

SIRACH (*Ecclesiasticus*)

Introduction. Due to the fact that this book of the Bible has a prologue written by the grandson of the author, we know the author's name, Jesus Ben Sira, whom we call Sirach. The book is also known as Ecclesiasticus from the Latin "Liber Ecclesiasticus," meaning "Church Book," because it was used frequently in the early church to instruct catechumens and the faithful. The book was originally written in Hebrew in Jerusalem between 200-175BC. Around 132BC, the author's grandson translated the book into Greek for Greek-speaking Jews living in Alexandria in Egypt. Sirach is one of the seven books of the Old Testament not found in the Protestant Canon of the Bible.

Jesus Ben Sira lived at a time of great change in his homeland. He witnessed many of his people deserting traditional Jewish beliefs for Greek ideas and practices. Ben Sira believed a book underlining the superiority of Jewish wisdom was needed. So he collected his class notes into a single volume and offered it to those, especially the young, who wanted to learn. When his grandson translated the book into Greek, it was made available to the Greek-speaking Jews living outside the homeland. In its introduction to this book, the *New American Bible* reads:

The author, a sage who lived in Jerusalem, was thoroughly imbued with love for the law, the priesthood, the temple, and divine worship. As a wise and experienced observer of life he addressed himself to his contemporaries with the motive of helping them to maintain religious faith and integrity through study of the holy books, and through tradition.

The book contains numerous maxims formulated with care, grouped by affinity and dealing with a variety of subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relations with one another and with God. It treats of friendship, education, poverty and wealth, in the law, religious worship, and many other matters which reflect the religious and social customs of the time (p.771).

Division of Chapters

The book is most often divided in the following way:

PART 1: PRAISE OF WISDOM AND GENERAL MORAL TEACHING (Chapters 1-43)

PART 2: PRAISE OF ISRAEL'S ANCESTORS (Chapters 44-50)

CONCLUDING POEM (Chapter 51)

CHAPTER 1: In praise of wisdom

"All wisdom comes from the Lord and with him it remains forever." (v.1)

"The beginning of wisdom is fear (respect) of the Lord...." (v.12)

"If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments and the Lord will bestow her upon you." (v.23)

In his commentary on Sirach, Patrick Skehan writes: *"The general theme of 1:1-4:10 is wisdom as fear of the Lord in its various manifestations: trust and lively hope in the Lord; patience in suffering and adversity; reverence and respect for parents; humility in one's attitudes and conduct toward others; docility, almsgiving, and concern for the disadvantaged"* (The Wisdom of Ben Sira, p.137).

The opening verses emphasize the value of wisdom and encourage people to treasure this gift from God. Creation reflects divine wisdom; failing to recognize that gift in creation would be foolish. Then the author tells us that the beginning of all wisdom is "fear of the Lord," generally understood as reverence, respect and devotion towards God.

CHAPTER 2: Serving the Lord is not without trials

"My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity. Cling to him, forsake him not; thus will your future be great. Accept whatever befalls you, in crushing misfortune be patient; for in fire gold is tested, and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation. Trust God and he will help you; make straight your ways and hope in him." (vv. 1-6)

When Sirach says “my son,” he is referring to one of his disciples, to a student in his lecture hall.

2:1-12 could be titled: “Exhortations to patience in time of suffering”. Sirach tells us that difficult times must be met with trust, faithfulness and patience. He sees adversity as a time of testing; those who trust and wait for the Lord will not be disappointed. Verses 12-18 enumerate the curses or woes that will come to those who have no hope in God.

CHAPTER 3: Honor parents; Humility; Almsgiving (Chapters 3:1 to 4:10)

“He who honors his father atones for his sins; he stores up riches who reveres his mother.” (vv. 3-4)

“Conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.” (v.17)

“A beggar in distress do not reject....” (4:4)

Verses 1-16 are like a commentary on the fourth commandment. Ben Sira divides his lesson on honor owed to parents into positive (vv 1-9) and negative duties (vv 10-16). In general, for Ben Sira, the father serves as the focus, and the mother as just a poetic contrast.

Verses 17-28—Humility. Here we have a strong exhortation to “conduct one’s affairs with humility.” By doing so, we will be loved by others and by God.

3:29-4:10—Almsgiving. These verses focus on one’s duties towards the marginalized citizens of the community. Ben Sira grounds his words on God’s love for the poor. Then he gives negative (4:1-6) and positive recommendations (4:7-10).

