations of musicians and entertainers have been reminded of the simple life which satisfies. They hum it, they cover it, they pay respect to it. And yet year after year we read of well-respected artists and entertainers who refuse to heed the song's warning. They overdose, commit suicide, or cave to crushing anxiety and depression.

Despite all our familiarity with the song, it seems that the melody of the world blares louder than the song of this mother.

For those of us who have been with us in our series in the book of Proverbs you've probably recognized the similarities between the posture of the mother in the song and the posture of the Solomon who is writing us these words. Last week we were introduced to a father who said, "Hear my son your father's instructions, and forsake not your mother's teaching."

Why? **Proverbs 1:33**, "whoever listens to me will dwell secure and be at ease, without dread of disaster."

There is the wonderful promise of this wisdom! All wisdom wants is for you to be satisfied. But just as we know is true with our songs, there is a difference between hearing a song and listening to it. There's a difference between knowing what is said, and actually heeding its message.

But this is what Proverbs 1:20-33 wants to help us with today. It wants to show us that to hear the call of wisdom's song is to really listen to it and respond to it. The big picture we are going to see today is this: **Wisdom is openly available but exclusively applied by the gospel.** Wisdom is everywhere, and yet it has to ultimately be found somewhere, and that somewhere is the place where God has placed his wisdom: Jesus Christ.

We are in the middle of a father's monologue to his son. Last week the father spoke from the perspective of the sinner to warn his son, today the father speaks from the posture of a new character, Lady Wisdom. This lady is wisdom personified.

We are going to look at three aspects of Lady Wisdom today. First in verses 20-21 we are going to see **Wisdom's Call**, then in verses 22-32 we are going to look at **Wisdom's Critique**, and lastly in verse 33 we are going to do the wonderful work of hearing **Wisdom's Comfort**.

Let's begin by looking at **Wisdom's Call**. Let's learn more about this lady in **Proverbs 1:20-21**.

So before we look at what wisdom is doing, let's quickly remind ourselves what wisdom is in the book of Proverbs. The definition of wisdom and the slogan of this book is found in **Proverbs 1:7**. What is wisdom? It is the fear of the Lord.

What is the Fear of the Lord? It is a reverent reliance upon God. It is the realization that we were created to be wholly dependent recognizing the obligation we have to delight in the God who created us for his glory. The fear of the Lord sees the whole of life through the eyes of the creator.

So Lady Wisdom then isn't just a place holder bright thinking, she's a personification of a right relationship to a God who knows all things.

And what do we learn about Lady Wisdom? She's pretty vocal.

This town is filled with her message. In the streets, wisdom speaks, in the market place, wisdom yells, at the head of noisy streets she does the work to be the clearest voice, and even when you are coming into the city for the first time, she makes her voice known.

If you've ever visited a theater for performing arts, you've sat in a room which engineers and designers meticulously planned the acoustics to carry the sound of the artist to every corner of the room. Some of the best theaters boast that two performers could whisper to each other on center stage and still be heard without amplification in the worst seats in the house.

In wisdom's call we see this world is acoustically tuned by God himself as the concert hall built to carry his glory to every corner. **Psalms 19:1-4**. Yes, every square inch of this divine theater reverberates with the constant glory of God demanding to be heard.

And yet, on top of the natural sound contained in God's creation, here is a unique wisdom not whispered in soft tones, but proclaimed, exclaimed and declared by Lady Wisdom. The call to hear and know this covenant keeping God has gone out.

We cannot turn anywhere in our world and not encounter the gracious call of wisdom which sufficiently gives us all we know to fear this creator God! More than that don't you kind of get the picture here that this Lady Wisdom is actually following you? When you go to work on the quiet street in the morning, when you're working in the market place, when you're coming home in rush hour traffic, when you head out of the city for vacation, she wants you to hear her!

What do we learn about Wisdom's call? It's intentional and it's everywhere.

But here is where we see a problem. Apparently not everyone who hears it, actually hears it. Look at how Paul speaks of this in **Romans 1:18-20**.

Everyone has heard it, but people reject it. As wisdom loudly calls us to fear the God who created us, we've made a habit of ignoring her.

This is what we see in the larger portion of this passage. The content of wisdom's call is a critique of our constant rejection of her. That's our second point today: **Wisdom's Critique**. In verses 22-32 we read a summary of her critique and two supporting arguments.

We see the summary of her critique in **Proverbs 1:22-23**.

So here we see the main critique of wisdom and that's this: "You've got broken hearts and you need help."

Did you see what she was saying in verse 22? She is speaking to three groups of people. First to the simple. The simple person here is the naïve or immature person. The person who is easily satisfied with where they are. Then she speaks to the scoffer, this is the worst category of the three. Unlike the simple and immature person, the scoffer implies that they understand what wisdom is saying and they scoff at it. They mock it. They find it to be foolishness.

