

“Competing Calls” (Prov. 1:8-33)

1. Voice of Parents (8-9)
 - a. Obey
 - i. Obvious Idea: Parents are giving good instruction. Although the father’s voice is primary, the mother is coupled with him in parental unity and responsibility.
 - ii. The ‘hear’ connotes listening for learning and applying. See the Shema (Deut. 6:1-6).
 - iii. In the parallelism of this verse, the son is to obey the instruction of the father, hence not forsaking “the law of your mother.”
 - b. Display
 - i. The instructions (laws) are for the benefit of the son (or daughter). When applied, the fruition is analogous to graceful adornments on and under the head – which possesses both ears and mouth which in turn are the instruments of hearing and speech.
 - ii. A life that displays patient/obedient listening and wise speech and actions is attractive like jewelry around the neck and on the head, framing as it were the instruments of hearing and speech.
 - iii. The point is not self-adulation but beneficial life. In fact, the stakes of heeding or forsaking such wise counsel is life or death; as seen in the subsequent verses and entire book.
2. Voice of Bad Co. (10-14)
 - a. Their Enticing (10). Short cuts and sensual pleasures are tempting and often preferred to the necessary discipline of laws and responsibilities.
 - b. Their Solidarity (11a)
 - i. One cannot underestimate the influence of association. Our worldly peers, the evil ones, and even our carnal flesh call out in unison (one voice) for us to indulge in carnality.
 - ii. We all want to belong to something which approves us, provides for us, affirms us, and secures us. God has provided the means of relational institutions where we find identity, security, purpose, and prosperity viz. marriage, family, and the Body of Christ.
 - c. Their Schemes (11b-14)
 - i. Their Cruelty (11b) What motivates their bloodlust? Greed, envy, insecurity, and jealousy are hideous sins which fail to see God’s provision and plan; they would rather listen to the evil call which spurs on hate for others. Furthermore, they are ruthless in that they prey on those who have no fighting chance revealing that they are shameless and cowards.
 - ii. Their Ignorance (11c-12) Surely evil groups would rarely (if ever) boast of lurking to destroy the innocent and unsuspecting without any cause. Perhaps the writer was abruptly exposing the reality of such actions – and the reality of such impetus (12).
 - d. Their Promise (13-14)
 - i. The promise of prosperity via short cut. Disregard providence and discipline and take from others by hook and crook and murder.
 - ii. Again the solidarity is emphasized as belonging and sharing in the supposed prosperity.
 - e. Their Deception (application)
 - i. Theirs is first a self-deception which parallels the evil one’s myopic idea to subvert God and ascend to prominence.

“Competing Calls” (Prov. 1:8-33)

- ii. Their deception to those considering joining is that they would not do the same unto each other viz. not equally share the “one purse.”
 - iii. Those who join are truly deceived as Paul warned (1 Cor. 15:33). One can learn about another by observing the company he keeps. Does your group, party, association ridicule and persecute those who do not join in?
3. Voice of the Father (15-19)
- a. Avoid (15) We must avoid the deception by heeding the instruction and law (8-9). Prov. 24:1-2 → In short: we are to be innocent but not naïve (unsuspecting v. 11). Wisdom is being associated with the innocent but prepared for the lurking ones. **Further Study:** Mat. 10 sheep sent among wolves.
 - b. Understand (16-19)
 - i. As I mentioned on vv. 11-12, schemes are better pitched when sanitized or justified. Have you ever cheered for criminals or immoral characters portrayed in movies? If so, you likely had to justify it. You may have reasoned, “Well, they had it coming because they did worse stuff.” Or, “He is just seeking justice.” After all, stealing from ‘the man’ or whomever, is just equaling out what the law, system, or authorities have failed to do.
 - ii. Vv. 17-19 sum up the just irony of reaping what it sown. I do love how God lets them set up the snares and has them be victims of such as it were. Consider the just and providential irony in Zech. 12:2-3. See **Further Study** on Zech. 12:3-4.
 - iii. Justice is not always poetic and it is seemingly always overdue. However, the stakes mentioned earlier are stated and promised in v. 19 cf. Mat. 16:25.
 - iv. What is missed in most English versions is the violent tone in v. 19a. By their own violence, they are “cut off” or “cut away” from life! See Mat. 11:12 and **Further Study** on v. 19.
4. Voice of Wisdom (20-33)
- a. Transparency (20) The call of wisdom is not subversive, scheming, or covert but rather truthful, beautiful, and life-giving, thus she is out in the open and calling forth into the light. John and Jesus used the analogy of light or day to convey such righteous living and the opposite of covert evil lurking in the darkness (cf. Jn. 3:19; 8:12; 1 Jn. 1:7).
 - b. Ubiquity (20-21) In the markets, boulevards, and open places, wisdom calls forth. The voices of the world are loud and also ubiquitous, but we are to employ wisdom in discerning which to follow by our observations. We can learn from nature about God and His virtues. The poetic and wisdom writers of Scripture call us to observe nature and her cycles, and even the animals and insects which also can teach us right principles for life. Furthermore, the laws are also mentioned in the Proverbs and so to the allusions to the person of wisdom. Therefore, God had provided more than enough evidence which call out to see Him and inquire further. We have nature, our consciences, the law, and Christ – not to mention the Bible which includes the prophets, prophesies, and other historical claims which can be verified via archeology, textual transmission (textual criticism), and scientific discoveries.
 - c. Entreaty (22-23)
 - i. God desires all come to repentance. Isa. notes that there is a time limit on such as seen here cf. Isa. 55:6.
 - ii. See **Further Study** regarding the Spirit and possible presence of all persons of the Trinity and possibly the Church in this passage.

