

Blessed Is the Man That Hears Me

Proverbs 8:34

*“Blessed is the man that hears Me, watching daily at My gates,
waiting at the posts of My doors.” – Proverbs 8:34.*

We see here in Proverbs 1–21, as in other places in Proverbs the Personification of wisdom. We can look and identify a bit of a helpful outline to help us understand just what it is that Solomon wants for us to understand:

- Her call, 1–5,
- This is followed by announcement of her worth, 6–11;
- And then her authority, 12–16;
- And then her rewards, 17–21.

Immediately before our considered passage Solomon speaks to us in verse 22–31. concerning what we could call the **“Revelation of personified wisdom’s identity”**. When we think the matter through from the NC perspective we can see Wisdom as a person which is ultimately revealed to be the Preincarnate Christ (although some scholars have denied this). Here wisdom is revealed to be coequal and coexistent with God. In verse 22 Solomon tells us ‘The Lord *possessed* [not created] me at the beginning of his work, *before* his deeds of old.’ This beginning, much like John 1: 1: ‘In the *beginning* was the Word,’ is an absolute timeless beginning. This magnificent passage anticipates 1 Cor. 1:30; Jn 1:1–3; Heb 1:1–3. We conclude that this is an off-hand reference to the presence of Christ with His Heavenly Father in Eternity past. This is the Christ that we enjoy and our Redeemer, the One who, by His body and blood removed our sin and the stain of our offense to God.

We might also note that we can see a tie to God’s Holy Spirit Who has indwelt and now enables us to see the wisdom of God revealed in His Word and to live that wisdom out as believers and servants of the Living Christ in our day and age.

I was daily his delight (v. 30; cf. also 3:19–20). The wisdom that enters the lives of the faithful actually enables them to participate in the rationality at the heart of things. This is why the impious are called “foolish” or even “stupid” (12:1); they are self-haters (cf. 8:36). On the question of whether the personification of Wisdom here goes beyond personification and describes an actual person, see Introduction: Personified Wisdom and Christ.

In our section, V32–34, we see a **renewed appeal** from Wisdom. How true it is that he who finds God is ‘happy,’ 32, 34, because he finds life in Christ the true wisdom of God. We ought to see that there is a definite, shall we call it, “process” to the realization of the great benefit of Wisdom in daily life as believers. We can, in simple fashion, set them out as follows:

1. Now therefore, *listen to me, my children,*

The gain and receiving of the wisdom of God in our lives demands a deliberate pursuit of it on our part. It is little wonder that the unsaved world (and also many in the redeemed world) fail to think and act in the manner in which God has laid out in His Word. They do not set themselves to “listen” in a deliberate and purposeful sense to what God has said as laid out in that Word of God.

We must realize that it is in this fervent pursuit of wisdom via His Word and NOT via our own understanding and perception that result is our being “*blessed are those who keep my ways*”.

2. We pick up there and declare that it is not merely the knowing of His way, but in the keeping of those ways that His blessing comes our way.

“Keeping” refers to deliberate apprehension and acting upon what God says in His Word in life. This is not to say that in so doing we divine fashion, “earn” blessing. It simply means that, as our Father, a “*parent*”, is speaking in an instructive way, God like and loves it when we are obedient and rewards us, as His children for that obedience. He tells us:

³³ *Hear instruction and be wise,
And do not disdain it. (Proverbs 8:33)*

3. Hear instruction and be wise,

“Hear” is a normal verb that speaks of listening to and paying attention to the object, in this case, instruction. We should see also that it is in the imperative mood. Being, according to context, spoken by Lady Wisdom and thus the Lord Himself, we see it as an absolute command. The idea is not just to hear the words spoken, but hear them, pay attention and understand them. It is then, Solomon says, that we will reap the capacity to “be wise” in our actions. Wise is the verbal form of the noun used to refer to wisdom. Solomon is telling us to listen to and seek to grasp the fullness of the instruction that Dame Wisdom gives to us. Thus, by heeding the command of the Lord and seeking the Lord to truly understand and know the true meaning of what God has said, we do as God has commanded. The result here is not merely that we know the content of what Dame Wisdom has said, but the essence of it as well. It is important that we understand that there is a real difference between the two.

Solomon gives us another responsibility to consider...

...And do not disdain it. (Proverbs 8:33)

4. And do not disdain *it*.

The implication of the first phrase here is that we both hear and act on it as it instructs. But obedience, especially is not easy, but rather, as any believer can see is, quite often, very difficult. How often has it been for all of us that temptation comes our way, or the responsibility to do (or not do) a given thing.

Again, I say, how often has it been that we either have gone ahead and done, or failed to do what should have been done.

“Disdain” is a powerful word in Hebrew. It is only used 16 times in the OT. It comes from a root word that speaks of being “naked” or revealed completely. In the sense that it is used here, means to let go, let loose. In a more positive sense, it means to let alone, avoid, neglect. It can speak of that which loosens (or is loosened). Regarding that which should be controlled it speaks of the act on a thing that allows it to be let loose, be loosened of restraint. We can easily see why it is used in such a negative way here. Solomon is telling us that, though it may be our nature or inclination to “let things go” or avoid them, we must not do so. Even in a positive sense, we must not allow the better things that God has asked us to do to be “loosened” but ought to keep a tight control and direction over them and see that they are completed.

