

Prov. 16:1-9 and 25; Mt. 7:12-14; The Destination of Wisdom I. The Path of the Wicked II. The Path of the Wise

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is the end or destination of your life? Do you know where you are headed? What does it mean to have a good, long life? Well, over the past few weeks we have considered the wisdom of Proverbs- how Jesus sets before us the path of blessing and peace. Many of these wise choices came with present day benefits. Just this past week I read an article that outlines 15 things that add to your longevity. In other words- if you want to live long, according to this article, you will drink wine in moderation, be kind and compassionate, get good sleep and work hard, get married and even become spiritual. Don't some of those sound familiar? Yes, even our world can agree that there is a benefit to following certain practical insights revealed in the book of Proverbs. But is that it? Is Proverbs only concerned with a long life today? Could a Star Trek quote echo proverbs in saying- Live long and prosper- or is there something more? Well, as we have been seeing Proverbs is setting two paths before us. Each path ends in a specific place. Choosing which kind of life you want to have is not like choosing between two kinds of pop- what do I feel like today? No- the path you choose has eternal consequences. The wise will choose the path of righteousness- those who fear the Lord and submit to His word will find true blessings! The foolish, however, choose the way of wicked rebellion. A way of hatred towards God and rejection of His Word. So we have the broad path and the narrow path set before us today at the conclusion of our series in Proverbs. We see that Jesus Christ sets the way of wisdom before the church which leads to eternal blessings.

### **I. The Path of the Wicked**

In our first point, we find the way of the wicked along with their end. Our text verse is 16:25- there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. One of the duties of a parent is to warn their children about consequences. I would not do that if I were you- that will hurt. We warn them to keep them safe! I would not take that path- it leads to injury! Well- Proverbs is warning us- don't go on the foolish path- its end is death! The foolish path is one where everyone does what is right in their own eyes. They do what feels good and looks fun- without any consideration of the standard of God's Law. A rebellious heart is one

that is a law unto themselves- they do what seems right to themselves- not knowing that in the end the price of their soul must be paid! Not only will his daily life be one of bondage- futility- a striving after the wind- in the end he will face an angry God with none to pacify. When traveling - is it wise to choose a road that you do not know where it goes? It may be fun for a time- but in the end can be dangerous! Like the people who follow their GPS into a swamp or off a cliff- you need to look ahead to see where this path leads! Well- Proverbs tells us where the foolish, wicked life leads. It leads to death as 16:25 concludes. Or again in 16:18- Pride goes before destruction- a haughty spirit before a fall. In the end, those who choose the path of least resistance- the easy way which is also the way warned against- will find themselves on the way to the grave. Not only will their lives be filled with trouble, sorrow and conflict today- they will find themselves at odds with God after this life. God hates the proud- and He will punish them in this life and in the next. They will be cast out- they will not enjoy the blessing of life that Jesus has secured. They will find hostility with men and hostility from God! As 16:4 says, the wicked were made for the day of trouble. In the day of wrath their riches will do them no good. No ransom and atonement for their iniquity will be found. They will be justly condemned and cast into hell for all eternity- where the fire does not die and thirst is never quenched. 12:2 – a man of evil devices is condemned by God. And again in 16:5- The arrogant heart is an abomination to the Lord- He will be punished. They will not be allowed to dwell in the Land of the LORD- the new heavens and earth will not be his home. 10:30 says, the righteous will never be moved but the wicked will not dwell in the land. Proverbs would shake us out of our apathy- to dispel the delusion. You will not live forever. There is a day of judgment coming! Let the wicked know that their end will be destruction! So flee this coming wrath! The foolish path does not end in a good place!

But this certain end- this imminent destruction- is not to imply that there is no way for us to avert this end. The fact is, we are all by nature born on the slippery slope down into the grave and hell. But by God's grace, the church is removed and rescued. Their sins are atoned for and their iniquity covered. As we come to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point- the way of the wise- let us never think that we are wise in ourselves! That we somehow deserve to go to heaven because we are smarter or wiser than the rest of humanity! Sometimes Christians can come off

as almost smug- an air of superiority! I am wiser than the foolish man- so I get to go to heaven. We do not choose the path of righteousness so much as the Righteous One chose us and placed us on that path! The Wise life is not like Karma- that if I do wise things I will get to go to heaven. No! There is no one righteous by nature- not one! So how does one come to find themselves on the wise path which leads to life?

