

Proverbs 1:10-15

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-1/proverbs-110-15/>

The Wisdom of God is not the only voice vying for our perspective and trust. Sin calls us toward the path of foolishness, a perversion of the good for which God intends.

Solomon continues the tactic of addressing the audience from the posture of a father to a *son*. He does this in order to emphasize, reiterate, and further develop his introduction to The Book of Proverbs.

In the preceding passage, the youth (*son*) is given the positive path of influence—instruction and wisdom from parents and a fear of the Lord. In verses 10-15, the young man is warned that those true and positive influences are not the only entities vying for the young man’s attention. He is thus warned of the dangers of giving in to these lesser authorities. Those who entice him to sinful living.

The *sinner*s will do their best to *entice*, or persuade, others to join in their practices and perspectives. Solomon implores the youth, *if sinners entice you, do not consent*—that is, do not willingly choose to go along with the enticement of *sinner*s. He is making it clear that although the enticement of *sinner*s—like the instruction of wisdom—is a powerful force, the agency for each individual life is not overcome by it. We are responsible for our choices; it is up to us to choose under which authority to place ourselves.

The first three appearances in the Bible of the word translated *sinner*s provides insight to its meaning. The first occurrence refers to the men of Sodom, who were exceedingly wicked, including sexually exploiting strangers for entertainment (Genesis 13:13). This is a gross violation of the second greatest commandment, to treat others as you want to be treated. The second occurrence of *sinner*s in the Bible refers to an episode where some priests decide to take matters into their own hands and perform the ceremonies related to burning incense the way they wanted to, rather than following God’s instructions (Exodus 16:38). God destroyed them directly. This shows the higher standard God has for leaders. The third occurrence of *sinner*s refers to those who defied God and were disallowed from entering the Promised Land (Numbers 32:14). The essence is that *sinner*s are people who live for their own appetites, consider themselves their own authorities, and/or act in rebellion against God’s commands.

The strategy of *sinner*s is to attack others. They entice by invitation: *come with us. Let us lie in wait for blood, ambush the innocent without cause, and swallow them alive like Sheol*. They do not care for the benefit of others. Only for themselves. They are looking to harm others to create gain for themselves. This reveals a key strategy of evil—to destroy, pervert, and steal from good and productive people—to take down the *innocent* so they can take what the *innocent* possess. This kind of behavior leads to a society full of violence and poverty. It is the opposite of the self-governing behavior God instructed Israel to pursue in His covenant with them (Exodus and Deuteronomy).

Their plan is to *ambush the innocent without cause*. Their intent is to *swallow the innocent alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down into the pit*. *Sheol* is the place of the dead. Depending on the context, it can mean the afterlife or the grave. Just as death completely consumes a person, robbing them of all life and livelihood, so these *sinner*s intend to consume their prey. They intend to swallow them *whole*, like a *pit*. The word translated *pit* can mean “cistern” or “dungeon.” The pit Joseph’s brothers threw him in is the same word (Genesis 37). The idea seems to be to render their victims helpless and completely in their control.

Gaining such control will allow the *sinner*s to accomplish their intended result, which is to *find all kinds of precious wealth*, and take it all for themselves. They plan to *fill our houses with spoil* from their heist. The *sinner*s believe if they can steal, kill, and destroy those who have gained wealth by their industry, they will be left with *wealth* and *spoil*. The *sinner*s take aim at those who have possessions, and intend to extract from them to take for themselves. In doing so, they are tearing down the very fabric of a self-governing society, which is the discipline to curb one’s appetites and serve the best interest of others.

The appeal from *sinner*s is a promise of togetherness. It begins with an invitation to join: *come with us* and *throw in your lot with us*. The robbers then promise they will share *one purse*. To be wise requires seeing reality as it is. And it is clear this invitation has appeal. There is an opportunity to join a group, to belong. *Throw in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse*. That always has appeal.

There is also the promise of wealth, in this case the promise of “easy gain” by taking from others. It is important to recognize the appeal of the offer in order to urge avoiding it. This appeal to be together and to *share one purse* sounds a lot like the famous description of the early church in Acts 2. The *sinner*s are trying to *entice* the youth to a perverse way, one that takes the true nature of God’s design—which includes community and sharing—and remakes it in a way they can control, one that serves their own flesh rather than trusting in God.

These *sinner*s who would steal and abuse others for their own gain make a promise of communal benevolence toward the invited co-conspirator, to have *one purse*. To share the loot. But that of course will be a hollow promise. Violence breeds violence. Which is one of many reasons Solomon urges the young student to understand 1) you have a choice and 2) your best choice is to not *consent* to join *sinner*s who intend to exploit others. Solomon urges the youth: *Do not consent* when *enticed* to join the band centered on theft, violence, and perversion.

Later on, Wisdom will shout from the streets, proclaiming publicly for all to see. This, on the other hand, has the feel of a shady, backroom deal. It is an invitation to turn from the unifying public good (which includes the individual) and turn to this evil inner desire for personal gain at the cost of the welfare of others.

In verse 15, Solomon alludes to the practical side of wisdom, saying, my son, *do not walk with them; keep your feet from their path*. In other words, don’t do what they do. Don’t go where they go. Make the wise choice and have nothing to do with them. Wisdom is a path. So is foolishness. Proverbs is setting out to establish the boundaries of each and empower the youth to walk according to the true path rather than sin’s perverse replication.

Biblical Text

My son, if sinners entice you,

Do not consent.

¹¹ **If they say, “Come with us,**

Let us lie in wait for blood,

Let us ambush the innocent without cause;

¹² **Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,**

Even whole, as those who go down to the pit;

¹³ **We will find all kinds of precious wealth,**

We will fill our houses with spoil;

¹⁴ **Throw in your lot with us,**

We shall all have one purse,”

¹⁵ **My son, do not walk in the way with them.**

Keep your feet from their path,