Solomon goes on and gives us yet a fifth idea to tie to the four that have gone before. He tells us that the man who does actually listen to God is blessed.

5. Blessed is the man who listens to me,

“Blessed” speaks of being made happy or becoming wonderfully fortunate as a result of what it is tied to. Here, it the act of “listening” to the personified Dame Wisdom we have mentioned before. The word for “listen” is one that is related to the leading word in verse 33 where we were told to “hear” instruction. Here the word is a participle that pictures the act of paying attention and taking in the instruction of Wisdom and sees it as an ongoing activity. And so, we understand here that this is not talking about a single action, but of one that is more the habit or pattern of one who is in view.

We conclude in this portion that the is sure and certain blessing or happiness from God as a result of taking in and using the counsel of the Word of God, that comes from the “lips of Wisdom” so to speak to enable us to do and be what God desires us to do and be. We just want to underscore this is NOT just a onetime thing, but, rather, is seen to be something done over a continual process and as a demonstration of the character one in view.

Solomon goes on talks about the idea in a more particular fashion, just what it is that God desires to be an aspect of this listening...

6. Watching daily at my gates,

The significance of this phrase seems fairly obvious. The picture is of one who, by an act of his purpose and desire, and perhaps of his duty, sets himself in a place where he can watch and oversee the “gates” of the city with the implication that it is done to see to it that these gate at not violated or used wrongly. In a military sense, it was to see that no enemy entered by way of the gate in view. In a commercial sense, it was to be aware and sound the alarm when something desirable was to enter.

Whatever the sense, it is clear that Solomon’s desire was that the gates be used ONLY in a positive and productive fashion. The implication here is that

there may be times when, due to our lack of watchfulness things might slip by! The word “watch” speaks off remaining wakeful and seeing to it that we do not fall into snoozing or dozing and so, miss something that might be harmful or that could have been very useful if only we had seen it! The word was used of those who “watched over” something very valuable to see that it remains safe and/or is used in a good and profitable fashion, in the manner in which it is intended. We also note that the counsel here seems insistent and urgent, something that we absolutely need to do.

A final aspect here is related to what we have said already. Not only are we to keep watch over the gates of the “city” of wisdom. We must also make it a particular, specific watching:

7. Waiting at the posts of my doors.

Solomon urges his readers to, along with the keeping of a continual and ongoing watch over the “gates” of Wisdom’s city, he tells us now to see to it that the one pursuing wisdom be sure that they are “waiting” at the posts of her doors. The word waiting actually means to “stand guard” and is one used frequently in the OT to speak of the Military concept that we are all familiar with - keeping an entrance of place of value secure by watching over the entrance. The idea is that they are to be sure that the “doorpost (s)” of wisdoms “doors” are secure and rightly connected.

We have spoken before that in many occasions in Proverbs the personification of Wisdom takes place in order for us to see the pointing of wisdom to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as He demonstrated the great wisdom and love of God. This particular phrase makes a similar use of the word “door post”, translated in most versions as “posts of my door” here in verse 34. It is the same word, in virtually the same form as is used in Exodus 12:7 when Moses is telling us of the protecting of the Israelites from the 10th plague in Egypt. Israel was to apply the blood of the sacrificed lamb to both “door posts, or the “door jams. They were also to apply it to the crosspiece overhead which connected the two “door posts”.

⁷ *And they shall take some of the blood and put it on **the two doorposts** and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.*

We cannot get away from the tremendous symbolism and prophetic value which the doorposts and the lintel serves in Exodus and thus would, at least suggestively, carry over to other usages of the figure. This use of it in Proverbs 8:34 is very clearly suggestive. Solomon tells his listeners that they are to be “...waiting at the posts of my doors.” He very clearly has something other than the wooden framework that held his bedroom door in place. He wanted us to think about that which secured the entry to a given place or room.

In the Exodus picture of the Passover Event, the blood on the door posts and lintels secured those inside, protecting them from the terrible penalty inflicted by God for Pharaohs’ refusal to let God’s people go! We ought, then, to attach at

least some of the same significance to this current passage. The picture of the door posts giving security, coupled with its' usage elsewhere in the OT, direct our attention to Christ and we take some remembrance of where these kinds of pictures point. We ought not make too grand a claim concerning the picture drawn for us here. But, after all, Solomon was here writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and ought, thus, be considered to be speaking as a Prophet of God. It is quite possible that He had more on his mind than just seeing to it that a given door in the Palace was secured.

Rather, we should take this aspect of Solomon's words here to be speaking of, not only security, but also about watching for the coming or emergence of Dame Wisdom from what is being watched. This, then, falls in line with what we have mentioned concerning a picture of watching for the coming one Who would emerge and bring with Him the ultimate wisdom that all men need and that would teach and show the reality of God's desire and provision for His people.