“Competing Calls” (Prov. 1:8-33)

- iii. Re: the “simple ones” Tremper Longman reminds us of the three categories of fools: “Woman Wisdom addresses three classes of fools. The first we have already seen above (1:4), the simple (*pētā ’im*). These are the most teachable of the three groups and may be understood also as naive or immature. The second type of fool, the “mockers” (*lēšim*), may be the most hardened. They hear advice and then criticize and ridicule the one who gives them the advice. Finally, she uses a word that may be the most generic of all the terms, and so we simply translate it “fools” (*kēsilm*). Her problem with these three groups of people is that they each relish their present state of ignorance. They not only tolerate it but also embrace it wholeheartedly, as communicated by the verbs “love” (*’hb*) and “hold dear” (*hmd*). The latter verb is the rarer of the two and is most notably found in the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17). It is the idea of coveting something. Finally, in a poetic twist, the third class, the fools, are said to “hate knowledge.” Indeed, in the world of Proverbs, to love folly is to hate wisdom and vice versa. There is no middle ground.”¹
- d. Calamity (24-31) In sum: there is a call to repentance (23), a refusal (24), a rebuke (25), and thus rejection (26-30 cf. Ps. 2:4-5) and recompense (31).
- e. Summary (32-33)
 - i. Inclusio or echo of v. 7
 - ii. Choices are plethora and never-ending.
 - iii. The more severe the choice the more the consequence.
 - iv. Even no choice is a choice. “Complacency” “destroys” v. 32 cf. Mat. 7:13.
 - v. The refusal v. 24 and turning away from God is done in the false security of the group. It is easy to see the promotion of ‘group think’ today with our echo chambers of affirmation and the marches and protests which demand a uniform speak, think, and action. And no one is to question the impetus, strategies, tactics, or attitudes of the group. If you do, you will be condemned or canceled. Conversely, Scripture is full of exhortations to observe, meditate, and test it and other things and reject what is fallacious and cling to what is true (1 Thes. 5:21). Some are “simple” and thus ignorant – unconcerned about critical thinking and simply decide to be critical of counter perspectives. Others are not ignorant but lack the courage to stand up against the flow of the militia and their militant threats.
 - vi. Conversely, “whoever listens to me (the father) will dwell safely and will be secure without fear of evil.” Evil is present yet the one who heeds wisdom is secure!

¹ Longman, T., III. (2006). [*Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs*](#) (p. 112). Baker Academic.

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The evil one loves confusion rather than clarity, affirmation rather than examination, a critical spirit rather than critical thinking, complacency rather than urgency, and secrecy rather than transparency. There are callings (voices) from both sides of these antonyms, and one can listen to neither side and still be condemned because no choice is a choice for destruction. However, the wise must heed warnings, observe reality, learn instruction, and choose the right path. The simple may not be confused as they are too ignorant to consider deeply enough to realize a decision must be made. Nevertheless, wisdom’s call is ubiquitous and some of the simple may eventually heed it. The Bible reveals that there is no middle ground and that there are only two paths, trees, foundations and their respective destinations (e.g. Prov. 1:15, 27-32 cf. Mat. 7:13-27). Simpletons, fools, and mockers are described as on the path which leads to destruction but such were we before Christ. The fool, simpleton, mocker, and rebel must embrace wisdom’s call and command to live and be secure and fear no evil. But if they refuse, destruction is promised. We must first receive wisdom and then become wise.

