

THE WISE PATH Sunday School- September 11, 2011

Unifying Topic: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Lesson Text

I. Fatherly Advice For Cherishing Wisdom (Proverbs 4:10-13)

III. The Wisdom In Avoidance (Proverbs 4:14-15)

III. The Wisdom In Instruction (Proverbs 4:20-27)

The Main Thought: Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life. (Proverbs 4:13, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People want to live life to its fullest. Are there ways to live that will make that happen? Proverbs suggests that those who make good choices and keep a righteous path will find fulfillment in life.

Lesson Aim: To examine the importance of passing down wisdom and of being a model of righteousness through the generations.

Life aim: To sharply contrast the path of wisdom and righteousness to the way of wickedness and destruction and to teach students how to continue to journey toward the clear path God has ordained.

4:10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many

4:11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

4:12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

4:15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

4:21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

4:22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

4:24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

SYNOPSIS:

Chapter 4:1-9 In ancient Israel the father bore the major responsibility for the spiritual training of the children. This message that Solomon penned for his son Rehoboam, undoubtedly is not only written by him to all young men for instruction, but is also what David had taught Solomon, as well. Note the father/son structure of the entire book, as the wisdom from God is to be shown, taught, illustrated, and lived. It is fatherly instruction or advice and Solomon wants him to hear it and not take it for granted (v. 1). That's what grandparents and parents are to do, pass instruction along to their sons and daughters. We are told again here to remember in detail the law of God and to live by it (do not forsake it) (v. 2). God has a plan for each of His children and that is, not to fail. We sometimes recall or reflect on our own childhood and what was taught and learned from our father and mother and it's so much better when it's retained in us (v. 3-4). You'll know it's retained because we tend to pass what we've learned on to others.

We are told to get two things: get wisdom and get understanding (v. 5). The words from the parent's mouths are not to be rejected. What was given them is to be received in their hearts (v. 6) Wisdom is to be preserved and invested in generation after generation. That's why it says get understanding. Generations need to know how to use this wisdom. When you truly learn and understand a thing you won't forget it. It'll be like riding a bicycle. You'll be saying I heard that or I remember that or I experienced that. Wisdom is the principal thing (v. 7) because knowledge alone can be dangerous; knowledge can destroy. God does not want us to stay immature. But with wisdom, you can choose the best course to use that knowledge you have. Wisdom is called she or her (v.8) because a father tells his son to treat wisdom the way they would treat their mother, sister, or wife: love her, honor her, embrace her, and exalt her! Wisdom is personified as a beautiful woman who invites us to her lavish banquet, while "Folly" is the adulteress or prostitute who tempts us to poverty and death. The one you love is the one who will control your life. Embrace or hold wisdom close and she will promote, exalt you, bring you honor, and bestow a crown of glory for meaningful life (v. 8-9). The

more highly one esteems wisdom, the more highly wisdom lifts that person. The blessings come as a result of pursuing wisdom. Crowns of glory in the New Testament have to do with heavenly rewards.

LESSON:

Proverbs 4:10-13 Fatherly Advice For Cherishing Wisdom

4:10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many— In order to do anything for the Lord, you not only have to **hear** or listen, but you've got to **receive** what you've heard. Hearing and receiving the father's wisdom or advice brings a multiplication of long life. This is in retrospect to (Eph.6:2-3), honoring father and mother that it may be well with you and **that you may live long** upon the earth.

4:11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths— Solomon says he has taught the right way and he has led in the right paths. That's what Jesus did with His disciples. He taught them and led them step by step. He did not tell them one thing and did another. We as teachers are accounted for the same standards we teach. Even though after teaching, do you think your children received it right away? No, that's why it's continual. That's why we keep seeing the word "*Hear!*" Whatever was taught, do it. There is only one path all of us must take and that is the path of wisdom because that's where you'll find the Lord assisting you.

4:12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble— Can you hear mothers say, *'if you did what I told you to do, then this wouldn't be happening!'* This verse shows that in the wise way you've been directed, your steps won't be hindered; your walk will go in a steady path to the thing you were directed to go. And when you begin to run, you can run the race well and you won't stumble as long as the wisdom of God directs you. There will be times you must be made to act quickly with decisions, therefore, when you're on the right path you are less likely to make mistakes, because you've been consistently choosing the way of wisdom.