Pause: How can the virtue of humility be a blessing for our daily lives? What are your thoughts about almsgiving to the beggar?

CHAPTER 4:11-31

“Wisdom instructs her children and admonishes those who seek her. He who loves her loves life....” (vv. 11-12)

“Use your time well; guard yourself from evil....” (v.20)

“Show no favoritism....” (v.22)

“Refrain not from speaking at the proper time, and hide not away your wisdom ...” (v.23)

The next section of this book, Chapters 4:11 to 6:17, has four parts on the general theme of wisdom in everyday life:

- 1) Wisdom’s rewards and warnings
- 2) Admonition against cowardice
- 3) Dangers of duplicity in speed and unruly passions
- 4) True and false friendship

4:11-19. This poem uses the image of wisdom as a mother who admonishes, instructs, tests, and ultimately rewards her children.

Quality of life – not longevity – is one of the rewards of wisdom. Further, the wise man receives glory, blessing, and God’s love. Full commitment to wisdom (serving, loving, obeying, listening to her) brings the ability to judge the nations (to know right from wrong behavior) and becomes an inheritance for the wise man’s descendants.

4:20-31. These verses contain practical advice, largely stated negatively, on speaking one’s mind regardless of social class, and on generosity. This section has some gems for us to reflect on.

CHAPTER 5:1 to 6:4: Against presumption; Sincerity in speech

“Rely not on your wealth; say not, ‘I have power.’” (5:1)

“Of forgiveness, be not overconfident, adding sin upon sin.”(5:5)

“Be swift to hear and slow to answer.” (5:13)

“Be not called a detractor; use not your tongue for calumny.” (5:16)

5:1-10—Against presumption. “As he often does, in this passage Sirach reflects on traditional biblical teachings. Relying on one’s own strength, skill, or wealth, instead of on God, is a frequent theme in the laws, prophets, and wisdom literature. Sirach warns of the sin of presumption. If we have wealth, we cannot presume that it is ours to use however we please, or that we will always have it. If we have power, we are not to use it to oppress others, for God can take it away at any time. Sirach then goes on to what he considers the greatest sin of presumption, presuming to know God’s ways.” (John McDermott)

5:11-6:4—Sincerity in speech. These verses are an exhortation to use the gift of speech in an honorable way. “A man’s tongue can be his downfall” (5:15).

Pause: What causes us to try to be self-sufficient just relying on our own strength? What causes us to misuse the gift of speech?

CHAPTER 6:5-37: True and false friendship

“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter, he who finds one finds a treasure.” (v.14)

Verses 5-17 – Poem on friendship. When we recall that the author was writing in order to instruct his contemporaries about how to live in a time and place heavily influenced by a pagan culture, we appreciate his warnings about true and false friendships. We can assume that the friend who is described as a sturdy shelter, a treasure, and priceless is a friend who has been formed by the wisdom of the Jewish tradition.

Verses 18-37—Attaining wisdom demands effort and discipline. These verses lay out ways for disciples to attain the blessing of wisdom. The search for wisdom will demand patience (vv 19-23), docility, discipline and perseverance.

Pause: What do you like or dislike about Sirach's advice concerning friendship? What do you look for in a friend?

CHAPTER 7:1 to 10:5: Advice regarding public and domestic relationships

“Seek not to become a judge if you have not the strength to root our crime....” (7.6)

“Laugh not at an embittered man....” (7.11)

“Dismiss not a sensible wife....” (7:19)

“Let a wise servant be dear to you as your ownself....” (7:21)

“Neglect not to visit the sick....” (7:35)

“...Whatever you lend, count it as lost.” (8:12)

“...Gaze not upon the beauty of another's wife.” (9:8)

These chapters offer advice as to how to relate with public figures, one's own family, and other men. Some points to note:

- Each sin is punished. This is the order of the universe (7:8).
- Insensitivity in public life is a great evil (7:11-16).

- Slaves and servants deserve to be treated with dignity (7:20).
- Honor due to parents (7:27-28).
- The unruly should be avoided (8:4).
- Advice on handling secrets (8:17-18)
- As we shall see elsewhere in this book, Sirach's thoughts on women are rather negative.
- Keep old friends and make new friends (9:10).
- Ben Sira compares good rulers to bad ones (10:1-5).