And lastly there is the category of the fool, that is the person who whether they know it or not is simply living life backwards.

And what's important for us to see are the heart words that Lady Wisdom uses here: How long will the simple love being simple? How long will the scoffer desire scoffing? How long will the fool hate knowledge?

These are words we feel don't we? Wisdom is writing not to people's minds, but to their hearts. She's after those who love their ignorance, boast in their arrogance, and hate considering another way.

What's interesting here is wisdom doesn't start her appeal at the society for the wise. Why is that? Because none of us are born wise. We are all born in a Romans 1 world where we refuse to see and hear God.

But here's the beauty of it. You could spend a lot of time trying to discern if you're the young immature simpleton, or the older and still as clueless fool, or the hardened and oppositional scoffer, but regardless of who you are, we are all offered the same call: Look at **Proverbs 1:23**.

Isn't that great? Doesn't that speak to the comprehensiveness of God's wisdom? Not only is it everywhere to be heard, but it's able to help all who turn at her correction.

If you've ever asked yourself the question: "Can God really help me?" Here's your answer. Yes! But what does it take. It takes turning.

The Hebrew word for turning is the same Hebrew word used for repenting. What does it look like to listen to wisdom? It looks like turning. It looks like repenting.

It's acknowledging that you've been the fool, the scoffer and the simpleton and realizing that you need something more than self-help. You need a new heart.

Because isn't that what's described in verse 23: "I will pour out my spirit to you and I will make my words known to you." Wisdom isn't realizing that you've figured something out. Wisdom is realizing that God needs to change your hearts.

How do you overcome all the heart words of verse 22? You get a heart transplant. You get God's spirit poured into you which creates new desires.

What Lady Wisdom is promising here is nothing less than conversion. Being made new by faith and repentance through Jesus Christ. Look at how Paul speaks of this in **2 Corinthians 5:17**.

Why is it that wisdom can be so comprehensively present in our world and yet we cannot respond to it on our own? Because the problem isn't with our ears, it's with our hearts.

Now if you're a Christian in here, you know what we are talking about. You've felt what it feels like to have God give you that affection for Jesus Christ which desires to repent and turn towards him. But for some of us, maybe even those of us who claim to be a Christian, we might wrestle with this idea of a heart change? Why do I need it?

Well here Lady Wisdom gets out in front of you. If in verses 22-23 she summarizes the problem: you've got broken hearts and you need new ones." In the verses which follow she highlights two supporting arguments of why you need a new heart.

We see that first argument in verses 24-28. Why do you need a new heart? Because without it you'll never find wisdom even if you look for it. Read with me: **Proverbs 1:24-28**.

In one sense there is a firm warning here that a day will come when it is too late to turn to wisdom's call. If you're wondering when you need to turn, now is the time. One day, when you stand before God, it's too late to repent. In those moments as you laughed at God's wisdom, Lady Wisdom will scoff at you.

But I think Solomon means us to find another more primary meaning in this text. Look at the harsh reality he paints in **Proverbs 1:28**.

So here is the picture Lady Wisdom is painting: The scoffer, the simpleton and the fool all encounter some moment, some trial which seems to sober them up to their foolishness. And in that moment they begin to call out for wisdom, they begin to seek wisdom, but they will not find her.

This sounds perhaps like wisdom has hidden herself from them. But I don't think that's the point.

Look at all that wisdom is doing in this text. Look at your Bibles, wisdom cries out, she raises her voice, she cries out, she speaks continually at the gates. Verse 26, she calls out again, but they refuse to listen, she reaches out and stretches her hand for help, but they do not heed her.

Does wisdom sound like someone who hides in the shadows? No. The problem isn't that wisdom is hidden. It's that without a heart change each and every one of us in a moment of trial will look for wisdom but we will look everywhere except the place where wisdom already is.

Do you get the picture here? Wisdom has set up a bullhorn, and yet these people call as if she hasn't spoken. Wisdom is reaching out her hand, and yet they search and cannot find her.

This is our postmodern problem. Our problem is not that we don't think we have problems. Our problem is that we look for answers to the problem in all the places except where God has already reached out and provided an answer for us.

Without heart change, we are all eyes and no ears. Look at how the late R.C. Sproul describes this dilemma: **"Everyone is looking for power in a program, in a methodology, in a technique, in anything and in everything but that which God has placed it--his Word. He alone has the power to change lives for eternity and that power focuses on the Scriptures."**

Recognizing that our lives have a problem is only part of the solution. It is still possible to be convinced of your foolishness but to diligently seek salvation apart from the wisdom which God has already offered.

Supporting argument one is that without new hearts, you'll never actually humble yourselves and turn back to wisdom. Argument two is that without a heart change, your seeking will lead you to something which seems to satisfy but can never save.

Read with me **Proverbs 1:29-32**.

