

Proverbs is a book that emphasizes the value of wisdom. True wisdom can only come from God and in this passage Solomon lists a few of the blessings that come through obedience to the wisdom that comes from God and His word. We will be blessed when we depend on the LORD to guide us through life and also when we do not resist being chastened and corrected by Him.

1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

“My son” – The book of Proverbs is introduced as *“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel” (Prov. 1:1)*. The writer has already referred to the reader as “my son” multiple times in the first two chapters. It seems that Solomon is addressing the reader as a father would when giving wise advice to his son.

“forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments” – The “law” and “commandments” refers to the wisdom and guidance that Solomon is presenting in the book of Proverbs. We would be wise to listen and take to heart what is being said.

“For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” – The benefits of obeying these words include increasing the length and quality of our lives. Obedience to the principles of God’s word will allow us to live long and peaceful lives.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: 4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

“Let not mercy [kindness] and truth forsake [leave; abandon] thee” – We should always keep kindness and a love of the truth in our lives at all times. They should always be at work in us when dealing with others.

“bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart” – These qualities should be as constantly present in us as they would be if we were wearing them as a necklace or if they were written indelibly upon our hearts.

“So shalt thou find favour and good understanding [prudence; insight] in the sight of God and man” – Having our lives governed by mercy and truth will cause both God and man to look on us favorably, much as Christ did as He grew into adulthood (**Luke 2:52** *“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”*). Both God and man will recognize the insight that people have who exercise mercy and truth.

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” – Solomon is stressing the importance of recognizing that the LORD’s ways are better and wiser than our own. When we are trusting in the LORD with all our heart, we will understand that following God’s word is the way to proceed rather than doing what our limited brains think is the best thing to do. Occasionally the word of God will lead us in directions that might seem contrary to human wisdom but the LORD always knows best.

“In all thy ways acknowledge [to know; perceive; consider] him, and he shall direct thy paths” – Acknowledging God means that we look for His guidance in every situation. It can also mean to recognize His presence in the situation and/or to consider what He would want you to do. We have His promise that if we seek His guidance then He will direct us in the direction He wants us to go.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes” – Following up on the admonition to trust in the LORD instead of leaning on our own understanding, we are told not to think too highly of our own intelligence. We should never think that we are too smart to need the LORD’s guidance.

“fear [reverence; honor; to be afraid of] the LORD, and depart from evil” – The Hebrew word for “fear” carries the idea of reverence as well as being afraid. The LORD is omniscient and omnipotent and therefore we ought to fear Him as well as to hold Him in the highest esteem because we are accountable to Him. Thus we should repent of any evil deeds that we have done and submit ourselves to Him in obedience.

“It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones” – The navel is centrally located in the body and so this reference is likely meant to represent the body as a whole. The marrow seems to imply the innermost parts of your body since the bones tend to be at the core of every limb and other part of the body. Solomon is saying that we will be blessed with good health (either literally or figuratively) when we reverence and obey the LORD.

9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase” – We are to honor the LORD by showing Him gratitude for how He has blessed us. We do this by giving back to Him (tithes and offerings). The firstfruits were the offerings made by giving the first produce harvested from your fields, gardens and vineyards. The firstfruits were given to thank the LORD for providing the harvest.

“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” – The expectation here is that the LORD will not bless the harvest if we are not grateful for the substance that He has given us. If we do honor Him, then He will give a good harvest that will fill our barns and the winepresses will overflow with “new wine” (grape juice).

11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

“My son, despise [reject; refuse] not the chastening [discipline; correction] of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction [rebuke; punishment]” – We should not resist or refuse when the LORD exercises discipline in our lives. There are benefits that the LORD wants us to receive when He chastens and corrects us.

“For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth [to be pleased; finds acceptable]” – Chastening from the LORD is evidence that He loves us and that we belong to Him (**Heb. 12:7-8** “*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons*”). A father chastens and corrects his son because he loves him and wants to shape his son into the man that he should be. Our heavenly father does the same for us.

13 Happy is the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding. 14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

“Happy [blessed] is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding [intelligence; ability to understand]” – It is a blessed man that gains wisdom and the ability to understand his circumstances. He is in a much better position to act than those who do not understand what is happening.

“For the merchandise [profit] of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold” – A man will profit more from wisdom and understanding than from silver and gold. Money is temporary and fleeting but wisdom and understanding will last a lifetime.

“She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her” – Wisdom is more valuable than rubies or any other material wealth that a man could desire. Wealth can be stolen or exhausted but no one can steal wisdom from you, nor can it be exhausted.

16 Length of days is in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

“Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour” – The wisdom that comes from God is portrayed as a wealthy woman or queen with gifts in her hands. The dominant hand (the right) holds the promise of a long life and the other hand holds riches and honor. It is probably not a coincidence that these are the additional gifts that the LORD promised to Solomon after he asked for wisdom (**1 Ki. 3:13-14** “*And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days*”).

“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” – Wisdom will guide us down pleasant and peaceful paths that avoid many of the troubles of life as God blesses us for our obedience.

18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

“She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her” – The expression “a tree of life” is a metaphor referring to something that is a source of renewal, refreshment and encouragement. It may draw its imagery from the tree of life that God placed in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). Solomon declares that wisdom is a source of such refreshment for those who seize it for themselves.

Prov. 11:30 “*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*”

Prov. 13:12 “*Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.*”

Prov. 15:4 “*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.*”

“and happy [blessed] is every one that retaineth her” – Wisdom is a source of blessing for those who have acquired and continually hold onto it.