

## **BE A WISE SON (OR, DAUGHTER)**

*1<sup>8</sup> Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching; <sup>9</sup>for they will be a wreath to grace your head and a [decorative] chain around your neck. <sup>10</sup>My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. <sup>11</sup>If they say, "Come along with us. Let us lie in wait for someone's blood; let us ambush the innocent without a [just] cause [for doing him harm]. <sup>12</sup>Let us swallow them up alive, like Sheol; let us devour them,\* like those who descend into the pit. <sup>13</sup>We will get all sorts of valuable things; we will fill our houses with plunder. <sup>14</sup>Throw in your lot with us, we will all have a common purse!" <sup>15</sup>My son, do not walk along the road with them; do not set foot on their path; <sup>16</sup>for their feet run to evil, and they are eager to shed blood. <sup>17</sup>It is useless to spread a net in full view of any bird. <sup>18</sup>But these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives! <sup>19</sup>The same is true of everyone who is greedy to gain riches—it deprives the owners of their lives. (Prov. 1:8-19)*

\*Literally, *"let us swallow them [whole]"*

### **Introduction**

After all that happened this past week, Jeremy feels like packing his bags and moving out of the house! On Monday dad chewed him out for missing Bible Class. On Tuesday dad lectured him about his poor study habits. On Wednesday it was a re-run of Tuesday. On Thursday dad disciplined him for the sarcastic, disrespectful remarks he made to his mother. On Friday dad warned him about his choice of friends.

Next door, Sue Ellen and her dad got into a really big argument. You should have heard the screaming and the slamming of doors! Sue Ellen wanted to go to a certain party. Her dad said, "No way! That crowd has a reputation for getting into trouble! I don't want my daughter hanging around with them!" Sue Ellen accused her dad of being too strict, then she went off to her room in a huff and slammed the door shut.

After the anger has subsided and the emotions have settled down, do you think most teens would rather have parents like Jeremy and Sue Ellen, or parents who don't care about their children and what they do?

In a calmer moment of reflection, both Jeremy and Sue Ellen realized that their dads were expressing concern because they loved their son and their daughter; even though they may have been rather clumsy, insensitive, and even sinful in the way they some times express their concern. Jeremy's dad could at least have said "Hello" before jumping all over his son; and Sue Ellen's dad could have done a better job of controlling his temper. Jeremy and Ellen came to acknowledge that their fathers acted out of love, even though their counsel and their orders were hard to take,

because it meant doing what was unpleasant (homework in the case of Jeremy) and giving up what promised to be an exciting event (in the case of Sue Ellen)

Our attitudes towards our parents have a lot to do with our age:

- for toddlers it's adoration; as one toddler expressed it, "My daddy is almost as smart as God!"
- for adults it's appreciation: "Thank you, Dad and Mom, for all your love!"
- for teens many times it's frustration: "I'm no longer a little kid, I want to be treated like an adult!"

The Book of Proverbs allows us to eavesdrop on a father as he addresses his son: a son who is maturing towards manhood, ... and a father who is seeking to prepare his son for the time when he will be out on his own.

As we study this passage of Scripture, let us be aware that it does not only apply to the relationship between young men/women and earthly fathers, it also applies to our relationship with God our heavenly Father. As spiritual sons/daughters of the heavenly Father in Christ our Savior, let us exhibit the marks of a wise son (or daughter.)

### **I. Be a Wise Son: By Appreciating Your Father's Counsel**

Here is the earnest, loving pleas of a father to his child: "*My son*" ... (I give you this counsel because you are my son; I love you, I care about you, I have your best interest at heart.) All the more does the heavenly Father love His children and desire the best for us: "*Walk in all the way that Jehovah your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper ...*" (Deut. 5:33.)

What does the father plead for his son to do? He exhorts his son, "*listen to* [heed, pay attention to, take to heart] *your father's instruction* [teaching and discipline]." The Book of Hebrews reminds us: "*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it*" (Heb. 12:11.)

The father goes on to say, "*do not forsake* [forget, discard, reject, depart from] *your mother's teaching.*" Notice how it is assumed that the father and the mother are united in their love for their son, and in their giving him godly instruction. Now, the father's concern is that his son does not outgrow his godly upbringing, discarding it when he leave home; rather, he is to grow by it into greater spiritual maturity.

Attached to the plea there is the promise that godly training, when accepted, shall prove to be of great value and blessing: "*they will be a wreath to grace your head*

*and a [decorative] chain around your neck”* (vs. 9.) Godly teaching is described as *“a wreath to grace your head;”* or, *“a crown of grace upon your head.”* When accepted, godly teaching shall crown your life with blessing, honor and glory. Godly teaching is further described as *“a [decorative] chain [or necklace of jewels] around your neck.”* When accepted, godly teaching shall cause your life to be adorned with the precious, invaluable and eternal beauty of godliness.

Be a wise son/daughter: by appreciating your heavenly Father’s counsel. Appreciate that it is administered from a heart that loves you and is concerned for your well-being, anything less than love would not bother to discipline you. Note the words of the Book of Hebrews:

*You have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup>because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he scourges everyone he accepts as a son ... <sup>10</sup>he disciplines us for our profit, so that we may share in his holiness ...* (Heb. 12:5-6,10)

Appreciate the fact that, when it is heeded, the heavenly Father’s counsel and discipline will yield rich and eternal benefits.