CHAPTER 10:6 to 14:19: Lessons on pride, deceptive appearances, wealth and speech

“Odious to the Lord and to men is arrogance....” (10:7)

“My son, hold fast to your duty....” (11:20)

“God's blessing is the lot of the just man....” (11:22)

“Never trust your enemy....” (12:10)

This section has words of wisdom on the sin of pride and arrogance, on honor and dishonor, deceptive appearances, imprudent speech, wealth and death, friendship and wealth, rich man and poor man.

As we continue to read Sirach's words on many miscellaneous topics, we might ask ourselves which words resonate with us and which ones don't. For example, in 12:7 Sirach says: “The Most High hates sinners,” we would say: God hates sin but loves the sinner.

CHAPTER 14:20-15:20: Wisdom and her blessings; Man's free will

“Happy the man who meditates on wisdom and reflects on knowledge.” (14:20)

“Say not, ‘It was God's doing that I fell away.’” (15:11)

The *New American Bible* states: “From his social teaching the sage now turns to consider individual responsibility. Happiness is to be found in the pursuit and possession of wisdom (14, 20-15, 5). Joy and honor are given, not to the sinner (7), but to him who fears God and observes his law (1-6, 10). The sinner is fully responsible for his conduct because God, who sees all things (18), is not the author of wickedness (11, 20); he gives to every man the liberty to choose between good and evil (14-17)” (p.784).

CHAPTER 16: Punishment for sinners

"...For one can be better than a thousand; rather die childless than have godless children!"(v.3)

Verses 1-14. It is better to have a few God-fearing children than many godless children.

CHAPTERS 17-18: The relationship between the Creator and his creation

"The Lord from the earth created man, and in his own image he made him." (17:1)

"To the penitent he provides a way back, he encourages all those who are losing hope!" (17:19)

"The Lord is patient with people and showers upon them his mercy." (18:9)

17:1-18 speaks of God the Creator's relationship to his creation, especially humans.

17:19-27. With heartfelt emotion, Sirach calls his readers to repentance, and assures them of God's tender mercy and forgiveness.

18:1-13. God's justice and mercy is beyond human comprehension.

18:14-29. Sirach encourages his disciples to be prepared for unpleasant intrusions, especially sickness and death.

18:30 to 19:3. Warning against surrendering to lustful desires.

CHAPTERS 19-22: Evils of gossip; Fraternal correction; Laziness

"Never repeat gossip...." (19:6)

"Favors and gifts blind the eyes; like a muzzle over the mouth they silence reproof." (20:28)

19:5-16 is a commentary on the eighth commandment which has to do with the use of speech in a way that pleases God.

19:17-26. True and false as described here are synonymous with virtue and vice.

20:1-7. Wisdom indicates the proper times for speech and silence, i.e., the occasions when the most benefit can be gained from them.

20:17-25. The ill-timed speech of the wicked, the unruly, and the fool is repulsive.

20:26-30. Unlike the fool who invites disaster through misuse of the tongue, the sage, through prudent speech, gains honor and esteem among the great. He must be aware, however, of accepting bribes.

21:1-10. Forgiveness is possible through prayer. *"Prayer from a poor man's lips is heard at once"* (21:5). The foolish or wicked will die in their sins (21:8).

21:11 to 22:18 contrast the mind of the wise and the fool. In 22:19-26, Sirach returns to the topic of friendship and remarks on the wonderful resiliency of affection.

CHAPTER 23: Prayer and teaching on sins of speech and lust

"Let not the lustful cravings of the flesh master me...." (23:6)

"Let not your mouth form the habit of swearing, or becoming too familiar with the Holy Name." (23:9)

In 22:27 to 23:6, Sirach prays for control over his speech and lustful desires. In 23:26-27, Sirach moves from sins of the tongue to sins of the flesh and their dire consequences.

CHAPTER 24: Praise of wisdom

"From the mouth of the Most High I came forth...." (v.3)

"Before all ages, in the beginning, he created me...." (v.9)

"Come to me, all you who yearn for me, and be filled with my fruits." (v.18)

Commenting on this chapter, the *New American Bible* states: *"In this chapter Wisdom speaks in the first person, describing her origin, her dwelling place in Israel, and the reward she gives her followers. As in Prv 8, Wisdom is described as a being who comes from God and is distinct from him. While we do not say with certainty that this description applies to a personal being, it does foreshadow the beautiful doctrine of the Word of God later developed in St. John's gospel (Jn 1:1-14). In the liturgy this chapter is applied to the Blessed Virgin because of her constant and intimate association with Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom"* (p.793).

