

## "A Father's Instruction"

Proverbs 4:1-22

- In the passage we examine today, Solomon gives instruction to his children
- He tells them what is important (or what ought to be)
- He encourages them to learn and grow
- And he lets them know what they should avoid
  
- He describes the difficulty a sinner will face
- And he provides a plan for avoiding such difficulty
  
- Wisdom for every believer is found in Proverbs 4
- As we focus on "A Father's Instruction" today
  
- Fatherly advice is not always looked upon as a positive thing in modern society
- A prideful person may reject the thoughts of elders
- They may show disdain for the way it was done "back in their day"
- But the Bible speaks quite positively about the growth that happens in a person over time
- If they are following God, learning from wrong choices, and Biblically correcting errors
- They have something valuable to say!
- And fathers who respond in this way are particularly well-positioned to teach
  
- With this in mind, let's observe the words of Solomon in our first verse...

Proverbs 4:1-4

- 1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.
- 2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.
- 3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.
- 4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

- Fathers instruct, whether they know it or not - in presence or in absence
- And their children do hear, whether words are spoken or not
- These instructions have effects on children's lives
- In this case, Solomon offers specific instruction
- And everyone listening (including us) ought to "attend"
- That is, we ought to be attentive
  
- Hopefully it is true that fathers provide "good doctrine"
- And hopefully fathers set down laws that are worth obeying
- That is certainly never to be taken for granted, but was true in this case
  
- Fathers do (very often) have experience
- That is, they have walked the path they are asking their sons to walk
- Their experiences in taking heed - or even in not taking heed - inform their fatherhood

- Solomon's father David told him to take his words to heart
- Fathers have been specially prepared by God to relay words of life to children

#### Proverbs 4:5-7

5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.  
 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.  
 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

- We see two things worth getting here: wisdom and understanding
- Wisdom is more about thinking and acting in the way God would have us to think and act
- Understanding is about seeing reality - having clarity, based on the truth
- Both can be provided by God alone
- The assumption, though, from verse 5 is that a father (in this case Solomon) can help with wisdom and understanding, presumably pointing us to God
- Their words should not be forgotten, forsaken, or declined
- The content of their words (the instruction) is meant to preserve and keep the hearer
- But no command to "forsake her not" would be needed if children didn't often forsake
- This is a mistake, precisely because "wisdom is the principal thing"
- That means it is the first thing in order
- It's where we must start
- How does God want us to think and act?
- Fathers often point us to the answer
- Along the way to the answer we gain clarity (understanding)
- We learn to be discerning

#### Proverbs 4:8-10

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.  
 9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.  
 10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

- We're told to lift up wisdom
- To embrace wisdom, while rejecting the foolishness of the world
- And we're told that if we do, we will be lifted up
- Because wisdom crowns the person who embraces it
- They receive an ornament of grace - or favor
- And a crown of glory - or beauty
- Wisdom is always attractive in a world that is filled with folly
- It is remarkable, it is recognizable, it stands out
- And it draws others to the one that exercises it
- Prolonging the life of any receptive, and therefore obedient, son

- Praise God for fathers that have and pass along their wisdom...

#### Proverbs 4:11-12

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

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

- Solomon has not led his children astray
- He has shown them the right path
- He has pointed them in the right direction
- If they pay attention, if we pay attention to wisdom, we will avoid pitfalls and stumbling stones
- This, of course, doesn't mean a perfectly smooth path
- But it means a path approved by God, narrow indeed, but leading to life everlasting
- The pitfalls and stumbling stones of the disobedient come into clearer view in the next section...

#### Proverbs 4:13-18

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

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

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

16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

- This kind of instruction is life-preserving
- Because the unwise paths of the wicked lead to destruction
- This is why we are to use every means at our disposal to avoid that path
- Just look at the command to "avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away"
- There is danger in wisdom-rejection
- Danger in avoiding God's path and taking our own
- For the path away from God is dark and unguided
- But there is light where He leads
- And He is with us on every step of the journey
- Solomon has a little more to say about this...

#### Proverbs 4:19-22

19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

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

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

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

- I wonder if we understand what is good for us?
- God certainly knows, and often provides people (and more importantly His word) to point us in the right direction
  
- This father begged his children to listen
- God had given him experience
- He knew the agony of stumbling in darkness
- And knew God wanted, for his children, the relief of walking in light
  
- I wonder if we will hear this instruction too, and look to God alone?

*Christopher Harper, **Take Note** 2020*