

The Search for Wisdom

Introduction:

1. Wisdom is the power of right judgment – knowing the right and perfect action for every situation, as defined by God and not man, for man is born void of much natural wisdom and all spiritual wisdom.
2. Wisdom solves problems ... financial, relational, professional, marital, political, sexual, familial, etc.
3. Pain, problems, sorrow, and trouble can be traced back to a lack of wisdom in one or more choices.
4. Job's three friends did not have the wisdom to properly judge God's dealings with righteous Job.
5. Man was given innate knowledge of things natural at creation (Gen 4:19-22; Is 28:23-29; Job 35:11).
6. Man has learned more and more about the earth and life on the earth, but he has less and less wisdom.
7. The efforts men make for perishing things should urge greater efforts for a principal thing (Pr 16:16).
8. During a week, we spend much time pursuing other goals, but wisdom is the principal thing (Pr 4:7).
9. Noble men make this commodity the object of their greatest passion and pursuit. What of you, friend?
10. There are three interpretational issues in this chapter, which should be grasped before any exposition.
 - a. *The language is poetic or parabolic*, so allow figurative senses to words and phrases (27:1; 29:1).
 - a. *Does 28:1-11 describe God's work or man's work?* We believe man's work, because (1) it begins with men as "they" in verse 1; (2) metals are mined by man in verse 2; (3) men search perfection in dark places, not God in verse 3; (4) it is extraction mining described throughout; (5) the wording cannot easily describe God; (6) if it does describe God, the effect is not impressive; (7) the contrast in verse 12 does not apply to God; and (8) God's wisdom is in 23-27, not 1-11.
 - b. *What is the wisdom of 28:23-27?* We believe this is God's creative and providential wisdom, part of His secret things, which is above the reach of man, distinct from what He offers man in 28:28.
11. A simple outline of the chapter might help keep the progress of the lesson in mind for the reader.
 - a. Man has made diligent search with great effort and skill for things natural in the earth (28:1-11).
 - b. But wisdom cannot be found, and no efforts can be made or price paid to obtain it (28:12-22).
 - c. God has, understands, and declares all wisdom, proven by creation and providence (28:23-27).
 - d. The blessed God has benevolently and mercifully instructed man how to obtain wisdom (28:28)!

1 Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it.

- A. Men have discovered how to find silver veins in the earth and mine it for various purposes.
- B. Men have discovered how to find gold veins in the ground and refine the ore to a pure metal.
- C. It is a place where they *fine* the gold, not where they *find* it, which is stated in the first clause.
- D. Consider the cost, desire, difficulty, efforts, ingenuity, and risks of mining gold and silver.
- E. Though man has discovered the place and means of precious metals, he cannot find wisdom.

2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.

- A. By great labor and refining ingenuity, men obtain useful iron from the earth for many uses.
- B. Where would we be without iron! But efforts for iron should not exceed those for wisdom!
- C. The English *brass* has been used historically for any alloy of copper, usually with tin or zinc.
- D. Brass is not of recent origin, for copper was known and used in alloys (Gen 4:22; Ezra 8:27).

3 He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.

- A. Man uses natural or artificial light to dig and search in the dark earth, where is only darkness.
- B. He looks for perfect gemstones, the mother lode, or a vein that will produce perfect returns.
- C. The diamond on your hand was once a stone of darkness until miners brought it up into light.
- D. The precious metals men admire and desire came from the dark place of burial and graves.

4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men.

- A. There is no doubt that this is a difficult verse, but we press on with our theme for this section.
- B. One of the great dangers of mining underground is the breaking in of subterranean waters, which the miner, the inhabitant of the mine, brings about by breaking into its course or place.
- C. This is water the miner has not encountered before, as forgotten by his feet, for they flow underground, and he has never walked or waded in them before.
- D. Miners have pumps, pipes, canals, tunnels, and other means to discharge, divert, or restrain water in order to continue their mining, and the earth itself often has crevices to absorb it.

5 As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire.

- A. Men have learned, by divine blessing, to turn the earth and bring forth bread (Ps 104:14-15).
- B. Beneath the surface, man extracts brimstone and coal for fires and dazzling gemstones that appear to be on fire by their shimmering brilliance, etc.
- C. By providential kindness, man has discovered how to use earth's surface and that beneath it.

6 The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold.

- A. Man has discovered the location of gemstones; they do not grow on trees or fall from clouds!
- B. Under the ground, man has found gemstones and minerals, like sapphires and gold dust.
- C. He does not know where wisdom is found, but he has discovered and learned earth's depths.

7 There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen:

- A. Vultures and other birds have great eyesight, but they cannot see beneath the earth's surface.
- B. They cannot see buried riverbeds or the veins of precious metals running through the rock.
- C. Beneath the surface of the earth, man engineers paths and tunnels to pursue its valuable ores.
- D. Man has explored regions far out of the vision of birds in order to find and obtain riches.

8 The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.

- A. The paths and places of miners are beyond roaming lions, no matter how fierce or hungry.
- B. Lions, young or strong, roam far and wide in their pursuit of prey, but man surpasses them.
- C. Man shows God's natural gift of wisdom above the beasts in searching the earth's depths.
- D. Man has explored regions with great danger and risk that even lions avoid and ignore.