You see here we see the anatomy of those who don't hear wisdom. To not hear wisdom is to hate knowledge and not fear God. The need for heart change continues. But what we also see is that as these simple, scoffing fools encounter a moment of crisis, they turn to everything but wisdom and unfortunately they find things which satisfy.

That's what's implied when wisdom says, "therefore they shall eat the fruit of their ways, and have the fill of their own devices."

And then wisdom says something remarkably profound: **Proverbs 1:32**.

The simple are killed by their turning away. That word "turning," is the same word used by Lady Wisdom in verse 23, and is still the same Hebrew word for repentance.

Why do we need a new heart? Because it's not the act of repentance which saves us, it's the object of it. Everyone repents to solve what they think is wrong.

This is a really profound statement isn't it? From a biblical perspective, all of us are turning, all of us are repenting in light of our own needs and limitations. The question isn't do you repent, or do you turn? The question is to whom do you turn?

In his book *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis is describing what makes hell hellish in a novelized form. One person says that the problem in hell is not that there are problems. There are no problems, the individual says, "The trouble is they have no needs. You get everything you want (not very good quality, of course) by just imagining it."

Meaning this: what sin lacks in quality it makes up for in quantity. No sin will every fully satisfy us, but sin promises an endless stream of temporary satisfiers. All of whom call for us to turn when it seems we encounter the problems of our own heart.

And it's in this complacency that you will be destroyed. What a unique word. Did you know that word is another heart word? It implies a sense of peace-time living, security, confidence.

Meaning that for many of us, when this moment of trial, calamity like a whirlwind hits us, we might turn not to lady wisdom, but to something else and we might find complacency. We might find comfort and contentment in work which distracts, drink which satisfied, and a community which comforts.

But this is a farce. It cannot satisfy you. This will destroy you. If you are someone in this room who feels the limitations of contentment in your own heart, I want to encourage you that this is a good thing. Because this proverb shows us that it is not the discontent who should be fearful but the content and complacent.

Are you one who finds your life to be easy? Satisfied? Complacent? I want you to soberly consider to what have you turned? Because this passage closes with two paths. One path is the path of sinful turning away from God which leads to destruction. But there is another path. A path which changes our hearts and our experiences.

Look with me at **Proverbs 1:33**.

Here we see our final point today: **Wisdom's Comfort**.

Listen closely to what I say because if you do it will help you some sunny day.

God promises true comfort not false complacency, ease not ignorance, freedom from fear not frenzy. But how do we get it?

How do we lay claim on the promise which has apparently gone out into the world, echoed through the heavens, been proclaimed at us by Lady Wisdom herself?

We listen. That word, "if you listen," is the same word this passage opened with, "*shema*," in verse 8, "My son, hear your father's instruction."

What do we do when we hear this? Where do we go if we want to see the wisdom that we have missed? We must go back. We must humble ourselves. We must return to wisdom's offer.

Where does this wisdom finally and fully grip not just our ears but transform our hearts? What can our ears hear which can change our hearts? Let's look at something astounding: Look at the promise in **Ezekiel 36:25-26**. Now look at its fulfillment in **Ephesians 1:16-20**.

Isn't that wild? Look at these two verses side by side: **Proverbs 1:28**, **James 1:5**. What changed?

In Proverbs Lady Wisdom cried out and no one turned, so in the gospel Jesus the one who Isaiah 11 said would be filled with the Spirit of God's wisdom did more than call out to us, he came down for us.

Jesus' message doesn't call for us to return to the streets, instead Jesus grabs the heart of the sinner and brings us back to the cross. If you want this heart change it requires a turning which only Jesus can do. A turning which might seem painful because it admits what you have rejected your whole life.

But if you would be changed by this Jesus, and turn by the power of his grace away from your sins and towards the God who redeemed you, then you will finally find peace and dwell securely.

C.S. Lewis once said this: **"We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man...Going back is the quickest way on."**

Where are you turning? Because turning to God is not turning to something newly found, but something long ignored. Turning to wisdom requires coming to grips with your foolishness.

This is something that those who have never done, must do before it's too late. If you're stuck in the heart words of loving simplicity, delighting in scoffing and hating knowledge, heart change is possible but you must come and repent. You must humble yourself and see the good news of what Jesus has done to take your sins and restore you back to a fear of God.

To those who are Christian, who have repented in that wonderful and ultimate repentance, don't forget that your heart is not done repenting. This Proverb holds out the warning that we will daily seek to turn to other voices, but your conversion to Jesus gives you everything you need to listen to his voice above everything else.

The complacency of sin offers death deferred. It says yeah life is hard, but look at this new politician, this new TV, this new lover. But in the end it's distraction before destruction. But in Jesus death isn't deferred, it is defeated once and for all on the cross.

Would you listen to him and find peace in your turning back?