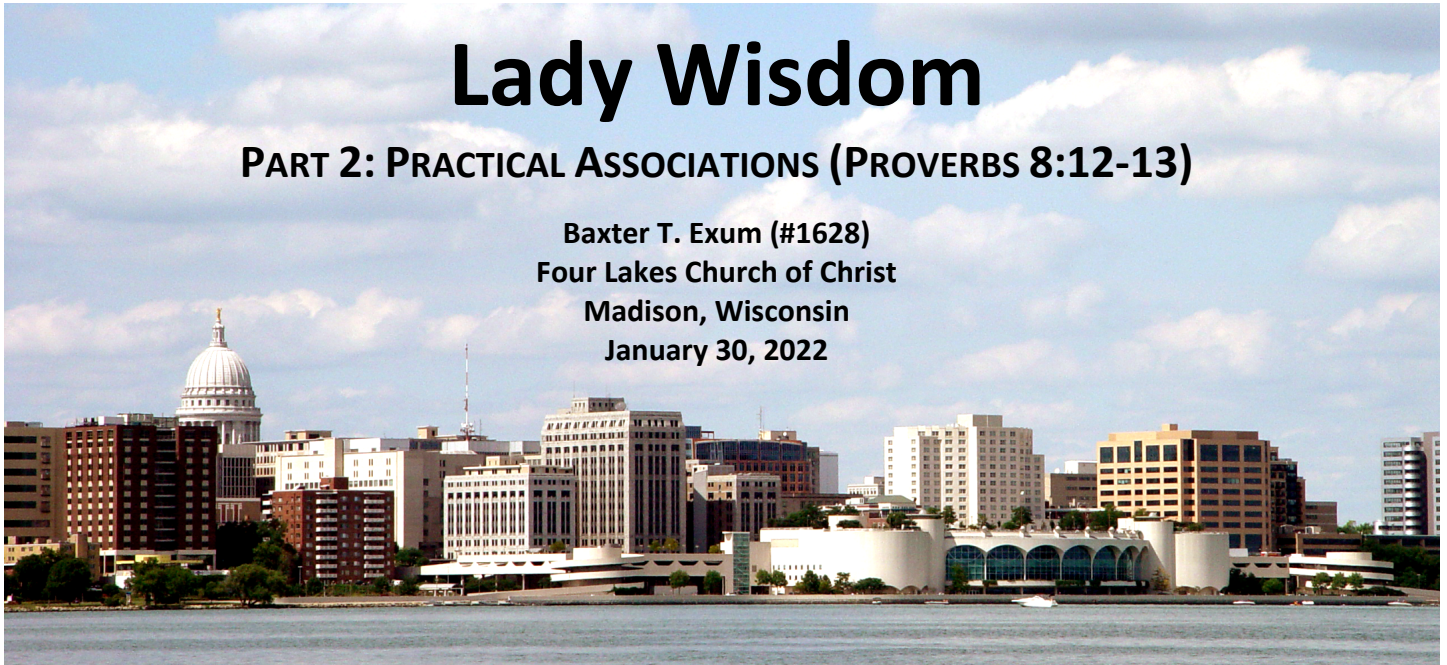


Lady Wisdom

PART 2: PRACTICAL ASSOCIATIONS (PROVERBS 8:12-13)

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It is good to be together this morning! We plan on partaking of the Lord's Supper right after our study today, so if you do not yet have the bread and the fruit of the vine, this would be a good time to get those from the table right inside the front door. And then, following the Supper, we will sing several songs together before we dismiss [for class].

At the beginning of each service, we have been in the habit of sharing God's plan of salvation on the wall up here, and we do have some good news from the Palm Beach Lakes congregation down in Florida. My friend, David, is one of the evangelists down there. They posted online a few days ago and say, "We rejoice that Jettie Sweetenbury decided to be buried with Christ in baptism this afternoon. Be sure to meet our new sister on Sunday!" Obviously, we are not in Florida right now to meet this new Christian sister, but we are thrilled that she has obeyed the gospel. The gospel is the good news is that Jesus came to this earth, took our place on the cross, and was raised up on the third day. We respond to that by doing what Jettie did – we hear and believe this good news, we turn away from sin, we confess Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God, and we allow ourselves to be immersed with Jesus in the act of baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you would like to learn more, please get in touch.