9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots.

- A. Man takes hold of rocks and bores through them on the surface and beneath the mountains.
- B. He uses hammers and other devices to shatter, move, or bore through rocks (Jer 28:28).
- C. The roots of the mountains are those parts below the ground, but men labor to mine it out.
- D. They undermine hills and mountains by their numerous shafts and tunnels used in mining.
- E. We could take this verse by itself to refer to God, but we must remember the context of 1-11.

10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.

- A. Engineers tunnel to get water away from shafts; old mine shafts and tunnels are like rivers.
- B. Digging beneath earth's surface, man finds many precious gemstones, metals, and minerals, which he would never see without effort and ingenuity at boring and tunneling underground.
- C. We could take this verse by itself to refer to God, but we must remember the context of 1-11.

11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.

- A. Mining engineers use ingenuity to hold back subterranean waters from entering the mine.
- B. What was hid down in the darkness of the rocks of the earth, the miners bring to the surface.
- C. Many have celebrated the discovery of special gemstones and pure gold under surface light.

12 But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?

- A. Man, by providential blessing, has learned the location and methods of extraction mining.
- B. Men seek the location throughout life for many things ... promotion, riches, pleasure, etc.
- C. But where is this great thing called wisdom and understanding? It is not so easily discovered.
- D. Though man has learned how to mine, he has not learned by natural ability to find wisdom.
- E. Though man has explored the subterranean depths of the earth, he cannot discover wisdom.

13 Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.

- A. Though money can buy most anything on earth, it cannot purchase wisdom or understanding.
- B. The value of anything dug from the ground is a function of its cost of extraction and profit, which means that more of it can be obtained for the same price or a slightly greater price.
- C. No natural ingenuity or effort of men can find wisdom on earth, like other things are found.

14 The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.

- A. It is not under the ground, where miners are able to find all sort of precious metals and gems.
- B. No matter how deep man may go, or what precious things they discover, wisdom is not there.
- C. Neither is it found in the depths of the seas, where mariners discover many varied creatures.

15 It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

- A. Wisdom is far beyond the value of gold or silver, no matter how much of it you might have.
- B. No wonder David declared he would prefer God's words above much fine gold (Ps 19:10).
- C. Solomon used Lady Wisdom to value wisdom over gold and silver (Pr 3:14; 8:10,19; 16:16).

16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.

- A. The gold of Ophir was the most precious in the Bible (I Kgs 9:28; 10:11; 22:48; I Chron 29:4; II Chr 8:18; 9:10; Job 22:24; Ps 45:9; Isaiah 13:12), but it could not purchase wisdom.
- B. Neither the onyx stone nor sapphires are of enough value to buy wisdom and understanding.
- C. Job by the Spirit is listing several of the world's most expensive commodities in comparison.

17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.

- A. Job continued his parable that no amount of gold or crystal could equal the value of wisdom.
- B. If gold were refined and formed into fine jewelry, it still could not buy understanding.
- C. No matter the effort or ingenuity used in mining, the valuable results cannot buy wisdom.

18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.

- A. Let man's ingenuity be applied in the sea, but neither coral nor pearls can purchase wisdom!
- B. Wisdom is greater than the price of rubies, a synecdoche for all gemstones and minerals.
- C. Solomon also exalted wisdom above the price of rubies (Proverbs 3:15; 8:11; 20:15; 31:10).

19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

- A. The topaz of Ethiopia, clearly a valued precious stone, cannot equal the value of wisdom.
- B. And if gold were to be refined to 24k, or 99.9% pure, it could still not measure up to wisdom.

20 Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?

- A. If wisdom cannot be found on earth by natural means, where is it to be found and obtained?
- B. If deep mines, the sea, Ophir, and Ethiopia do not have wisdom, where is it to be found?
- C. If understanding exceeds all the precious stones of earth in value, where do we find it?
- D. If we found the locations for many other precious things, where is the location of wisdom?

21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.

- A. Man cannot find it, though he is ever so skillful at mining the unseen depths of the earth.
- B. Birds have very acute eyesight and can easily travel great distances, but they cannot find it.
- C. Man the miner cannot find it; birds cannot even follow man's mining, let alone find wisdom.

22 Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

- A. In contrast to the living of 28:21, those who are dead could only report they had heard of it.
- B. Great men had lived before Job to nearly 1000 years each, but they had only heard of it.
- C. The spirits of the wicked dead, held in prison for the great Day, had only heard of wisdom.
- D. Solomon denied there existed any knowledge or wisdom in the grave after death (Eccl 9:10).

23 God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.

- A. The living God understands wisdom and knows where it is to be found, for He is God of all.
- B. Man cannot find the way or location of wisdom, in order to obtain and take possession of it.
- C. Only God knows the overall providence and purpose of the universe, for wisdom is His.
- D. Job will get to hear more about God's creative and providential wisdom (Job 38:1 – 41:34).
- E. Solomon taught God had and used wisdom in the creation of the world (Pr 3:19-20; 8:22-31).
- F. No wonder the scriptures refer to our God as the only wise God (I Timothy 1:17; Jude 1:25).
- G. The wisdom here is God's only, which we allow Him, and wait for what He offers (28:28).

