

A Prudent Man Foresees and Hides Himself

Proverbs 22:3

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." - Proverbs 22:3 (Cp. 14:16; 27:12).

Solomon has much to catch our attention concerning just what prudence indeed refers to. We've talked about the idea before this before and come to conclusion that it refers to the taking in of the wisdom and understanding of the Scripture and then learning to interpret the world around us and matters we are faced with in order to arrive at the proper course of action and interpretation so as to proceed in a godly and God glorifying fashion. This verse actually demonstrates the truth of this definition for us. It is not talking about any kind of a psychic foresight, but rather of an accumulated wisdom that givens a kind of warning and enables us to "hide" ourselves from whatever undesirable thing is in the process of approaching. Included in the idea of prudence is that of taking action to forestall or avoid the effect of what negative is coming. Again, this is borne out by the second phrase of the verse: "...foreseeth the evil,". The word can, as some versions render it, "see", in the regular sense of perceiving through our physical eyes. But it can also be used in a metaphorical sense and speak of anything from the anticipation and interpretation of some oncoming event or situation in the context of what one has learned from God and His Word.

Note that it not just any old thing that one sees coming. But rather Solomon specifically speak of the foreseeing of "evil". This word can refer to a wide range of things; from wickedness, to personal or societal depravity, even misfortune or disaster, and in some contexts even speak of being treated badly by others. Likewise, in some contexts, it can speak of the coming temptation or tendency to do sickness yourself. As such, and it is not likely the primary meaning in this verse, it is likely that Solomon had a more general application in view in which to apply the sense of his meaning. It is a noun form here, and so must, generally speaking, refer to the approach of sin, either personally or as a temptation so to indulge in.

He, prudently, see the danger that given situations pose to him in leading to a temptation, or worse, leading directly to indulgence in sinful behavior, thus giving in to his known weaknesses and he does what is necessary to "hide" from them, namely to at the least you minimize his exposure to them. "Hide" is a basic verb that has the same basic meaning as it does in our modern age. As such it speaks of making ourselves less obvious to the coming danger or temptation and sin. The basic idea that the phrase presents to us is that of making oneself, how shall we say it, "less obvious"?

The Scripture makes it clear that it is not enough to simply rely on our own will to refuse temptation and the sin that results. Surely, we must determine to refuse and deny the impulses that show themselves to us, but often, that is not enough to get the job done so to speak. The Bible gives us some good and solid guidance on the foreseeing of such coming sinful urges...

1. We can look at the Lord Jesus' example in Matt. 4:1-11 and be sure that, knowing what inevitably is coming, bathe ourselves in prayer and fasting to prepare for what we will face.
2. We can know what the Scripture says about our particular weakness and then, when they arise, use the text of the Bible to fight against both the temptation and the tempter.
3. Likewise, we can recognize where it is and what it is that makes us susceptible to sin and failing the Lord's command.
4. We must also be sure to make our weakness a matter of ongoing prayer, seeking our Father's aid and power to see to that we are not "led into temptation". Of course this not to say that it is God that presents the path into either our temptation or our failure. But rather, it is He Who stands both as the shield and as the solution to it.
5. As Paul said in 1 Cor. 10:12-13 we MUST see to it that have an accurate view of self. We think neither more nor less than what we (and all men really) have as a our nature.
6. Paul also said, in Galatians 6:1 that the brethren (we or they "who are spiritual") are very useful and have an obligation in the matter of personal holiness and the avoidance of sin.
7. It is essential that we remember and take to our use and benefit the One Who, in Hebrews 4:15-16, is presented as the very fulfillment of the OT mechanism for dealing with the sin issue in the life of God's people.
8. We must remember that all sin is unacceptable and that it is God's desire that we abstain from any sin at all, in so far as we are able (1 Thess. 5:22).
9. Paul tell us in Rom. 6:12f that we ought to take the opportunity and grasp the tools that can prevent sin from "reigning in our mortal bodies" so that we do not "obey its' lusts".
10. James tells that it is essential for us to remember and keep in the front of our minds that God does not tempt us (no matter what the seeming case) and He, Himself, cannot be tempted. As we have said, we are, each one led astray and enticed by our own lusts. (James 1:13-15). It is the allowing of lust (not sexual necessarily, but the general concept of lust as the desire to get what we wish) to "conceive", that is, to dwell not dealt with, or, as Solomon says, not hidden from, that allows sin to "conceive" and give birth to sin.
11. As this passage and others tell us, we can develop the personal habits and discipline need to keep us from heading in the directions to which we are made susceptible to failings and falling to sin.