This morning, we also have some good news of a different kind. Some of you might know that the church where my sister worships out in Port Angeles, Washington, has been without elders for a number of years. Back in September, they asked me to preach on the subject of elders, giving some practical encouragement for getting that process started. So, I did. The lesson was well-received, they had some good questions, and I gave the reminder that if we have a plurality of men who are qualified, but if we do not appoint those men, we may find ourselves as a congregation operating in open rebellion to the word of God. Well, this past Lord's Day, they appointed three men to serve as elders out there. This is the picture my sister sent last Sunday night, and she wanted me to know that these men do not always look this terrified! They do seem to be taking their responsibilities seriously, so I would ask that we simply ask God to bless these men as they take on this new responsibility.

And speaking of appointing elders, I need to say a brief word in honor of brother Jerry Turley. Most of us know by now that Jerry passed away this past Friday morning. What many of you might not know is that we might not have elders here at this congregation right now if it weren't for Jerry's courage in speaking up at a business

meeting back in the fall of 2015. If you were there, you might remember the men of the congregation sitting down in the back room, and before we could even start the meeting, Jerry (from his place of honor in the rocking chair back there) blurts out, “I nominate Ray Exum to be an elder.” Well, we had to deal with it! The men of the congregation then appointed a smaller group of spiritually minded men who were not qualified to serve as elders, and as a group we tasked them with coming up with a plan. They did. We studied it further, we invited a guest speaker or two to give us some insight as to what it means to actually serve as an elder. And then we appointed three men on December 27, 2015. I’m just reminding all of us that this process started with Jerry Turley, and we are thankful.

This morning, we return to a series of lessons based on our extended and somewhat sporadic study of the book of Proverbs! In this series-within-a-series, we are currently working our way through Proverbs 8, where wisdom is pictured as a woman – wisdom personified, or “Lady Wisdom,” as we have described her in this study. A year ago, in Proverbs 7, we looked at the off-limits woman, the adulterous woman. Well, Lady Wisdom is the opposite of that, and last week we looked at wisdom’s call. Instead of lurking and tempting in private, Lady Wisdom is out there making her appeal in the streets. The invitation is open to all. She speaks words of truth and reason. And in the last section there, she points out that her wisdom is truly valuable.

This morning, I’d like for us to move into the next little section, where we have what I would label as the description of Lady Wisdom’s associations (this comes in Proverbs 8:12-13). On one hand, wisdom is pictured as dwelling with certain qualities. And on the other hand, there are also some qualities she hates in her relationships. This morning, then, as we continue our study of Lady Wisdom, let’s look together at Proverbs 8:12-13 – the words of King Solomon concerning Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8:12-13,

- ¹² ***“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And I find knowledge and discretion.***
¹³ ***“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverted mouth, I hate.***

As we learn from King Solomon this morning, let’s break this down between the positive and the negative.

I. And we start with the positive, as King Solomon starts by describing WISDOM’S COMPANIONS.

In verse 12, we have what we might describe as Wisdom’s roommates. These are Wisdom’s friends, Wisdom’s companions. We know that our lives are often defined by the people we associate with. We can tell quite a bit about a person by looking at their friends, and the same is true for Wisdom, ***“I wisdom,”*** she says, ***“dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.”*** These qualities, then, are wisdom’s close associates. This is the good side, the positive side, of wisdom’s associates. And even without digging into what these words really mean, most of us probably have a fairly positive impression at this point. If somebody were to say that we are known for our prudence, knowledge, and discretion, most of us would take that as a compliment, and for good reason. As we study, though, I would also point out that these qualities can be taken in a negative way, if they are somehow separated from godly wisdom. So, let’s keep that in mind as we move through this passage. These qualities need to be associated with wisdom, otherwise they have a way of losing their goodness.

A. Well, as we dig a little, we start with this idea of **“PRUDENCE.”**

We look up the word itself, and it goes back to a word that is sometimes translated as being ***“crafty”*** or even ***“shrewd.”*** This is our first clue that this might not always be a good trait! One source refers to prudence as “masterful decision making.” It refers to considering all possible options, anticipating possible outcomes, and coming to a reasonable conclusion, having insight. One source refers to this as being “street smart.” Another refers to this as the ability to make a solid decision under difficult circumstances, anticipating and avoiding possible trouble.