Further Study

With regard to v. 19, Bruce Waltke wrote the following:

The father draws his lecture to conclusion by universalizing his scenario of this gang of villains. Plöger argues that the extreme case does not allow a universal generalization.⁶⁶ The father, however, is not using a logical argument, which would be signified by “therefore” (*lākēn*), but an analogous assertion signified by *such* (*kēn*). The particular scenario of the lecture focused on the sing. “way” (v. 15), but the pl. *paths* (*’orhôt*; see nn. 61) depicts all sorts of lethal behavior prompted by greed. Overland notes that *everyone* (*kol*; see v. 17) figures prominently as a summation device (cf. 1:19; 3:15, 26; 4:7, 22, 23; 5:14; 6:14, 29, 31; 7:12, 26; 8:8–9, 11, 16, 36) and belongs to the category that B. Smith labels “unqualified assertions.”⁶⁷ *Who is greedy for gain* (*bōṣea’ bāṣa’*) glosses an idiom that means literally “who cuts off a cut,” as of a carpet. This gave rise to the figurative use “to cut off the life cord” (cf. Ps. 88:5[6] and “to cut off a profit”). Profit making may be neutral as in Ps. 30:9(10), but mostly the word refers to an illegal, an unjust cut/gain, similar to Eng. “rip off” (see 28:16; 115:27; cf. Exod. 18:21; 1

⁶⁶ Plöger, *Sprüche*, p. 17.

sing. singular

pl. plural

⁶¹ The three inseparable notions pertain as well to its synonyms: *’orah* (1:19; 2:15, 19, 20; 3:6; 5:6; 9:15; 4:18; 9:15); *ma’gal* (2:9, 15; 4:11), *n^etîbâ* (7:25; 8:2, 20). *’Orah* (“path”) is virtually a poetic—possibly apart from its metaphorical use in Gen. 18:11, 56 or 57 times in poetry—synonym of *derek*, signifying the route, not some secondary path in the woods, the traveler has selected. It was not used in everyday speech. *Ma’gal* (“track”) seems to derive from the route marked out by wagon wheels (see 2:9, 15). Tracks are made by men traveling in the course of their labors. *N^etîbâ* (“byway”) seems to allude to a byway rather than a highway (Judg. 5:16; Jer. 18:15), “a passage” rather than an open road (Job 18:10; Hos. 2:8). Though *’orah* is a poetic synonym for *derek*, Koch notes several ways in which they differ. First, *’orah* occurs predominantly in the pl., *derek* predominantly in the sing. Second, a *derek* can be composed of several *’orahôt* (cf. Isa. 3:12). Finally, *’orah* emphasizes more the state or condition of the wayfarer than his actions (K. Koch, *TDOT*, 2:281, s.v. *derek*).

⁶⁷ P. Overland, “Literary Structure in Proverbs 1–9” (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International; Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1988), p. 107; and B. Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), pp. 182–86. Eng. English

“Competing Calls” (Prov. 1:8-33)

Sam. 8:3; Isa. 33:15).⁶⁸ The lexeme *bš* ‘ (“to cut off”) always refers to an unjust cut/gain, similar to Eng. “rip off.” The subject of *it takes away* (*yiqqāh*; see 1:3) refers semantically to personified “unjust gain,” not the grammatically possible “all who are greedy.” *Life* (*nepeš*) links this summarizing lesson (v. 19) with the father’s substantiation in the particular illustration (v. 18). The gloss *the one who gets it* (*b^e ‘ālāyw*, lit. “its owner”) was used so as not to allow the misreading of many versions that “its” refers to “life.” The unjust gain clings to the criminal and eventually destroys him. Jesus draws a similar universal: “All who live by the sword will die by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). In sum, this aphorism articulates the book’s fundamental concept of deed-consequence: sin begets harm (cf. Gal. 6:7).²

Another commentary on verse 9 reads: “But as the phrase *kol-bōšēa ‘ bāša* ‘ (v. 19a, translated as “all who seek profits by violence”) implies, these are not just any profits; they are profits sought by illegitimate means. The sages are not against the pursuit of profits through honest, hard work. Many of the proverbs that follow actually encourage hard work with the intention of gaining profits. Nothing is more foolish to the wisdom tradition of Proverbs than the lazy person (as in 6:6–11; 10:4; 15:19; 21:25; 27:23–27; 31:27).”³