CHAPTERS 25:1 to 27:21: Things that bring happiness; On good and bad wives; Dangers to integrity and friendship

“The crown of old age is wide experience; their glory, the fear of the Lord.” (25:6)

“Happy the man who finds joy in his children ... and is blessed with a sensible wife.” (25:7-8)

“Wickedness changes a woman’s looks and makes her sullen as a female bear.” (25:16)

“In woman was sin’s beginning and because of her we all die.” (25:23)

“Happy the husband of a good wife twice-lengthened are his days.” (26:1)

A bad wife is a chafing yoke; he who marries her seizes a scorpion.” (26:7)

25:1-11 names some of the things that should bring us happiness such as friendship among neighbors, good kids, a sensible wife, and good friends.

25:12 to 26:18—Wicked and virtuous women. Here we will see some of the most negative things ever written about women. Ben Sira says some good things about wives, but only from the viewpoint of their husbands. We also note that Ben Sira has no section on evil husbands.

Concerning Ben Sira’s offensive remarks about women, Patrick Skehan writes: *“It should be observed at the outset that Ben Sira was a typical oriental male who wrote his book in a patriarchal society and culture in which a woman had few rights as a free and independent human being and was subject to either her father or her husband. In ancient Israel, woman was considered man’s chattel, whom he could dispose of for his own advantage (Gen 12:12-20; 19:8, 20:1-18; Judg 19:24-30). In the conclusion of one form of the Ten Commandments, the wife is listed with a man’s property (Exod 20:17). It was legal and moral for a man to sell his daughter as a slave, and she could not be freed (Exod 21:7), as could a male slave, at the end of six years (Exod 21:1-2). Such was the religiously legitimated social order in which Ben Sira lived. Accordingly, we can hardly expect that he would write things about women that would appeal to us who live in a Western (hence totally different) social order in which, for the most part, women are socially and politically equal with men, at least in law if not in fact” (ibid p.90).*

In Scripture interpretation, it is good to be aware of the distinction scholars make between “the timeless texts” and the “culturally time-bound texts.” Examples of the latter would be Sirach’s depiction of woman, Paul’s admonition to slaves to obey their masters and for women to cover their heads in church services.

26:19 to 27:21 concern business dealings and the difficulty of maintaining justice in business transactions, sinful speech, secrets, and friendship.

CHAPTERS 27:22 to 28:26: Deceit, vengeance, strife and slander

“He who has shifty eyes plots mischief and no one can ward him off.” (27:22)

The vengeful will suffer the Lord’s vengeance; he remembers their sins in detail.” (28:1)

“Should a man nourish anger against his fellows and expect healing from the Lord?” (28:3)

Concerning these verses, the *New American Bible* states: *“Betrayal of confidence through indiscretion destroys friendship and does irreparable harm (16-21); Sir 22, 22. False friendship based on hypocrisy and deceit is hateful to God and man (22); it soon becomes a victim of its own treachery (25). The same fate awaits the malicious and vengeful (27, 28-28, 1). They can obtain mercy and forgiveness only by first forgiving their neighbor, being mindful of death and of the commandments of the Most High (28, 2-7). And they must avoid quarrels and strife (8-11)” (p.797).*

CHAPTER 29: Borrowing, lending, almsgiving

“Lend to your neighbor in his hour of need, and pay back your neighbor when a loan falls due.” (v.2)

“To a poor man, be generous; keep him not waiting for your alms.” (v.8)

“Be it little or much, be content with what you have....” (v.23)

The book of Proverbs advises strongly against guaranteeing loans for someone else (Prov 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16, 22:26-27; 27:13), but Ben Sira urges the opposite, although in a responsible manner. His motive for this practice and for lending money to the poor, as well as for almsgiving, derives from religious duty, the commandment to be generous to the needy.

CHAPTER 30: Training children; Health; Cheerfulness

“He who loves his son chastises him often, that he may be his joy when he grows up.” (v.1)

“Pamper your child and he will be a terror for you....” (v.9)

“More precious than gold is health and well-being” (v.15)

“Gladness of heart is the very life of man, cheerfulness prolongs his days.” (v.22)

Verses 1-6—Training children. Because of his bias against women, Ben Sira only refers to sons. He extols the value of strict discipline if one wants to raise a good son. The physical punishment of children was taken for granted in Israelite society.

