

“The Pleasures of Godly Wisdom” Proverbs 3:17-18

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her. Proverbs 3:17–18 (NKJV)

In the passage we are considering tonight Solomon is personifying “godly wisdom” or religion or for us Christian Living and saying all her ways are pleasantness!

Meaning Christian Living has its own pleasures! This is important to know because we are tempted toward worldly pleasures and worse the passing pleasures of sin!

I. Solomon who is writing about wisdom and pleasure, was an expert on both -

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Proverbs 3:17 (NKJV)

1. Solomon had prayed for wisdom to govern God’s people and God answered his prayer -

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

30 Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 1 Kings 4:29–30 (NKJV)

2. God gave Solomon, not only wisdom but he blessed him with riches and Solomon used the wealth God test the enjoyment of pleasure -

2 I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure”; but surely, this also was vanity. 2 I said of laughter—“Madness!”; and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?” 3 I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. 4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which

to water the growing trees of the grove. ⁷ I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical instruments of all kinds. Ecclesiastes 2:1–8 (NKJV)

Solomon enjoyed the best food, drink and entertainment money could buy, these were flesh

gratifying, not necessarily sinful pleasures -

... but surely, this also was vanity. Ecclesiastes 2:1 B (NKJV)

These things were not ultimately satisfying, as good and as enjoyable as they were, as much as he had of them, they were eventually, VANITY, emptiness, BORING!

3. His father David had enjoyed sinful pleasure committing adultery with his mother Bathsheba, but sinful pleasure is rightly called “passing” –

... the passing pleasures of sin, Hebrews 11:25 (NKJV)

A. Some pleasures are sinful immediately and obviously, adultery is an example of that –

B. Some pleasures are sinful only because of EXCESS, gluttony, drunkenness –

4. Solomon’s wives were an example of both kinds of sin –

11 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites—² from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did evil in the sight of

the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. ⁸ And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 1 Kings 11:1–8 (NKJV)

A. *Excess* - “many” – 1 Kings 11:1 seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines – 1 Kings 11:3

B. *But also, just plain wrong* – ² from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” 1 Kings 11:2

⁶ Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. ⁸ And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 1 Kings 11:6–8 (NKJV)

C. *God punishes such things is part of why their pleasure is PASSING* – ⁹ So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 1 Kings 11:9 (NKJV)

¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 1 Kings 11:10–11 (NKJV)

5. *In writing Proverbs Solomon under the influence of God’s Spirit personifies godly wisdom = the fear of the Lord, as the right kind of woman* – ⁷ The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)

Despite being given “wisdom” Solomon had been a fool, for a time!

II. The wisdom that brings lasting pleasure is godly wisdom, the fear of the Lord –

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Proverbs 3:17 (NKJV)

1. Consider the gift Solomon prayed for as a young king -

⁶ And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. ⁷ Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I *am* a little child; I do not know *how* to go out or come in. ⁸ And Your servant *is* in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. ⁹ Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” 1 Kings 3:6–9 (NKJV)

Solomon prayed for: wisdom to judge / rule God’s people.

2. Consider God’s answer to this prayer –

¹⁰ The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, ¹² behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. ¹³ And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. ¹⁴ So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” 1 Kings 3:10–14 (NKJV)

Solomon received from God in answer to prayer: wisdom to rule, even beyond all others, plus riches and honor. What Solomon did not get, infallibility, notice the BIG “if” in verse :14 –

¹⁴ So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.” 1 Kings 3:14 (NKJV)

There was “wisdom” but this would only continue to be “godly wisdom” as long as Solomon kept God’s laws ...

3. It is this godly wisdom / religion that brings God’s blessing, lasting pleasure, joy -

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness,... Proverbs 3:17 A
she has “ways” plural that need to be learned, that are ways of pleasantness (pleasure)

A. Ways for relating in a family, ways for husbands, ways for wives, ways for children

B. There were ways for kings

C. There were rules for a happy life –

⁹ For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there *is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:9–11 (NKJV)

4. She also had paths that all led to peace –

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJV)

III. This wisdom is a tree of life –

¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her. Proverbs 3:18 (NKJV)

1. Where do we find the tree of life in Scripture?

A. In the beginning –

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9 (NKJV)

B. At the end –

¹⁴ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:14 (NKJV)

Here in the middle too - Proverbs 3:18 (NKJV)

2. Here in the Book of Proverbs Solomon tells us twice that there is a way that SEEMS right to a man –

¹² There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death. Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

²⁵ There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death. Proverbs 16:25 (NKJV)

A. ADAM chose the way of disobedience –

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:17 (NKJV)

B. Jesus Christ chose obedience –

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:8 (NKJV)

Obedience, the fear of the Lord is wisdom. The cross is true wisdom, the wisdom that confounds an ungodly world –

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV)

C. Christ's obedience led to our life, even abundant life, so we also are called to obey –

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, Philipians 2:12–15 (NKJV)

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