There are a huge number of other passages in the Old and New Testament that speak to this idea. We'll not take the time to develop them, but suffice it to say that there are many, many more. But it should be the occupation (as much as we are able) to see to it that we live as holy a life as we are possibly able.

We notice the second part of the verse when it take us the ones Solomon calls “the naïve”. The word, when used of the mature, refers to those who are similar to the young. The simple, inexpert, unknowing in the matters of how to deal with the affairs they are confronted with. In this context it can speak to those lacking an effect and sufficient store of wisdom and knowledge that can translate into the ability to cope with life’s matter’s. It is also used to speak of those who are gullible and easily taken in and deceived. They easily persuaded to any given situation.

These “naïve” just plod onward and, as a result, the implication is that they fail and are punished. The implication here is that this “naivety” is something that the one is naïve is so deliberately, at least to some degree. It is this deliberate pursuit of the simpleness of mind that brings the judgment of God. It is possible to be naïve and without the knowledge or wisdom that can place one in the class in view, but that is NOT what brings Gods’ judgment. It is failing, in its’ face, to apprehend and build the Wisdom and understanding of God’s Word. A serious matter indeed.

To rehearse and summarize our interpretation - “Prudent” is a contraction of “provident,” which means “foreseeing.” “The evil” is any impending danger. “The simple” are heedless ones who neglect prudent precaution. Such, in the face of peril (which they might and ought to avoid), “go forward” and (as by a judicial mulct or fine) “are punished,” “suffer injury,” the consequence of their foolhardiness. While the “prudent” are spoken of in the singular, “the simple” are plural, to give us to understand that *many* simple ones are found for *one* prudent man.

There are a number of illustrations that are useful to us at this point:

- Noah - an exception to the “disobedient” of his day, who despised warning—“moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.”
- There were among the servants of Pharaoh some who, prudently taking precautions against the threatened plague of hail, saved their cattle, and others who braved it to their great loss (Exod. 9:20, 21).
- Gedaliah contrasts with Paul, the one by prudent precautions averting an untimely death; the other, through his rash incredulity, incurring it (Jer. 40:13–16; 41:1, 2; Acts 23:17; etc.).
- Still more was that Apostle Paul an example and a contrast to many in his solemn preparation for the day of judgment, as one who acted upon what he *knew*, and would fain “persuade” others (2 Cor. 5:9–11).

By way of application - Frequent verifications of this saying meet us in life. We see character preserved or damaged, fortune secured or wrecked, life saved or lost, according as it is acted on or not. But by far its most important fulfillments are in what we see not—the destiny of the soul. Alas! what

tremendous risks are run every day by the heedless many who pass *by* the Refuge (Isa. 32:2), and *on* in the road that leads to sure destruction! Even animal instinct is observant of times and seasons (Jer. 8:7). Even the ox must be *driven* to the slaughterhouse. But unwise souls “know not the judgment of the Lord” (Jer. 8:7), not discerning the signs of the times (Matt. 16:3), and run to meet their damnation. Why is this? The answer is given from above. “My people” (saith God Himself) “doth not *consider*” (Isa. 1:3). Want of prudence arises from want of thought. Hence, the Church has done kindly in setting apart seasons for special self-examination, remembering, and “looking forward,” of which the time before Easter (commonly referred to as “Lent”) is one. There is absolute; y nothing wrong, before the Lord, with purposive to do well during these forty days to repair often to the secret chamber of prayerful meditation (Isa. 26:20), as well as to the courts of the Lord’s house, to seek, by penitence, confession, and reformation, for pardon from the Great Absolver, to enter upon a new life “hid with Christ in God,” to secure against the day of doom safety under the Almighty wings.