Verses 7-13 spell out the sad results that occur when a father fails to discipline his son.

Verses 14-20 speak about the blessing of a cheerful spirit.

CHAPTERS 31:1 to 32:13: On riches and table etiquette

“Happy the rich man found without fault, who turns not aside after gain!” (31.8)

“...Moderate eating ensures sound slumber and a clear mind next day on rising.”(31:20)

“...In whatever you do, be moderate, and no sickness will befall you.” (31:22)

“Let not wine-drinking be the proof of your strength, for wine has been the ruin of many.” (32:25)

“If you are chosen to preside at dinner, be not puffed up, but with the guests be as one of themselves....” (32:1)

“...Flaunt not your wisdom at the wrong time.” (32:4)

31:1-11 deals with the challenge of being both rich and wise.

31:12 to 32:13—Table etiquette. This section deals with moderation in eating (31:12-24), self-control when it comes to wine (31:25-31) and proper conduct at a banquet. As we read this section, we should remember that it is generally believed that Sirach

was wealthy and that his students were wealthy young men who did attend banquets. Sirach is a big champion of *moderation*. He believes all things are good in moderation. He sees wine, if used in moderation, as a gift from God (31:27-28).

CHAPTERS 32:14 to 33:32 The wisdom seeker; Property and servants

“He who would find God must accept discipline... He who studies the law masters it....” (32:14-15)

“No evil can harm the one who fears (respects) the Lord; though trials, again and again he is safe” (33:1)

32:14-24. The seeker of wisdom must be disciplined, a good student, ready to seek direction from another wise man and be vigilant of wrong paths.

33:1-6 compares the wise and the foolish person.

33:7-18 uses the analogy of good and bad days to speak about blessed and cursed people (e.g., Abraham, Moses and the Canaanites). We cannot fathom God’s choices.

33:19-24. If in a position of authority, be independent. Don’t let anyone buy you. Lobbyists would not like these verses.

33:25-33 deals with slaves. It is both harsh and compassionate.

CHAPTERS 34:1 to 36:17: Trust in the Lord and not in dreams; True worship of God

“Divination, omens and dreams are all unreal... unless it is vision specially sent by the Most High, fix not your heart on it; for dreams have led many astray....” (34:5-7)

“To keep the law is a great oblation, and he who observes the commandments sacrifices a peace offering.” (35:1)

34:1-17 offers two contrasting grounds for hope: dreams (vv 1-8) offer false grounds, whereas trust in God is the true ground.

35:1-12. In the first part of his poem, Ben Sira describes what true worship of God means. He insists that the moral prescriptions of the Mosaic law

(including charity toward the poor, almsgiving, and the avoidance of injustice) take precedence over any other eternal cultic practices.

In the second part of the poem, Ben Sira outlines the attitudes and interior dispositions that a righteous Jew must have when making offerings to God. He closes his poem on a note of inclusivity: Israel's God is a God of justice and practices no partiality.

34:18 to 36:17—Worship of God. Unacceptable worship (34:18-26) is contrasted with acceptable worship (35:1-10). In a passage about divine justice and mercy (35:11-24), Ben Sira asserts that the prayers of the lowly are heard (vv 16-18). The prayer which closes this section (36:1-17) would be applicable to Israel at all times in this disturbed period of Ben Sira's life or later.

CHAPTERS 36:18 to 42:14

"A wife is her husband's richest treasure...." (36:24)

"A true friend will fight with you against the foe...." (37:5)

"Most important of all pray to God to set your feet in the path of truth." (37:15)

"A man may be wise and benefit many, yet be of no use to himself." (37:19)

"God makes the earth yield healing herbs which the prudent man should not neglect." (38:4)

"How different the man who devotes himself to the study of the God Most High!" (39:1)

"The works of the Lord are all of them good...." (39:16)

"O death! how bitter the thought of you for the man at peace amid his possessions...." (41:1)

"A daughter is a treasure that keeps her father wakeful...." (42:9)

This section offers advice on how to judge reality correctly. Social relationship (36:18-39:11) and good and evil things (39:12-42:14) are two big divisions.

36:18 to 39:11—Social relationship. These chapters deal with the following topics: introduction (36:18-20), choosing a wife (36:21-27), choosing friends (37:1-6), choosing advisors (37:7-15), speech of the wise (37:16-25), temperance (37:26-30), illness and physicians (38:1-15), mourning (38:16-23), artisans and the wise (38:24-39:11).