Zech. 12:3-4

Zechariah conveys a couple of analogies:

- Cup of stupor (drunkenness or reeling)
- Stone of cutting as it were

The ‘cup’ symbolized the life experience which God purposed for man. This might be a ‘cup of salvation’ (Ps. 116:13), a cup overflowing with blessing (Ps. 23:5), but more often, in view of man’s perverse unbelief, it had to be a cup of the Lord’s wrath. This Jerusalem had had to drink to the dregs (Isa. 51:17; cf. Jer. 25:17, 28), but now it has been removed (Isa. 51:22), and the turn of the nations has come to drink it. Their intoxication will reduce them to helplessness. *neb* takes the word *sap*, ‘cup’, in its other sense of ‘threshold’, hence the very different reading.⁴

The ironic picture is one of a marauder who, mad with greed, might drink down the dregs contained in a stolen goblet, only to find himself too drunk to carry away the booty.⁵

Leupold describes the scene most vividly:

What a scene: a huge bowl of wine; several men, representatives of Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistaea, Phoenicia, crowding around the bowl and setting their lips to it! They are athirst to gulp down Israel. But, strange to say, one after another steps back, reels and staggers as a drunkard, for God has

⁶⁸ D. Kellermann, *TDOT*, 2:205–8, s.v. *bš* ‘.

Eng. English

lit. literally

² Waltke, B. K. (2004). *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15* (pp. 196–197). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

³ Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 109). Baker Academic.

NEB *The New English Bible Old Testament*, Library Edition, 1970.

⁴ Baldwin, J. G. (1972). *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 28, pp. 203–204). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Klein, G. L. (2008). *Zechariah* (Vol. 21B, p. 353). Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.

“Competing Calls” (Prov. 1:8-33)

made this to be a bowl of reeling... They are rendered impotent by the wine of the wrath of God and stagger about like drunken fools. The city of God stands undefeated.^{4 6}

The stone portrays those who cut themselves trying to remove it. By their own actions, they incur the consequences they sought to enact. Mat. 21:42-44 comes to mind.

“The world views God’s people as an impediment to its sinful program and ambitions. But when the world tries to move the church, God makes her weighty and breaks the back of the ungodly.”⁷

Spirit, Trinity, Church

Not to over spiritualize this verse but is it just coincidence that “spirit” of God is mentioned? With the inclusion of God’s Spirit; we have discerned that Wisdom is personified and fulfilled in Jesus (note v. 27 uses the analogy of the consequences of a storm which destroys not unlike Jesus likened His words of wisdom to life and death using the same analogy). Furthermore, we understand that such Wisdom is given from the Father above. Finally, with the rare mention of the ‘mother’ (perhaps only one other allusion), who is linked with the “law;” We can see the Father, Son, Spirit, and Church. If God is your Father then the Church is your Mother as it were. And the law of wisdom and salvation is found in her – the body of Christ (Mat. 16:18-19; 18:18; The heavenly Jerusalem is our mother (Gal. 4:24-26 cf. Heb. 12:18-23; Eph. 4:14) which is the Church (Rev. 21).

In v. 23 we hear Wisdom’s invitation to these foolish people. She has appealed to them to change their injurious style of living (“my correction”). She has offered to give them “her spirit” (*rûah*). This comment is interesting in the light of connections elsewhere between God’s Spirit (*rûah*) and wisdom (*hokmâ*). For instance, when Yahweh commissions Bezalel to be the chief craftsman for the building of the tabernacle, he announces, “I have filled him with the Spirit [*rûah*] of God, with skill [*hokmâ*], ability [*têbûnâ*] and knowledge [*da‘at*” (Exod. 31:3 NIV). We also notice the connection between God’s Spirit and wisdom in Isa. 11:2–3a in referring to the shoot from the stump of Jesse:

The Spirit [*rûah*] of Yahweh will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom [*hokmâ*] and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh—
and he will delight in the fear of Yahweh. (cf. NIV)

This connection between Wisdom and spirit and God will become even clearer later when we explore the relationship between God and Wisdom in chaps. 8 and 9.⁸

⁴ H. C. Leupold, *An Exposition of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971 reprint), 227.

⁶ Phillips, R. D. (2007). *Zechariah*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & I. M. Duguid, Eds.) (p. 259). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

⁷ Phillips, R. D. (2007). *Zechariah*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & I. M. Duguid, Eds.) (p. 259). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

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⁸ Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (pp. 112–113). Baker Academic.