The first time this word is used in the Bible, though, it refers to what we might describe as “First Degree Murder.” Over in Exodus 21:14, the Law says, ***“If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die.”*** In this case, to kill someone ***“craftily”*** carries the idea of planning it out very carefully. And so, if I’m chopping wood and the blade of my axe flies off the handle and strikes my neighbor in the head so that he dies, that’s one thing. On the other hand, if I kill him ***“craftily,”*** that’s something else entirely. If I plot and I plan, if I carefully think through how I’m going to do this, if I anticipate all possible outcomes, if I know he comes home at a certain time, and I sneak up behind him as he gets out of his car at night (so as to avoid any negative consequences for myself), that is a clear case of murder (as opposed to an accident of some kind). The difference is ***“craftiness.”*** The difference is ***“prudence.”*** Prudence, then, is the idea of being careful, meticulous, cautious, even methodical. Some have defined ***“prudence”*** as the practice of anticipating what might happen and making plans based on that anticipation. Normally, it’s good to plan. Normally, it’s good to be careful. Normally, it’s good to be meticulous. In the case of killing someone, not so much. In other areas, planning and anticipating possible scenarios can be a huge blessing, even lifesaving. I think of the advice given among hikers and backpackers to carry the “Ten Essentials.” Whenever we are out in the middle of nowhere on a hike, we should always carry along some food and water, and a map and compass, and rain gear, and a source of fire, and a first aid kit, and so on. We carry those items, because (based on our own experience and the experience of others) we anticipate what might go wrong. Planning, then, can be good. Not, however, when it comes to plotting and scheming to commit evil.

The second time this word is used in the Bible comes in Joshua 9:4, with reference to the ***“craftiness”*** of the Gibeonites. You might remember that as Joshua and the Israelites are moving into the Promised Land, God tells them to completely destroy the locals. God had given them opportunity upon opportunity to repent, they were always to offer terms of surrender. But the Gibeonites acted ***“craftily.”*** Although they were from just over the next hill, they disguised themselves as having just traveled from a distant land. They plan this out. They put on old, worn-out clothing, they take worn-out sacks for their donkeys, they wear these old, patched sandals on their feet, they make sure their last bits of food are dry and crumbled, and then they pitch a “covenant” with Joshua and the people. And instead of checking with God for advice, Joshua falls for it. So, in this case, ***“craftiness”*** is not really a good quality, and the reason (in this case also) is that ***“craftiness”*** or ***“prudence”*** has been separated from godly wisdom.

With godly wisdom, though, this ***“craftiness,”*** this ***“scheming”*** can be a good thing. What if I use this ***“craftiness”*** to figure out how to help my neighbor through a serious illness? What if I use this ***“craftiness”*** to figure out how to solve some complex problem at work without compromising what I believe? What if I use this ***“craftiness”*** to encourage a child who has survived some traumatic event? I think we understand that if ***“prudence”*** refers to the idea of careful planning, it can be either good or bad, depending on what we are planning. But the point for us today is that wisdom dwells with ***“prudence.”*** ***“Prudence”*** is wisdom’s companion. ***“Prudence”*** is wisdom’s

roommate. ***“Prudence”*** and wisdom belong together, because once they get separated, terrible things can happen.

Combined with godly wisdom, prudence allows us to do good and to do it effectively. We plot, and we plan, and we scheme, but in a good way. This is prudence, wisdom’s companion.

B. The second companion to wisdom is “KNOWLEDGE.”

It seems that ***“knowledge”*** perhaps refers to having an awareness of certain facts, either by experience or observation. ***“Knowledge”*** is accumulating information. And generally, knowledge is great, but as with prudence, knowledge without godly wisdom also has the potential of being quite dangerous. Sometimes, for example, knowledge has a way of leading to arrogance. We think of Isaiah’s prophecy against Babylon in Isaiah 47:10, where Isaiah says to Babylon, ***“You felt secure in your wickedness and said, ‘No one sees me,’ your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you; for you have said in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’”*** The Babylonian Empire had vast amounts of knowledge; but, their knowledge led them to arrogance. Their arrogance kept them from listening to God. Knowledge can mislead if we trust in knowledge itself without acknowledging God. In Proverbs 8:12, though, Solomon says that wisdom ***“finds”*** knowledge. In other words, she goes looking for it. Godly wisdom has nothing to fear from accurate and truthful information. Lady Wisdom, then, is on a quest for knowledge – perhaps through formal education, perhaps through reading, perhaps by looking to those who have experience in a certain area. A person who is truly wise will go looking for knowledge. To the wise, knowledge is a companion.

