

The Cost of Rejecting Wisdom – 1:20-33

INTRODUCTION

The moment we awake, we begin to make choices throughout the day. Making choices always include rejecting what was not chosen. We try our best to make the right choices all the time. However, we know that that it is not possible; but that must not stop us from trying to keep on making the right choices to the best of ability. All of us have made wrong choices in life before. Some of these choices were life changing. Marrying the wrong person or committing a crime or a grievous sin is an example of these major choices that can plunge our lives into despair with lifelong consequences. Not too long ago, there was a captain who went to see what the casino in Sentosa was like. This “sight” led to addictive gambling. It resulted in losses. To win back his losses, he borrowed money from an illegal moneylender. He lost more money. To reduce his debt (at a rate of S\$2,000 per month), he was given the choice of becoming a debt collector for the loan sharks. In desperation, he agreed. He did this on more than 20 occasions. In the process of collecting money from debtors, he committed crimes such as splashing paint on their doors and walls. He was caught and convicted for his acts of vandalism and harassment. Obviously he lost his 14 year job as a captain and his pension. He also lost his wife and two children. One “small” choice of “taking a look” at the casino destroyed his promising career and his entire life. This true to life testimony warns us that our choices must be made with the greatest of care. The lives of those dearest to us depend on them too.

The question is: how do we know that we are making the right choices where we can be certain that they will always be RIGHT and will turn out for our good and the good of our loved ones? There is no book written by man that can provide us with such an absolute guarantee. The simple reason is that every man is fallible. Man’s knowledge is finite and he changes all the time. One day he might say that it is good not to drink coffee because it is bad for your health. Tomorrow, he might say that coffee is good for you because it keeps certain diseases at bay.

Thus far, we have been referring to earthly circumstances with earth bound consequences. No matter how severe these consequences might appear, they cannot be compared with the consequences that will last for eternity. The loss of money is nothing because money can be earned back. The loss of any material thing in this life is only a loss of money. However, the consequence of ending up in Hell is a loss that we do not wish on our worst enemy! No believer should desire evil or the worst for his enemy. As Christians, we should want the best for one another, including our enemies. Why? The reason is that God also wants the best for all sinners. As Christians, our testimonies are crucial in the promotion of the cause of Christ. Jesus says in Matthew 5:16 (KJV) *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* The only way to point sinners to Christ is to live our Christian lives in accordance with God’s holy and perfect Word. Wisdom is the perfect Word of God.

WISDOM’S WELCOME – vv 20-23

If God’s Word is hidden and we cannot find it, then we have an excuse before God that we have searched everywhere but to no avail. It is too well hidden and we cannot be blamed for not obeying God’s Word. However, the Bible says that wisdom cries without, i.e. outside. The word “cry” in verse 20 has the idea of shouting for joy, including singing out loud. The emphasis is that there is great joy in what is proclaimed. Other usages include **Psalm 35:27 (KJV)** *“Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath*

pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.”; **Psalm 51:14 (KJV)** “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.”; **Psalm 59:16 (KJV)** “But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.” [Emphasis added] Wisdom is personified as a person. She shouts out loud in joy to the whole world. The second line of verse 20 is a synonymous parallelism.

Where does wisdom cry? She cries in the chief places of the concourse, in the openings of the gates and in the city. Here, the word “cry” is different from the one in verse 20. The word “cry” in verse 20 emphasizes the mood of the cry which is one of joy, whereas the word “cry” in verse 21 emphasizes the approach which is an invitation. It has the idea of meeting someone and inviting him to a place or an event. [The content of the invitation is explained in the following verses.] The phrase “chief places of concourse” refers to places which have a large gathering of people. The phrase “in the openings of the gates” refers to official places where business is conducted. For example, in **Genesis 23:18 (KJV)** “Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.” Abraham conducted his business, of buying the cave of Macpelah to bury Sarah his wife, at the gate of the city. Another example is **Genesis 34:20 (KJV)** “And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, . . .” Hamor and his son Shechem convinced the people of Shechem to be circumcised so that Jacob and his family might become part of them. (see also Deu 22:14, 25, etc. for more examples on this interpretation). The phrase, “in the city” is self explanatory. Wisdom is broadcasted out loud as an invitation to all asunder, from the general people who gather in public concourses, to businessmen or official government people, to everyone who lives in the city! No one is excluded in this general and joyous invitation.