4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life—**Take fast hold**; a quick grip of instruction. Hold on to wisdom the way a child holds a parent's hand and trusts mother or father to guide and protect. Wisdom must be received into our hearts and not into our heads only. If in our heads then we are just hearers only (it's just leaking out), but we must be doers of the Word that was instructed (It is practiced daily). When we take hold we have a tight grip to do something; we are following it to the letter. That Word can save your very life; that Word is balanced instruction. The father commanded his son in verse 5 to get wisdom, here he commands him to hold on to it.

Proverbs 4:14-15 The Wisdom In Avoidance

4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men—Solomon now pleads to **avoid** at all cost the **path of the wicked**. On that path you will meet men who are ungodly. Sin is best dealt with at its beginning by the application of necessary wisdom to suit the initial temptation. This is a strong command: **enter not!** What will cause you to enter something that is not good for you? It will say, "*No Trespassing! Do not Enter!*" Well, I believe the reason would be that you were not paying attention to instruction; you were not hearing or receiving; you were not taking hold of the wisdom given. You were probably saying, it won't hurt me this time, it's only once. And because of non-adherence to wisdom, evil men are waiting. This is the very reason wisdom is given: there is wickedness lying wait.

4:15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away—Five verbs identify aspects necessary in urgently dealing with sin at its start:

1. **enter not** the sinful situation (v.14);
2. **go not** toward evil men (v.14);
3. **avoid it** at all cost (v.15)
4. **pass not**—travel as far from it as possible (v.15);
5. **turn from** the tempting path of sin (v.15);
6. **pass away** or escape the sin (v.15)

These words are very clear. There is danger when we go pass a sign that says "*Enter Not!*" There is trouble! "*A man is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*" says James 1:14b. This sounds like a plan where the pattern of sin's enticement is clear. As we know there is a wide path and there is a narrow path. The wicked and evil men have chosen a wide

path to follow, meaning anything goes; while the believer has chosen a "*narrow path, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it*" (Matt.7:14b).

Proverbs 4:20-27 The Wisdom In Instruction

4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings—The emphasis is upon fixing upon the members of our bodies on wisdom – the eyes, the ears, the heart, etc. **Attend** means to listen, focus on, and concentrate your attention upon the **words**; don't be distracted when you hear. **Incline** means to tune to the words so your **ears** may be adjusted to God's voice; so your hearing will be keen. Don't let anything else get in or take the place of what the Word is really saying. ¹Whatever enters my ears will ultimately influence my mind, my heart, and my decisions, so I'd better be careful what I listen to. When people speak, we must be able to identify God's voice (John 10:3-5, 16) and obey what He says. If one fails to hear then he is really hurting himself and will be making the same mistakes over and over as the older generation.

4:21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart—As the 'ear' was mentioned in v. 20 to tune in, the "*eyes*" and "*heart*" are mentioned here in this verse. The **eyes** should be fixed upon wise teaching and careful reading of that which imparts wisdom. In other words read it over and over; don't let it depart from your eyes. By you reading the Word over and over, it will get in the heart. The **heart** in the Bible often refers to the mind or affections of a person. ²The heart is the core of a person's being. The heart is the "*command and control*" center of a person. We think with our heart; we feel with our heart; we make decisions with our heart. And so a heart that is fully integrated and centered on God will think appropriately (*in a way that is consistent with certainty*), will have (*to a certain extent*) the right feelings (*those that mirror God's feelings*), and will make good decisions (*those that lead to life and further the purposes of God*). This implies meditation upon those things in which we have seen, heard or read. Whatever the heart loves, the ears will hear and the eyes will see. Therefore, the father wants wisdom to be right there guiding his son in the core of his being.

4:22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh—The reason for the above verses is concluded in this verse. The Words that we attend to, we incline our ears to, that we don't let depart from our eyes, and that we keep in the midst of our heart brings **life**; brings existence; brings refreshment and second it brings **health to all our flesh** (*flesh is the body*); it brings wellbeing; brings fitness; brings vigor; and strength. Therefore, by finding this wisdom, you determine what kind of life you will live.

4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life— **Keep your heart**; watch your heart; guard your heart. Why? Why are we to protect our heart, and **with all diligence** (*carefulness, attentiveness*)? Because it's not from our outer circumstances but it's **out of the heart** that **flow the issues of life**; the actions of life; the source of life; the fountain of life. ³Think about a little village in the mountains whose only source of water is a spring coming up from the ground. That spring provides fresh water for drinking, cooking, bathing, crops, etc. That village would be foolish not to pay any attention to the condition of that spring because it is a source of life. If the spring becomes polluted, everyone and everything in the village would suffer. In the same way, we would be foolish not to pay attention to the condition of our heart because our heart affects everything in our lives. Whatever fills our heart flows out into the rest of our lives. If the heart is right, so will the actions of men be; they are regulated by it; they will then spring from right principles, and be directed to right ends. "*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*" (v. 23, NIV). If we pollute that wellspring, the infection will spread and before long, hidden appetites will become open sins and public shame. What you believe in your heart affects the way you live; when it's down deep within your heart, then there is the effect upon your life.