## II. The Path of the Wise

Here we consider or text from 16:6- by steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for. The fact is, our sins need to be atoned for- forgiveness for our debts received. Atonement is a rich theological point- that brings to mind the OT sacrifices and the Day of Atonement- where the sins of the people were covered so that they could approach God and worship Him without fear. By Mercy and Truth- Hesed and Emeth in the Hebrew- faithfulness and truthfulness- mercy and kindness along with righteousness and steadfastness. The same word is found in Ex. 34- Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Because of Jesus work on the cross, forgiveness of sins is secured for us! The wrath of God against sins is satisfied- payment made in full and peace secured! Or we could say, because of Jesus who is proof of God's love and faithfulness, we are now justified. Rom. 3 says that the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is for all who believe! And Titus 3 puts it- when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us! As you can see, we have the gospel right in the middle of Proverbs! As Prov. 10:16 echoes- The wage of the righteous leads to life! Who is this righteous man that brings life? None other than Jesus Christ our Lord! We need to keep this fact – this truth before our eyes. The only way that we can be removed from the path of foolish vanity and sin- is if Jesus puts us on the path of wisdom and life! That is why the fear of the Lord- the trust and worship of the One true God through Jesus- that is the only way to true wisdom! So once we are declared righteous- as the Spirit lives within us- we can and will live a righteous and holy life. This leads to a life of peace. Peace with God and even peace with our enemies as 16:7 says, when a man's ways please the Lord He causes His enemies to be at peace with him. Peace between God and man and peace between man and man. He will enjoy the blessings of tranquility- a blessed life- which normally leads to a long life. As

14:30 says- a tranquil heart gives life to the flesh. He will be vigorous- his youth renewed like the eagles who soar on the wind. As we have seen in recent weeks- living according to this Wisdom Literature normally translates into a long, well ordered and balanced life. Turning away from evil- v. 6 and 6:31 - a long life is gained in a righteous life. Keep the commands of the Lord- for length of day and peace they will add to you- 3:2. So the church is known by a holy and ordered life today. But there is a definite destination in mind as well. A blessed eternity that those who are wise in Jesus- who fear the Lord- can look forward to. Even if they do not necessarily live a long life on this world as it is- these are promised a long and blessed life- even an eternal life- in the land of rest that is to come. AS 18:10 says, the righteous man finds safety in the Lord- He runs into the Lord His strong tower and he is saved! 15:24- the path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol- from the grave beneath. The application then is two first. First, enjoy your life! Enjoy the blessings God has given you and use them rightly- for His praise and your neighbor's good. Do not idolize and thus destroy the good gifts! When you look at the world wisely- your life will be blessed. You can live long in the Land the Lord your God is giving you. As Ecc. 3 says, be joyful as long as you live- eat, drink and take pleasure in your toil. This is God's gift to man! The Second application is this- keep your heart set on Christ and His word! Put your hope in the only one who can provide atonement for your iniquity! Like a loving parent calling their child to them- come here little one and find rest. So Jesus calls us to Himself- to follow His way for blessings and life. His way is the wise path!

To conclude- Proverbs tells us that the one who finds wisdom finds blessings. Yes- there are blessings to be had in this life- we can enjoy wine and wealth- good health and a godly family- each a blessing from God and used for His glory. But there is a definite end- a future which we look forward to! So choose which path- enter the gate of your choice- but do it carefully- be wise and know the end of the matter! Look down the road- see what lies ahead! If you want true and lasting peace, blessings and life- then you will submit to the Lord and His way! You will fear the LORD and believe in His Son Jesus! Jesus Christ sets the way of wisdom before the church which leads to eternal blessings. For with the LORD is life and blessings forever!