## **II. Be a Wise Son: By Avoiding Evil People**

The father’s concern is to forewarn his son: *“My son, if sinners entice you.”* He is saying to his son, “You may encounter such people, you should not be naïve, you should be alert and discerning.” This is a realistic, precautionary counsel. There is no illusion that “our community is immune to sin;” no sense that “such things can’t happen here, we live in a nice community.” Remember, the father of Proverbs lived in Israel, not among the pagan nations of the world; nevertheless, Israel was not exempt from crime and evil men. Furthermore, there is no illusion that his son is immune to sin; no sense that “my son is a good boy, he would never be tempted to get into trouble and become involved with evil people.”

The LORD promises to take care of His children, and one means He uses to accomplish that end is godly, caring counsel. Listen to the Lord’s own counsel to us:

*Then I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people [i.e.; out of “Babylon,” which symbolically represents the secular, ungodly society of this present world], so that you have no fellowship with her sins and that you do not receive the plagues that will come upon her. <sup>5</sup>Her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”* (Revelation 18:4-5;) to come out of “Babylon” means to live a life that is distinct from the society of the world, a life that is devoted to God rather than to self-centeredness and sin

The godly father of Proverbs provides us with a penetrating description of the mind and heart of wicked men. We hear them say to one another,

*“Let us lie in wait for someone’s blood.”* These people are not adverse to violence; indeed, they plot violent and bloody deeds—they have little, if any, appreciation for the sanctity of human life.

*“Let us ambush the innocent.”* They victimize *“the innocent”* (or, the helpless; note Psalm 10:8, *“He lies in wait near the villages; from ambush he murders the innocent, watching in secret for the helpless.”*) They exhibit a cruelty: a merciless, pitiless, viciousness—a devilish attribute.

*“Let us ambush the innocent without a [just] cause [for doing him harm].”* They exhibit an open scorn and contempt for righteousness and justice; they confess that their evil deeds are plotted and perpetrated *“without [just] cause”* against *“the innocent.”*

*“Their feet run to evil, and they are eager to shed blood.”* The godly father of Proverbs informs his son that he should be aware that he may encounter people—in any community—who are completely depraved, people who are evil; people who, if given the opportunity, will stop at nothing, not even murder.

What should you do as a child of God, for your own well being and for the sake of Christ and His glory? Listen to the counsel of Proverbs: *“My son, if sinners entice you, do not do not give in to them”* (vs. 10.) You may be approached by such people; they may seek to persuade you and coerce you to join them, but *“do not give in to them,”* or, *“do not consent”* (from the Hebrew verb, *הִנָּח*, meaning, "to be willing," "to be inclined.") The father is counseling his son to not even begin to consider their evil proposal, do not even entertain it for a moment. Note 2 Corinthians 6:14-15a, *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers, for what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup>What harmony is there between Christ and Belial [the devil]?* (2 Cor. 6:14-15a)

The father goes on to counsel, *“My son, do not walk along the road with them; do not set foot on their path”* (vs. 15.) Do not associate with these kind of people; have nothing to do with them, avoid them and the lifestyle they live.

Be a wise son: by avoiding evil people. Be aware that they are out there. Be aware that you may encounter them at sometime in your life. Bear in mind these verses of Scripture:

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers.* (Psl. 1:1)

*Do not be misled, Bad companions corrupt good morals.* (1 Cor. 15:33)

### III. Be a Wise Son: By Guarding Your Heart from Greed

Starting with verse 13, the focus of the discourse shifts from violent criminal behavior perpetrated by a relatively small number of men to a sinful attitude that is very prevalent throughout society. The people described in this passage are motivated by greed: *“We will get all sorts of valuable things; we will fill our houses with plunder”* (vs. 13.)

When greed motivates and dominates a man’s heart it can make him ruthless, as this present passage of Scriptures testifies. The accumulation of wealth becomes more important than mercy and compassion. The accumulation of wealth becomes more important than justice and righteousness. The accumulation of wealth becomes more important than human life.

Verse 19 warns that greed takes away life: *“The same is true of everyone who is greedy to gain riches—it deprives the owners of their lives.”* Not only will the greedy man be willing to destroy the life of another in his pursuit of wealth; his greed will also consume and destroy his own life. Let us take to heart the admonition of the Apostle Paul:

*Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with much grief.* (1 Tim. 6:9-10)

Be a wise son (or daughter): by guarding your heart from greed. Appreciate what greed is: the insatiable desire for more and more things; the more you get, the more you want. Appreciate the early warning signs that should alert you to the danger of greed. Be on guard when your focus shifts from what you have to what you want; ... when you begin to tell yourself that one more possession will fulfill your desires and make you happy; ... when you begin to redefine your wishes as needs and necessities. Appreciate what greed can do: it can become a way of life that eventually and surely turns into a way of death. Note, again, the warning of Proverbs 1:19, *“The same is true of everyone who is greedy to gain riches—it deprives the owners of their lives.”*

Understand what you should do about the propensity towards greed. First, resort to prayer:

*Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward covetousness.* (Psl. 119:36)

*... give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my necessary portion. <sup>9</sup>Otherwise, if I have too much, I may disown you and say, "Who is Jehovah?" Or I may become poor and steal, and by doing so dishonor the name of my God. (Prov. 30:8-9)*

Second, cultivate a biblical perspective:

*But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup>We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (1 Tim. 6:6-8)*

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break in and steal; <sup>21</sup>for wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matt. 6:19-21)*

## **Conclusion**

Here are three marks of a wise son: 1) a wise son appreciates his heavenly Father's counsel; 2) a wise son seeks to avoid evil people; and 3) a wise son guards his heart against greed. May God give us the grace to become wise sons and daughters of our heavenly Father—for our own well being and, above all, for the glory of His great name.