

Then Shall They Call on Me

Proverbs 1:28

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“Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me.” - Proverbs 1:28.

This verse is a part of a section that has been referred to as “The Call of Wisdom”. We’ve mentioned before that the chapter can, for convenience sake, be thought of in three sections:

- **v1–7. To promote wisdom and godly living.** Verse 7 strikes the theme of the entire book. Reverence toward God is the essential prelude to all wisdom and successful living.
- **v8–19. Home discipline is a moral safeguard** against a life of crime.
- **v20–33. Wisdom personified** as a prophetess and teacher. She shows the folly of those who reject moral instruction and discipline.

Here is Verse 1:28 Wisdom declares that when calamity falls upon the scoffers, **they will call upon me, but I will not answer.** Although the language is similar to texts such as 1 Sam. 8:18, we ought to note that actual prayer is probably not in view here. “Lady Wisdom” in this place (and remember that this is personification and NOT a reference to any gender in particular) is not God but simply a personification, it is describing a non-human thing/quality in human terms so as to make it more easy to perceive and/or understand on the part of the reader. The meaning is that what Solomon has described as fools and scoffers, when disaster overtakes them, will frantically seek the wisdom to get out of trouble. This is a completely understandable and perceivable thing. I don’t think that many will agree but it will be too late for them.

The idea that it will one day be too late to cry out to God, the “door” will have closed! Over in Luke 13:22–30 we read what Jesus had to say about “The Way into the Kingdom”

²² And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?”

And He said to them, ²⁴ “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ ²⁶ then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ ²⁷ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ ²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom

of God, and yourselves thrust out. ²⁹ They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

Given our Lord’s teaching there (and elsewhere) it is more easy to understand just how there could come to be a time when someone could “call out” to the Lord and yet not find an answer!! We might also think about the parable of the Virgins, a familiar one to most of those who read the Bible! Jesus there taught that there will come a time and a related circumstance when there will, as in the case of the 10 virgins, be those who

It is interesting that here and in the immediately following verses we can see that God’s rejection of sinners is carefully detailed in a way that is not often seen elsewhere in the OT. Of course, the NT is far more detailed and developed. This is the aspect of God’s wrath expressed in His abandonment of sinners. It is described very clearly and in detail in *Rom. 1:24–28*. The point here is that, without a pre-existing and ongoing relationship with God, no prayers or diligent seeking will help them (cf. 8:17).

- **1:28–30 I will not answer.** God will withdraw His invitation to sinners because they have rejected Him. Note the rejection of knowledge (v. 22), fear of the Lord (vv. 7–9), counsel (v. 25), and reproof (v. 23).
- **1:31 eat the fruit of their own way.** The ultimate punishment is God’s giving a people up to the result of their wickedness. Cf. *Rom. 1:24–28*.

To think once more about the Interpretation of our passage—“*Then,*” not till after *they* have been called and sought with loving solicitude. To seek “*early*” is to seek diligently. Thus God reproaches His people with His “*rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not*” (*Jer. 7:13*). The reproach will be turned into a ground of condemnation if not heeded. The retribution will be that they shall seek *Him* early, but shall not find Him.

As always, we can think of some illustrations to help us with our understanding:

- Esau, who had despised his birthright blessing, sought it vainly at last with tears.
- The Israelites, who would not hear when God spoke unto them, but went against the Amorites, in vain wept before the Lord afterwards (*Deut. 1:43–45*).
- Too late did the foolish virgins knock for admission at the door they might have entered had they been in time.

To consider the idea of application here: Wisdom reiterates her invitations. But if the sinner refuse, or make excuse, or procrastinate, then, at last, judgment utters her voice. The call was tender and winning; the sentence is severe and repellant.

But who can complain of injustice? For had the truants but answered the Voice, they would have seen a Hand outstretched to beckon, to welcome them back. Yea, the very Hands that were stretched upon the cross would have been laid upon their heads in blessing. But alas! “no man regarded.” And then, when warned, by sickness or death before their eyes, by hairbreadth escapes, by many a thrilling fear, “they set at nought all His counsel.” And when to this, in love, He added the thunder of the law, the sharp remonstrances of conscience, and the touching revelation of His cross, “they would none of His reproof.”

So, at last, the terrible retribution is denounced. “Because I have called, and ye refused: therefore shall ye call upon Me, but I will not answer. Because I have stretched out My hand, but no man regarded: therefore shall ye seek Me eagerly (with outstretched, suppliant hands), but ye shall not find Me. Because ye have set at nought My counsel, I also will laugh at your calamity. Because ye would none of My reproof, I will mock when your fear cometh.”

*Great God! is this true? Is this Thy Word? And am I yet spared?
And does the Voice of Wisdom yet invite me? Oh, give me grace to
heed, to obey that Voice! It calls me back to God, to my home in
His Church, to a son's place at His table, to walk henceforth in His
ways. If I have not already, I must, I will return. For how self-
condemned I shall be, if, at the last, I find Him deaf to my
entreaties, and learn too late that in rejecting Him I ensured my
own rejection!*
