

Proverbs 4:10-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-4/proverbs-410-13/>

Solomon, having completed his testimony about how he received wisdom, goes on to explain what to expect from a life of wisdom.

Solomon begins this section with his familiar refrain—*Hear, my son, and accept my sayings*—which is often used as a sort of checkpoint marker to make sure his young audience is still with him. He goes back to the singular use of *son* ([see notes on Proverbs 4:1-6](#)), zooming in to each individual audience member. He implores them to *accept my sayings*, like he did when his father taught him.

If any *son* does this, *the years of your life will be many*. Proverbs are not always promises. They are not guarantees. They are usually principles, or probabilities, if you like. And so, when Solomon says *the years of your life will be many*, he is not guaranteeing you will avoid a premature death. There are elements beyond your control.

What he means is that, generally speaking, you will live longer than you would otherwise have lived. This could be because you have less stress. If you are not constantly fighting against reality, your body often follows your mind and soul. This could also be because you are less likely to surrender to harmful addictions, like substance abuse, that can be detrimental to your health.

Even more than quantity, this speaks of quality. The *years of your life* (under wisdom) will be greater and better. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the “LXX”) translates “life” in this phrase as “zoe,” which is used in the New Testament to refer to quality of life, as opposed to presence of life. (“Psuche” is often used to refer to “someone who is alive rather than dead”). So this verse probably ought to be taken as, “Wisdom will likely cause you to live longer, but even if it doesn’t the years you do live will be substantially more fulfilling.” Again, given that proverbs are principles, this does not mean the fulfillment will come in a manner we prescribe. Wisdom is not transactional in that way. True wisdom will provide us the benefit as well as the ability to perceive it as such.

Solomon again resets the stage in order to emphasize his objective: *I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths*. Throughout Proverbs, Solomon is leading his audience to receive wisdom and apply it/take ownership of it. He is *directing* them *in the way of wisdom*, just as someone might provide directions to a lost person for how to get to their desired destination. Solomon is a leader. He *has led* his students to the *paths* where they can gain the fulfillment in life that they desire. Solomon has shown the benefits of wisdom as well as the dangers of wickedness. Solomon is leading, but it is clear the students have the freedom to decide whether or not to follow.

These recurring proclamations are his way of using the strength of repetition to remind his students of the primary objective, and that the ball is, effectively, in their court—they will choose

either the path of wisdom or the path of folly. In making this repetition, Solomon demonstrates an important wisdom principle: keep your eye on the destination. We can't live an intentional life without clarity about our THERE—our desired destination. And it is easy to get distracted. Solomon continues to remind that our destination is *wisdom*. If we don't intentionally choose *wisdom*, then we will by default gain folly.

Once again, the proverbial sayings in verse 12 are not suggestions that all our circumstances will be perfect. *When you walk, your steps will not be impeded and if you run, you will not stumble* are not guarantees life will go as we wish. This is a good thing, because often what we wish will bring us harm. However, if we have wisdom as our desired goal, our desired THERE, then this statement is a guarantee. This is because we can choose wisdom no matter the circumstances. No one can stop us. It is fully within our control.

If we choose to trust God, no one and nothing can stop us. If we choose to see things through the prism of God's revealed truth, no one and nothing can stop us. Our *steps will not be impeded* by anyone. God gave us the unilateral power to make the choice to trust Him, and decide that His ways are the best ways. *If you run* infers a decision to act. Solomon has *directed* us to the *upright paths of wisdom*. If we decide to *run* on that path, embrace *wisdom* with exceptional vigor, *you will not stumble*. That does not mean life will be comfortable. It does mean that the promises of wisdom will occur, and nothing will stop them from taking place.

As it applies to life's circumstances, *Your steps will not be impeded and you will not stumble* does not mean life will be without difficulties or obstacles. What it does mean is that those difficulties will not ensnare you and cause you to depart from wisdom's way. *Wisdom* transcends circumstance. *Wisdom* allows us to see opportunity in difficulty. We can trust more, deepen our faith, serve those who are suffering with us. As we do this, we grow in *wisdom*, and nothing will stand in our way.

When we walk in *wisdom*, our circumstances don't define our existence. Instead, no matter the circumstance of life, *wisdom* can be chosen, and no one and nothing can stop it from happening.

Solomon invites his audience to *take hold of instruction; do not let go*. This is consistent with previous invitations to not forget, to treasure, and to keep the sayings of wisdom. What is being offered is the key to overcoming circumstances, to not letting them define one's existence. We must, therefore, *guard her for she is your life* ("zoe"). Pursue, follow, and uphold this treasure. It is the key to transforming life from a set of oppressive circumstances to a set of opportunities. To live life in alignment with reality, and gain the greatest fulfillment available, for the short time we are granted to live.

Biblical Text

**Hear, my son, and accept my sayings
And the years of your life will be many.
11 I have directed you in the way of wisdom;
I have led you in upright paths.**

**12 When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;
And if you run, you will not stumble.**

**13 Take hold of instruction; do not let go.
Guard her, for she is your life.**