Not intending to draw our discussion out, but this fits well with the couple verses:

*³ For whoever finds me finds life,
And obtains favor from the LORD;*

*³ But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;
All those who hate me love death." (Proverbs 8:35-36)*

Of course, Solomon is speaking Wisdom, as personified in Proverbs. But the same ideas would also be applied to the coming Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. One day, He would emerge and was extremely important that His "door" be watched careful for the moment He emerge so that His provision could be seen and grasped by those who were exposed to the entire process. The incredible significance of this entire matter is shown in what Solomon says are the repercussions of failing to grasp this Wisdom as it comes to be seen and able to be known - they are two fold:

1. For whoever finds me finds life,

There is little mistaking seeing the two-fold benefit described. Biblical wisdom has great benefit for those who find it, understand and pursue it, and come to be able to apply it to their lives. Life can refer to both eternal life and to the fullness of living here while alive.

2. And obtains favor from the Lord;

Favor from the Lord is, perhaps the greatest of gains that the Scripture, especially the OT has to offer men. Throughout both of the Covenants this favor is NEVER obtained by anything other than the mercy and grace of God. The ultimate demonstration of that grace and mercy was seen in the coming, life and death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. It is, Solomon says here, by the apprehension of Wisdom that we are able to obtain mercy from the LORD.

It is by this “mechanism” alone that we are able to come to know the wisdom that salvation is obtained by means of the Lord Jesus and His work.

3. But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;

Likewise, any believer comes to know and understand the danger of sin and self-indulgence. Solomon wants it to be perfectly clear than any choice or decision/action that is in violation of what Wisdom (meaning the teaching of the Word of God/not human wisdom of course) proclaims is what our best course ought to be not only offends God (as he has said before in Proverbs) by also actually damages our own soul, meaning our own ability to walk with the Lord.

4. All those who hate me love death.”

As a summary of what he has been saying here, Solomon concludes with a dramatic but easy to understand argument. If we are among those who do not apprehend Wisdom, we will end up pursuing after the things that bring death and not beneficial for living. The idea here implies that the “hating me” that is present in this phrase points to the idea that this hating of wisdom is a knowing and deliberate thing. It is not merely a matter of “I’d really rather not...” or “Oh...that’s not for me” kind of treatment of the wisdom of God that is offered to all men. Rather it stands to be seen as a path that is taken purposefully and deliberately by those who find themselves confronted by an undeniable set of truths that, if acknowledged or grasped and follow, would contradict their understanding of reality. This is actually much like what the Apostle Paul had to say in Romans 1 and 2 when he said that all men have an innate knowledge of God and of their accountability to Him and yet rebel and reject that general revelation, denying even that God exists, putting themselves in the place of being actual “haters of God”. Here Solomon tells us that those who reject the knowing testimony of Dame Wisdom to them are actually putting themselves in a place where the results of such an action can truly be seen an act of hatred against themselves!

Just by way of a bit of a rehash of our Interpretation we remember that it is Wisdom who speaks, appearing here in the style of an Eastern sovereign. At her palace gates the most importunate suitors watch and wait, that they may seize the first opportunity for an interview. Happy they who, thus earnestly seeking, find life and favor at the hands of Jesus, “the Wisdom of God”!

There are a number of illustrations that are helpful here:

- How wise, how blessed were the aged Simeon and Anna, to whom, watching in the Temple courts, “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” Jesus was revealed, among the very first!
- Did not Mary of Bethany, by sitting persistently at His feet, acquire from His lips that “better part,” which is only theirs who are content to watch and wait?
- The eager and energetic suit of a Zacchaeus snatched hold of, as it were, salvation in a day.

- Health, bodily and also (may we not believe?) spiritual, was granted to the persevering efforts of that impotent man (how strong in faith!) who strove for so many years to bathe first in Bethesda's pool.
- The Ethiopian nobleman and the Bereans found wisdom in their unwearied Scripture search.
- Why should Christians be less willing than God's people of old to wait, whether as priests (Exod. 29:42) or as laity, at the doors of the Temple (Luke 1:10) for the assured blessing?

Thinking in terms of any application - How eager they are who have their worldly interests at heart, and who look for favors at Court or at the hands of great people! How willing to wait in the antechambers, to watch for the unbarring of the gates! For a pardon, for life, yes, even for a pension, what labors, what humiliations will they not undergo! And shall I be less earnest about what concerns my whole being in the present and in the future? Have I not to seek remission of the penalty of eternal death, unless, indeed, I have already obtained absolution? Do I not need—ah! how can I live without the perpetual favor of my God? Let me be instant, then, in the use of the ordained means of grace There are gates which will unfold, doors which will open and disclose to me, if on the lookout, Him whom my soul seeks. In prayerful meditation upon and study of God's Word; in daily frequenting (where possible) of the services of the Church; above all, in frequent and early resort to Holy Communion, I may hope to find Jesus, and to be found of Him. Unwearied diligence and patient expectation in the way of Christian duty cannot long fail of their desired end. Wisdom's child, familiar with Wisdom's gate, will find Him "in whose favor is life." And "blessed" shall be his eyes and his ears!