39:12 to 42:14—Good and evil things. These chapters cover various subjects such as: psalm of praise (39:12-35), suffering (40:1-11), what is enduring and what is passing (40:12-17a), joys of life (40:17b-27), begging, an evil in life (40:28-30), death (41:1-4), memorials (41:5-13), true and false shame (41:14-42:8), a father's care for his daughter (42:9-14). Sirach considers a daughter to be a source of anxiety for her father, lest she fail to marry, or be seduced, or in the case of a married daughter, lest she be disliked, prove unfaithful, or find herself sterile.

CHAPTERS 42:15 to 43:15: God's powers and works

"Now I will recall God's works; what I have seen, I will describe." (42:15)

"...The Most High possesses all knowledge...." (42:18)

In these verses, Sirach contemplates God's power, beauty and goodness, as manifested in creation, in his knowledge, and in his perfect wisdom.

PART 2: PRAISE OF ISRAEL'S ANCESTORS (Chapters 44-50)

Part 2 of the book is dedicated to the praise of famous men from Israel's past. No women are included in the list. Ben Sira lists *twelve* classes of individuals to be praised. The number twelve is considered sacred in the Bible: twelve tribes of Israel, twelve months in the year, twelve Apostles. In all these categories, they are said to be "glorious in their time." Though priests are not included in the twelve groups, Ben Sira gives much attention to the priesthood. The praise of Aaron in Chapter 45 is three times as long as that of Moses.

CHAPTERS 44:1-15: Introduction

"Now I will praise those godly men, our ancestors, each in his own time." (v.1)

Each of the individuals mentioned is said to be godly men. The twelve groups mentioned comprise rulers, men of valor, counselors, prophets, wise leaders, guardians of tradition (lawgivers), instructors, compilers of wise sayings, composers, authors, the rich and the peaceful.

CHAPTERS 44:16 to 45:26: Seven conventional figures

After a brief mention of Enoch as a friend of God (Gen 5:21-24), seven recipients of the covenant promises are praised: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Phinehas. Sirach gives a lot of attention to the priesthood because he wants to impress on his disciples the importance of true worship of God.

CHAPTER 46: Focus on Joshua, Caleb, the Judges and Samuel

Joshua and Caleb advise Moses to gain and take the Promised Land while others oppose their counsel. Samuel is regarded as the greatest of the Judges in his era.

CHAPTER 47: Praises for Nathan, David and Solomon

Nathan and David's advisor and prophet are Israel's two greatest kings. But Sirach also criticizes Solomon for his failures (v.20).

CHAPTER 48: Praises for the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and King Hezekiah

Condemning widespread idolatry is the focus of Elijah and Elisha's ministry. Isaiah is Hezekiah's advisor.

CHAPTER 49: Praises for Josiah

This chapter praises **Josiah**, one of the few good kings in Judah, and the prophets who preach in that era, especially **Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel**.

CHAPTER 50: Praises for Simon

Simon is praised as a High Priest and a contemporary of Sirach.

EPILOGUE: 50:25-29

Sirach expresses his hatred for three of Judah's neighbors: the Canaanites, the Edomites and the Samaritans. Then he states the advantages that come to those who study his teachings and embody them in their lives. *"Happy the man who meditates upon these things...and puts them into practice"* (vv 28-29).

CHAPTER 51: Cantic of Praise

"I gave you thanks, O God of my father; I praise you, O God my savior!" (v.1)

"When I was young and innocent, I sought wisdom." (v.13) *I became resolutely devoted to her...."* (v.18)

"My whole being was stirred as I learned about her...." (v.21)

"Come aside to me, you untutored, and take up lodging in the house of instruction." (v.23)

"...Wisdom is close to those who seek her...." (v.26)

Verses 1-12 is a cantic of praise to God for delivering Sirach from slander, dangers, destruction, death, the netherworld, and evil of every kind.

Verses 13-22 beautifully describe Sirach's love affair with Wisdom.

Verses 23-30 are a strong exhortation to the young to follow Sirach's example and seek the way of Wisdom.

Resources

- Colledgeville Bible Commentary—Old Testament
- The Colledgeville Bible Handbook
- The Wisdom of Ben Sira – Patrick Skeham
- The New Interpreters Bible – Volume 5