

Woodland Baptist Church
Wednesday December 4, 2013
Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 4:1-27
The Life Long Pilgrimage [Kidner]

1) Introduction

- a) **James 3:13-18** - 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

2) Read Proverbs 4:1-9

- i) The father (and mother), not the professional teacher or the pastor or government official, has the most profound responsibility and opportunity to lead a young man in the right way.¹

3) Verses 1-9 - How to Get Going/Seek [Kidner]

- a) **Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, 2 for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.**
- i) **Insight** - [binah] - the capacity to gain an accurate and deep understanding of something.
- ii) **Precepts** - [leqach] - doctrine, teaching
- iii) The initial call to attention that wisdom is about to be spoken to the child. He is about to be given words to live by.

(1) This linking of three generations demonstrates how a love of the best things will be transmitted mainly by personal influence.²

¹ Garrett

² Kidner

b) **3 When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, 4 he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. 5 Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. 8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."**

i) **When I was a son with my father** - the father is about to teach the son the valuable things that his Grandfather had taught him when he was a young boy, "tender." [David/Solomon/Rehoboam?]

(1) **Tender** [rak] - inexperienced, soft, delicate - could mean literally not developed fully in mind and body physically, or used metaphorically to mean in the mind and intelligence.

ii) **"Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. 5 Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. 8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."**

(1) Heart hold fast the words, keep the commandments - live

- (a) Get - wisdom and insight
- (b) Do not forget
- (c) Do not turn away from the words
- (d) Do not forsake/she will keep you
- (e) Love her/she will guard you

(i) **James 1:25** - 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

(2) **The beginning of wisdom** - this can be a deliberate anacoluthon (violation of syntax) meant to drive home the idea that the first step in the pursuit of wisdom is to determine to obtain her. Still, the sense of the text is clear: Wisdom is the greatest possession anyone can have, and the young man should make winning her the primary goal of his life.³

- (a) Get wisdom/get insight
- (b) Prize her highly/she will exalt you
- (c) Embrace her/She will honor you

(i) She will...

1. Place a graceful garland on your head
2. Bestow on you a beautiful crown

c) We are overhearing a father of teenage sons coaching them in wisdom. How does he do it? He tells them what he learned when he himself was a boy. He is saying, "I remember when I was a kid, how my dad got me going into a great life." We have seen this father/son conversation before. But now we meet the **grandfather**. Now we see *three generations* in the family. Evidently the grandfather has died, because the father does not say, "Remember what grandpa used to say?" Instead the father informs his sons about how his dad made such a positive impact during his youth. So do you see? We are being invited into a tradition of wisdom.⁴

(1) What is a tradition?

(2) Our forefathers that have been faithful all the way to their deaths have something to say into our lives. How many of us tonight can say that we have someone in our life that lived their entire life faithful as a spouse or deacon or preacher or businessman, or any other?

(a) **Hebrews 13:7-7** Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

4) Verses 10-19 - How to Keep Going/Choose [Kidner]

³ Garrett

⁴ Ortland, kindlebook

i) We might prefer three ways to choose from—a rotten life of folly over at one extreme, a super-duper life of wisdom over at the other extreme, but in the middle a half-decent life of mediocrity that we don't mind settling for. But God is saying there are only two ways: a gloomy disaster of a life without his wisdom and a bright success of a life with his wisdom. Therefore, God's wisdom is not an optional extra: ". . . she is your life" (v. 13).⁵

b) Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

i) 11 I have taught you the WAY of wisdom; I have led you in the PATHS of uprightness. [Psalm 23]

(1) 2 When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. 13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

(a) Gives the idea that as long as you "hold on" to wisdom you will not fall - almost like we hold on to a handrail as we walk down the stairs.

(b) Truths that are only grasped by our minds and that do not become the daily nourishment of our souls never enter into our hearts.⁶

ii) 14 Do not enter the PATH of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.

(1) 15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. 16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

(a) Evil becomes compulsive, and none of us is above it, because this is the nature of our depraved hearts. Jesus said, "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). Sin is a slavery deep inside, an emotional engine we cannot shut down just by choosing to do so. How do we see this dynamic at work today?⁷

⁵ Ortland

⁶ Bridges, 37

⁷ Ortland

c) **18 But the PATH of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. 19 The WAY of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.**

i) **Jeremiah 23:12** - Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall, for I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment, declares the Lord.

5) **Verses 20-27 - How Not to Get Lost Along the Way/Concentrate [Kidner]**

i) The constant repetition of such a call is deliberate, for a major part of godliness lies in dogged attentiveness to familiar truths. So a kind of medical inspection follows, in which one's state of readiness in the various realms symbolized by heart, mouth, eyes, and feet, comes under review.⁸

b) **20 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. 22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. 24 Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. 25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. 26 Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. 27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.**

i) **Notice the use of body parts:**

(1) **Ear** - listen and learn

(a) **My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings**

(2) **Eyes** - remain attentive and alert

(a) **21 Let them not escape from your sight**

(b) **25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.**

(i) **Matthew 6:22-23** - 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your

⁸ Kidner, 68

eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

(3) Mouth - integrity of speech, no lies, deception

(a) 24 Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

- (i) **Mark 7:20** - 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."
- (ii) **James 3:11** - 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?

(4) Heart - protect it, allow it fill with wisdom, not foolishness

- (i) The natural heart is a fountain of poison; but the purified heart is a well of living water. As the spring is, so will be the streams. As the heart is, so will be the mouth, eyes...etc.⁹

(b) 21 keep them within your heart.

- (i) A neglected Bible is the melancholy proof of a heart that is alienated from God.¹⁰

(c) 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

- (i) **Mark 7:20** - 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

⁹ Bridges, 39

¹⁰ Bridges

(d) If the heart is captured, the whole man - affections, desires, motives, pursuits - will be handed over.¹¹

(5) **Flesh** - our bodies last longer and perform better when guided by wisdom

(a) **22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh**

(6) **Feet** - be very careful where we go and remain focused on God's will and path.

(a) **26 Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.
27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil**

6) **CLOSE**

a) **The Middle Path** - "It is as if the royal way was hemmed in by the sea, and to wander off the path from either side would put you in danger of being drowned. Some are too greedy, others are too ascetic. Some are too bold, others are too diffident. Some neglect the Mediator, others seek other mediators. Some flee from the cross, other make their own unnecessary crosses. Some tamper with popery, others, from dread of it, hazard the loss of valuable truth."

¹¹ Bridges