4:24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee— One of the best ways to observe what is happening in a person's heart is to listen to his/her words. "*It is not what goes into the mouth of a man that makes him unclean and defiled, but what comes out of the mouth; this makes a man unclean and defiles him*" Matt.15:11 AMP.

¹ <http://www.theparkwaychurchofchrist.com/SermonsM-S/proverbs3.htm>

² http://www.faithmanhattan.org/shared/text/2009_06_07_Sermon.pdf

³ http://www.faithmanhattan.org/shared/text/2009_06_07_Sermon.pdf

A pure heart brings pure words. A **forward** (deceitful; contrary) **mouth** reveals a heart filled with pride and perverse (evil) words which come from an evil heart. A forward mouth is speech that has departed from God's law; God's truth. *"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks"* (Matt. 12:34). **Perverse lips** mean wicked, mean, evil, and vicious. Lips that are filled with scorn and arrogance have their roots in a scorner's heart. Lips only speak what is in the heart. Whatever is in the heart will ultimately come out of the mouth (Matt. 12:33-34). God's children must be careful to have *"sound speech that cannot be condemned"* (Titus 2:8); speech that's gracious and *"seasoned with salt"* (Col. 4:6, NKJV). The call is for speech that is wise, straightforward and not deceptive. It says put it away, put it far away; having nothing to do with it; put away dishonest talk and deceitful speech. A wise heart will teach the mouth.

4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee—⁴Shifty eyes that cannot look at you ordinarily indicate the person has something they are covering up. Eyes that look straight at you say, *"I am telling the truth"*. We have a choice as to where we look and what we look at. Our eyes should be focused on the Lord and on the path ahead gazing in the right direction. The wise person isn't distracted by temptation to leave *"the path of life."* The person who *"looks directly ahead"* is following after wisdom with a single mind.

4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established-- "Ponder" means *"to weigh"* or *"to make level."* It is related to a word that means *"scales"* (16:11). It means to think about the path you are launching out on. Make sure the path of your feet, your walk is sure and certain, and then it will not be unstable but established (*be well known, and publicly recognized as truth*).

4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil— Every direction of our steps matter. Sin turns us to the right when we should go left or left when we should go right, but if we stick to wisdom, it will lead us from evil paths into right paths every time. With the Lord before you, don't let the allurements of the world distract you. Don't be swerved by flattering promises. Should you take a step in the wrong direction, quickly step back for the Lord is willing to help.

SUMMARY:

Solomon, the father gives advice to his son. This meaningful wisdom will bring him long life if he hears it and receives it. When taught right, it equips us to go down the right path even when we want to go into another direction. This fatherly wisdom when received protects our steps. Our steps will not be crooked but stays balanced. We will not stumble but run as a runner would run a race to the finish line. When the baton is exchanged, we will take a solid and quick grip by not letting go of what we've learned from father or mother. That's how we cherish wisdom by taking hold of the instructions taught, keeping that wisdom because it is life; our continuation to life.

The signs are clear to avoid when it says: Wrong Way! Do Not Enter! Do Not Pass This Point! Avoiding these paths means to stay clear of; keep away from; and shun. The wisdom is given but sometimes we step out into the hot water anyway. It would go so much smoother when the voice inside is the Holy Spirit recalling to our remembrance the Words of Wisdom; the Word of God that is evil for our lives.

Every part of us is to adhere to wisdom's instructions: our ear gate; our eye gate, and our heart gate. Our ears are tuned, our eyes are fixed, and our heart will mirror what was heard and seen. As we guard what comes out of the heart, then our lives will be fit for God's use. The actions from our heart will affect our health. The actions from our heart will not bring forth a deceitful and contrary mouth or wicked and evil lips, but our actions will bring pure words that teach our lips sound speech. Our eyes will speak truth; our feet will be certain and accustomed to walking wisely, not into evil paths by swerving to the right hand or the left hand.

APPLICATION:

"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" Proverbs 4:13.

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/proverbs/05.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>