

Wisdom a Source of Vexation, Grief and Sorrow

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Wisdom a Source of Enjoyment (Prov. 3:13, 17).

Wisdom a Source of Vexation, Grief and Sorrow (Eccl. 1:17-18).

Wisdom, of and by itself, is not vexing, grievous, or sorrowful as Proverbs 3 verse 13 and 17 confirm. However, according to King Solomon, if the goal of acquiring wisdom is to attain power, prestige, status, or accumulate wealth, it is just intellectual vanity and not the way to achieve true and lasting happiness (cf. Eccl. 1:2; 12:8). In fact, God refers to the pursuit of this form of wisdom as foolish,

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** (1Cor. 1:20; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Those who are wise in their own estimation cannot understand God's truth, even when it is explained in simple terms,

For since, in the wisdom of God, **the world through (its) wisdom did not know God**, it pleased God through the foolishness (simplicity; cf. 2Cor. 1:12; 11:3) of the message preached to save those who believe (1Cor. 1:21; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In order to receive the wisdom of God, an individual has to approach Him in a humble and respectful manner, combined with a desire to obey His word,

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; **a good understanding have all those who do His commandments**... (Ps. 11:10a; cf. Mt. 4:4; emphasis added).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Prov. 9:10; cf. Jn. 17:3).

Those who use their "wisdom" to take advantage of others, or exploit them, do not have God's wisdom. Instead, they are using Satan's wisdom to the detriment of others. This type of wisdom is referred to as "the wisdom of this age,"

Now the serpent (symbol of Satan) was more cunning (SHD 6175; subtle, shrewd, crafty, sly) than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made ... (Gen. 3:1a; Ed. notes in parentheses: see study; Every Beast of the Field).

However, we (God's servants) speak wisdom among those who are (spiritually) mature, **yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing**.⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained (predetermined) before the ages for our glory,⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1Cor. 2:6-8; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool (humble himself) that he may become wise (in God's ways). ¹⁹**For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.** For it is written, 'He (God) catches the wise in their own craftiness', ²⁰and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise (of this world), that they are futile' (1Cor. 3:18-20; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Focusing solely on the acquisition of this world's wisdom will not bring true happiness. Therefore, it becomes a useless exercise,

... Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh (Eccl. 12:12b).

The real goal of study and research, throughout one's life, should be to arrive at a better understanding of God's word and His will for mankind,

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

Therefore, the wisdom that brings grief or sorrow is the wisdom of this world, as opposed to God's wisdom which brings enjoyment to those who seek it, and then follow it with all their might,

But solid food (God's truth) belongs to those who are of full age (spiritually mature), that is, those who by reason of use (practice) have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14; Ed. notes in parentheses).

King Solomon commented that seeking the wisdom of this world will not change a person's life for the better. This can only occur when someone begins to understand the wisdom of God and then follows His commands,

I (Solomon) communed with my heart, saying, 'Look, I have attained greatness (by this world's standards), and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood (seen) great wisdom and knowledge.' ¹⁷And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this is grasping for the wind. ¹⁸For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow (Eccl. 1:16-18; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Solomon realized the more wisdom he acquired, about the world around him, the more frustrated he became because it did not bring him happiness. He could build great houses and gardens, have large celebrations, acquire multiple servants, marry many wives, gather as much gold and silver as possible, and still feel a huge void in his life,

I (Solomon) 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. ⁴I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. ⁵I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. ⁶I made myself waterpools from which to water (irrigate) the growing trees of the grove. ⁷I 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. ⁸I 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 (Eccl. 2:3-8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Having experienced all these things, Solomon had enough wisdom to know that they did not bring true happiness. Instead, it was only through the pursuit of God's wisdom that he would experience true joy,

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit (meaningful benefit) under the sun (Eccl. 2:11; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In conclusion, the scriptures that are supposed to contradict each other are actually describing two kinds of wisdom. One is dealing with this world's wisdom, which brings grief and sorrow because it is materialistic, while the other describes God's wisdom, which explains spiritual realities and leads to peace and contentment. Without God's wisdom no one can come to understand the purpose for this physical life (Prov. 3:13-18).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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