What does wisdom cry? The content of the message is, “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (verses 22-23). The addressees are called “simple ones.” The word for “simple” refers to “those who are seducible or easily deceived.” These are not innocent ones who are simple in their minds with low IQ, but in their spiritual minds and the moralities of life. They are easily deceived by the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life. They have been deceived for some time and have not returned back to the path of wisdom. Instead, they have been enjoying their sins and their life without God’s Word. It is one thing to be deceived and another to be in a state of deception and enjoying it. Using synthetic parallelism, God calls them scorers who delight in their scorning. These are the ones who make their mouths at God when God’s Word is taught to them. The word for “delight” is the same word used in the Ten Commandments that warns us not to covet. It is a very strong desire for something. In this case, the scorers are in love with their own scorn against God. To add to their foolishness, God calls them fools. They may be very successful in the things of the world, but any rejection of God’s Word makes them fools. All worldly wisdom is good only for this world and in this life. The moment this life is over, all our skills and knowledge die with us and are completely useless in the afterlife. There is no need of doctors, scientists or surgeons in Hell or in Heaven. Every bit of earthly information is useless in Hell and in Heaven. They are fools not in terms of Intelligence Quotient which measures our knowledge and brilliance in things earthly, but fools in not knowing and obeying the only Book with knowledge that is useful for all eternity even BEFORE we leave this world and enter Heaven! This knowledge that fools scorn is GOD’S PERFECT WORD! The regression from simpleton (easily seducible) to scorers (seduced to make mouths at God), to fools (a condition of the heart) speaks volumes of the sinner who does not know God, and of the professing believer who does not know God’s Word.

There is only one book that God has given to mankind that will be most useful in Heaven. It is the BIBLE. It is useful right now, is the loud message from wisdom. Reject me and you become fools, says wisdom. However, receive wisdom with all your heart and hold her in the highest esteem and it will give you life. Turn from your sins based upon the reproof from the Word of God. It always begins with the fear of God. That is why reproof is used here. The word “reproof” has the root idea of chastisement toward righteousness. The only righteousness is imputed righteousness to all who believe in Christ as Lord and Saviour from the heart. **Romans 4:22-25 (KJV)** *“And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. **23** Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; **24** But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; **25** Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”*

After repentance from sin and turning to God through Jesus Christ, conversion takes place in the believer’s life. From verse 23, we see that at least two things happen. The first is that the LORD will pour out, i.e. send forth His Spirit into the believer. The natural man understands only natural things. He is earthly. He cannot understand the spiritual. We are referring to true spirituality. The Bible makes this very clear in **1 Corinthians 2:11-14 (KJV)** *“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. **12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. **13** Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **14** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

The second thing that happens to the believer is that he will begin to understand God’s holy and perfect Word. Before conversion, the Word of God read like a history book with much killings and quite bloody. However, after salvation, the believer is no longer spiritually dead but made alive in Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He is now able to understand the Bible with an intense desire in his heart to obey the whole counsel of God. The ability is supernatural. It comes from God. It is not from man. He did not have this ability at all before conversion. It is given to him by God alone. He cannot go to the seminary or Bible College to acquire it. Only a born again believer has this ability. Those who are called or gifted by God to be teachers and preachers of God’s Word will have a better understanding and exposition of God’s Word.

WISDOM REJECTED – vv 24-25

It is a good thing to be given the Word of God. People are invited to church to listen to God’s Word. It is a privilege to be exposed to God’s Word. However, there are consequences when we reject the Word of God after we hear. The word for “call” in verse 24 is the same as the word “cries” in verse 21. It has the idea of approaching and inviting. In other words, the person who listens to God’s Word is invited by God to obey. However, he refuses to obey. Verse 24 is a synonymous parallelism. The illustration is that the LORD offers His outstretched hand to the sinner to repent of his sin and turn to God. The sinner pushes God’s hand aside and keeps on sinning. The sinner turns a deaf ear to the cries of wisdom!

Verse 25 (synonymous parallelism) describes aptly the response of the unrepentant sinner, *“But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.”* “To set at nought” means “to dismiss summarily” the counsel of wisdom. Such a blatant rebuff of the Word of God is to insult God. God’s reproof to direct the sinner back to the path of righteousness is totally rejected. When a king speaks and he is rebuffed, the king will surely punish. God is the King of kings. He wants the best for

mankind. However, when mankind rejects God's continuous overture to turn from sin and return to Him, there will be grievous consequences.

When sinful man rebuffs God, what do you think God ought to do?

