

In this passage we see Solomon again stressing the importance of God's wisdom, a truth that was previously taught to him by his own father. Solomon reminds us that wisdom has benefits and instructs us to avoid the ways of the wicked, contrasting their ways with the ways of the righteous. Solomon also warns us to guard our heart to prevent it from being lured away by the temptations of evil.

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.

“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father” – As in the previous chapter (Prov. 3:1, 11), Solomon addresses the reader as a father instructing his children.

“and attend to know understanding [discernment]” – He urges the reader to pay attention to what he says so that they may increase their discernment to know right from wrong and wisdom from foolishness.

“For I give you good doctrine [teaching], forsake ye not my law” – The reader should not ignore Solomon's teaching because it is trustworthy and beneficial.

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.

“For I was my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother” – Solomon is speaking as a father to his son, but he reminds us that at one time he was also a young child being taught by his own father. The description of Solomon being “tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother” refers to him being the only child of Bathsheba.

“He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live” – Solomon was following the example of his own father who had taught him as a young child to serve the LORD and is passing what he learned along to us. These words of David seem to continue through v. 9.

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.

“Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline [turn away] from the words of my mouth” – David's words to Solomon as a child continue by urging him to acquire wisdom and understanding and to never forget them. He should not turn away from his father's teaching.

“Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee” – The promise is that wisdom (personified as “she”) will preserve and guard those who gain and hold onto her. It is important to remember that this wisdom and understanding does not refer to worldly wisdom but to the wisdom that comes from God.

7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 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.

“Wisdom *is* the principal [first; best; most important] thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” – Wisdom from God has such value that it is the most important thing that David wants Solomon to seek. It should be the first thing that he seeks above all else. The Hebrew word behind “principal” can mean “first chronologically” or it can mean “first in importance.” The context seems to suggest the idea of wisdom being first in importance, since David urges that his son do all that he can do to gain it.

“Exalt [to esteem highly] her, and she shall promote [raise up; exalt] thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her” – When Solomon holds wisdom in the highest regard, then he will reap her benefits. He will be exalted and honored when he embraces wisdom.

“She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace [favor]: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee” – Wisdom will show her favor to those who seek after her and adorn them with her glory.

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

“Hear, O my son, and receive [take possession of] my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many” – Solomon seem to resume giving his instruction, stating that those who accepts it and incorporates it into their lives will enjoy a long and blessed life.

“I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths” – Solomon is fulfilling his responsibility by teaching us the proper paths based on God's wisdom and not in the ways of evil and foolishness.

“When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened [hindered; impeded]; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble” – Following Solomon's teachings of God's wisdom will put us on paths where our steps will not be impeded by sin nor will it cause us to stumble under God's judgment.

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

We should hang onto the wisdom of God that is being imparted to us through Solomon's instruction. We should never let “her” go since she gives us life (v. 10).

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.

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*” – Solomon instructs us to have nothing to do with wicked and evil men and their ways.

“Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” – We are to avoid the way of the wicked, to not go anywhere near it, turn so that we don’t come near it and pass by it whenever we accidentally encounter it. The repetition indicates how seriously Solomon is emphasizing that we should have nothing to do with the ways of evil men.

“For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall” – One reason to avoid the ways of the wicked is because they are not willing to sleep at night until they have inflicted some evil or injurious act upon someone (“mischief”). They apparently love to hurt people, either physically or otherwise, and value doing so above sleep.

“For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence” – Solomon pictures their love of wickedness and violence as desirable to them as consuming food and wine. They see wickedness and violence as a source of sustenance.

18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

After instructing us to avoid the ways of the wicked, Solomon contrasts the ways of the just against the ways of the wicked.

“But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect [to be established] day” – The Hebrew word behind the expression “perfect day” speaks of the fullness of the day. The path of the righteous is like the sun that begins with a glimmer of light at dawn and gets progressively brighter until it gets its brightest at noon.

“The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” – In contrast, the way of the wicked is in constant darkness (spiritual blindness) and they cannot see what they have stumbled over that caused them to fall. This speaks of their ignorance of their sin and/or their unwillingness to take responsibility for it. They will blame their stumbling on everything and everyone else but their own sin.

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.

“My son, attend [pay attention] to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings” – Solomon again appeals to the reader to listen to and heed his instructions.

“Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart” – The reader is to read and reread Solomon’s teachings so that they are memorized forever.

“For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” – The benefit of remembering these words of God’s wisdom is that they will preserve the life and health of those who hear and obey.

23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life. 24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence [prison; guard house]; for out of it *are* the issues [outgoings] of life” – The Hebrew word translated “diligence” carries the idea of standing guard to keep prisoners from escaping or to keep the enemy out. The Hebrew word for “issues” has the idea of “an exit” or “a path to go out.” Solomon seems to be saying that we are to guard our heart vigilantly in order to protect it from being invaded or affected by external evil influences. The reason is that out of “it” (our heart) come the things that govern our life. The content of our heart governs our choices and behaviors (**Luke 6:45** “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”).

“Put away from thee a froward [distorted; crooked] mouth, and perverse [deviation; crookedness] lips put far from thee” – The word “froward” suggests the idea of twisting the truth or outright lying. The Hebrew word for “perverse” suggests anything that is deviant or not upright.

25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. 26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee” – We should keep our eyes straight ahead on where the LORD wants us to go and what He wants us to do. We should not get distracted looking to the side at what the wicked are doing or at any temptations to stray from the path of the LORD.

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established [stable; secure]” – We should pay attention to the path we are on and make the effort to ensure that it is the path of the LORD. When we do so then our ways will be stable and secure.

“Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil” – Turning to the right or the left implies that we are straying from the path that we should go. This thought is reinforced by the statement “remove thy foot from evil.” We are to remain on God’s path and not allow ourselves to be distracted by the temptations to do evil that we may encounter along the way.