24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven;

- A. Far superior to birds' vision, God sees everything in earth and heaven (Pr 15:3; Je 23:23-24).
- B. Not only does He see everything in earth and heaven, He knows and understands it all.
- C. Here is God's omniscience, for He looks and sees with perfect foreknowledge (Is 46:9-11).

25 To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure.

- A. His power is so great, He dispenses with the winds as easily as we would weigh any thing.
- B. Job will get to hear more about God's creative and providential wisdom (Job 38:1 – 41:34).
- C. The text is describing God's use of wisdom in designing and assigning winds and waters.
- D. Here is God's omnipotence, for He creates, designs, and implements anything He chooses.

26 When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder:

- A. God by wisdom sends the rain by His order for a variety of purposes (Job 37:11-13).
- B. The gods of the heathen can never do the great and wonderful things with rain (Jer 14:22).
- C. Lightning and thunder only occur by God's wise direction (Job 37:1-5; Ps 29:1-11; 97:4).
- D. The text states God's use of wisdom in designing and assigning rain, lightning, and thunder.

27 Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out.

- A. In the beginning, before and during creation, God dealt with wisdom (Pr 3:19-20; 8:22-31).
- B. The highest natural application of wisdom is the creation and government of the universe.
- C. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning (Acts 15:18; Isaiah 46:9-11).

28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

- A. This great and glorious God, Who made and orders the universe by wisdom, offers it to us!
 - 1. Philosophers and others have sought wisdom but never found it! Here it is freely given!
 - 2. We cannot be as God, for He knows secret things, but He revealed wisdom (Deut 29:29).
 - 3. Solomon used Lady Wisdom to offer it to the simple (Pr 1:20-33; 8:1-11,32-36; 9:1-5).
 - 4. Since our first parents cost us a tree of life, then by all means nourish this one (Pr 3:18).
 - 5. Wisdom and understanding are living your life by the Bible (Ps 19:7-9; 111:10; 119:130).
- B. The fear of the Lord is wisdom. You have found wisdom, and you can have it, as God's gift!
 - 1. The fear of the Lord is the reverent desire to obey Him in all parts of your life (Ec 12:13).
 - 2. It is governing your thoughts, words, and deeds by His scriptures (Ps 19:7-9; Deut 4:5-6).
 - 3. The fear of the Lord can be taught, for it is revealed truth (Deut 4:9; 29:29; Ps 34:11).
 - 4. The fear of the Lord = the religion of Jehovah: it is obeying and worshipping Him only.
 - 5. The opinions of men in comparison to scripture are mere folly (Ps 94:11; Isaiah 8:20).
 - 6. In Job's particular circumstances, Elihu declared, "God is greater than man," (Job 33:12).
- C. Departing from evil is understanding, for you avoid consequences of sin both now and later.
 - 1. Observe this holy combination in Job, who truly feared God and eschewed evil (Job 1:1).
 - 2. Folly = sin, for you make your choices by human rebellion rather than God's wisdom.
 - 3. The negative side of the fear of the Lord is to hate and reject all sins (Prov 8:13; 16:6).
 - 4. By learning God's precepts, we can know what is to be hated in life (Ps 119:104,128).
 - 5. The pain, sorrow, and troubles of life are caused by choosing sin over righteousness.
 - 6. By hating and departing from evil, you avoid those things that defile and destroy men.

Conclusion:

1. Finding wisdom takes effort somewhat similar to hunting for buried treasure (Prov 2:4; Matt 13:44).
2. The conclusion of the greatest philosopher and the whole duty of man is to fear God (Eccl 12:13-14).
3. Psalm 19:7-11 exalts the written revelation of God as the blessed source of wisdom and great reward.
4. Those who have the word of God *and keep it* have the means of wisdom (Deut 4:5-6; James 1:21-25).
5. Noble men make this commodity the object of their greatest passion and pursuit. What of you, friend?
6. How much effort do you put into reading, learning, and meditating upon God's glorious words daily?
7. Do you apply everything you learn to each part of your life without compromise to obey the Lord?
8. Do you choose only wise friends in God's sight in order to be yet wiser (Pr 9:6; 13:20; I Cor 15:33)?
9. To the degree you compromise God's words in fact or zeal, you choose death over life (Pr 8:36).
10. Do you have a heart for wisdom, reader, or are you a hypocrite following your thoughts (Pr 17:16)?
11. Go to the miners to learn your folly, who labor for that which perisheth, while you neglect the eternal.

For Further Study:

1. The web document of the book of Proverbs and commentary ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/index.htm>.
2. The sermon, "Mysteries of Wisdom," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/mysteries-of-hidden-wisdom.pdf>.
3. "Is God the Author of Confusion?" ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/is-god-the-author-of-confusion.pdf>.
4. John Gill Commentary, Job 28, ... <http://eword.gospelcom.net/comments/job/gill/job28.htm>.
5. Matthew Henry Commentary, Job 28, ... <http://eword.gospelcom.net/comments/job/mh/job28.htm>.