C. The third companion to wisdom is “DISCRETION.”

Discretion is the idea of “considering” something. Similar to ***“prudence,” “discretion”*** is the idea of plotting, planning or scheming with a purpose. And similar to ***“prudence”*** and ***“knowledge,” “discretion”*** can also be terrible, if it is ever separated from godly wisdom. For a negative example of this word being used in scripture, we go to Psalm 10:2, where the author says, ***“In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.”*** The word translated ***“plots”*** is the same word Solomon uses here in a good way. So, we have another reminder here that it is not always bad to ***“plot”*** something. We can ***“plot”*** good things. But, plotting truly has the potential of being awful if we ever start plotting without including God in our plans. Discretion, then, is the idea of plotting, planning, or scheming with a purpose. And discretion is described here as being sought out by wisdom as a companion, as a roommate.

Lady Wisdom, then, is looking for friends: She dwells with prudence, and she goes searching for knowledge and discretion. This is the positive side of this passage.

II. As we return to the text and as we move into verse 13, we now come to this reference to FEARING THE LORD, and Solomon’s point in mentioning this is to emphasize that when we fear God as we should, this fear should also cause us to “HATE.”

So, how do we not use prudence, knowledge, and discretion simply to benefit ourselves and to do evil? We fear the Lord! We think of Paul condemning the gentiles in Romans 3 as he quotes from the Old Testament. He describes the Roman world at the time (looking around him as he writes from Corinth), and I want us to ask whether Paul could be describing the world around us today. This is what he says,

...as it is written,
"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
¹¹ ***THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,***
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
¹² ***ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;***
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
¹³ ***"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,***
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"
"THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
¹⁴ ***"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";***
¹⁵ ***"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,***
¹⁶ ***DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,***
¹⁷ ***AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."***
¹⁸ ***"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."***

So, we have this huge list of awful sins, and then he boils it down to the cause, ***"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*** Paul would agree with Solomon that the world today has prudence, and knowledge, and discretion, but the world has failed to fear God. As a society, it almost seems as if we are using our craftiness, and knowledge, and discretion to invent new ways of sinning. The solution, though, is to fear God.

We think back to Moses making the handoff to Joshua on the east side of the Jordan River. Toward the end of those comments (in Deuteronomy 31:12-13), Moses says to Joshua,

¹² Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. ¹³ Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

The key to wisdom, then, is to fear God – not necessarily shaking in terror, completely afraid to ever approach God for any reason – but to fear God is to respect God for who he really is. God is God, and we are not. He is holy and separate. To fear God is to stand in awe of his power and might. To fear God is to realize that we are accountable for what we do, and say, and even think. Well, in the case of Lady Wisdom, this fear of God causes her to ***"hate."*** *****PPT** "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate."*** So again, our fear is not shown primarily by running away and shrieking in terror, but our fear of God is demonstrated with us hating what God hates. Our fear causes us to take on God's hatred. And so, to fear God is to hate evil. To fear God is to hate pride and arrogance and the evil way. To fear God is to hate the perverted mouth. The more we love God, the more we fear God, the more we hate sin. It's not that we never make a mistake, but sin is no longer who we are. We lose our taste for it. Sin no longer rules over us. We hate it. We turn away from it.

Conclusion:

Lady Wisdom, then, is careful with her associations. On one hand, she dwells with prudence, knowledge, and discretion. On the other hand, wisdom knows that ***"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil,"*** which causes her to hate pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverted mouth." If we are wise, we will love what she loves and hate what she hates.

As we close our study, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the only wise God, the source of all knowledge and power. This morning, we ask for wisdom. We ask for prudence and discretion. We also ask for your help as we turn away from sin. We pray that we would truly hate those things that you hate.

Today, we are thankful for Jerry Turley. We are thankful for his cheerful and generous spirit. We are thankful for his commitment to hospitality. This morning, we ask for your blessings on Karen, that you would comfort her in this time of loss.

In Jesus we pray. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: furlakeschurch@gmail.com