WISDOM REJECTS – vv 26-30

God will now reject sinful man. The LORD will laugh, or laugh to scorn at the sinner's calamity. He will also mock, i.e. to deride by imitation, the sinner's fear. Verse 26 is another example of a synonymous parallelism. God will deal with sinful man in the same manner that sinful man deals with God. This is not childish behaviour on the part of God. This is the law of just retribution. The sinner's state of enmity and sin against the holy God stands and has not changed. Therefore, God has to deal with sinful man according to this unchanged state of enmity. However, if the sinner repents of his sin and turns back to God by listening to the cries of wisdom, his relationship with God changes immediately from sinner to saint, and the LORD will immediately deal with him very differently. It is not God who has changed, for God is immutable and He cannot change and does not change.

When fear comes (befalls or happens), and it will definitely come in the form of desolation (sudden destruction), destruction will come (arrive or reach) swiftly like the whirlwind, and the end result is distress (trouble all round [external]) and anguish (the feeling of being compressed [internal]). The third- "come" is also "befall." In this state of great mental and physical calamity, the LORD says that sinners will call to Him but He will not answer! They will seek Him early, but they will not find Him. Both these judgments from the LORD are strong prohibitions with the same strength as the Decalogue. Why would the LORD not answer to allow sinners to find Him? This does not seem to gel with passages like **1 John 1:9 (KJV)** "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

The teaching from God's Word is that whenever genuine repentance drives a sinner or a saint back unto the LORD, the LORD will never reject them. However, when the LORD declares that He will not answer or allow Himself to be found, it means that the repentance is not sincere and not on God's terms! When Wisdom cries to the sinners to obey and embrace her, sinners reject and now they have to face the consequences of their many sins. The consequences cannot be removed even when forgiveness is meted out by the LORD. For example, a man convicted of murder and awaits execution cannot have his death sentence commuted because he says he has become a Christian. Even if he has truly become a Christian, and God has forgiven him, he will still have to go all the way to the gallows and die for his crime. We must not confuse forgiveness of sin with the consequences of sin on this earth. They are mutually exclusive. It is in this sense that we interpret verse 28.

The reason for the LORD's just retribution and rejection is explained in verses 29-30. These sinners hated God's Word and personally refused to choose the fear of the LORD which is the beginning of knowledge (verse 29). They willingly and consciously did not consent to Wisdom's counsel. They despised or blasphemed all the reproofs of wisdom (verse 30). The sinners' strong rejection of God's wisdom has now come full circle against them. The only One who could have helped them was God. When they rejected God during the time when they could have repented of their sins, God now rejects them after they have borne the fruits of their sins. The consequences of rejecting God's Word are extremely serious and painful.

These consequences are reiterated by the LORD in the final three verses.

CONCLUSION – vv 31-33

We make choices every moment of every day. The choices we make have severe and eternal consequences. Verses 31 and 32 describe the result of rejecting wisdom. They will consume the fruits of what they have sown. They are full of their own counsels instead of possessing the wisdom of God. Their counsel is earthly and will not pass the test of God's standard of holiness. They will fall far short of God's glory! The turning away (the LORD is bringing us back to the beginning of the conversion in verse 20) of the simple will slay them. They will be killed by their own actions. Their earthly gain which God calls the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. They waste their years pursuing filthy lucre and indulging in materialism which is all vanity. The end of life is death. Naked they came into this world and naked they will leave this world. What do they have to show for that will last for eternity? Absolutely nothing! If they die before repentance, their end is more than just loss of life and time on this earth; it will be eternity in Hell and ultimately in the Lake of Fire forever.

On the other hand, verse 33 describes the results of obeying and embracing wisdom. Anyone who obeys wisdom and his life is transformed by the living Word (Jesus Christ) and the written Word (the perfect Bible) will definitely dwell safely. The word for "dwell" has the idea of "permanent stay" and the word "safely" means "in peace." Nothing shall come and disturb him ever again. This does not refer only to the time when we get to Heaven, but right now while we are on earth. How do we know that? We know because of the next phrase says that we shall be quiet from fear of evil. Even if there is evil against us, we shall have peace in our hearts! When the sinner is right with God and has made peace with his Creator and God, he has nothing more to fear. Satan cannot hurt or harm the believer anymore that is of any eternal significance. The verses that summarize this very well is **Romans 8:38-39 (KJV)** *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do sinners reject God's Word? Why do believers reject God's Word? Give reasons.
2. What could happen to the person who attends church regularly and knows much about the Christian Faith but refuses to accept Christ? Is he better off than someone who does not attend church and knows very little of God's Word?
3. What impact has the Word of God given in your life since you became a Christian? Please share your experience.