

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

FATHERLY TALK ON HOW TO LIVE, PROVERBS 4:10-27

- A. Choose righteousness (10-19)
1. Exhortation from a father (10-11)
 - a. Accept instruction concerning wisdom and righteousness (10a and 11), **Hear, my son, and accept my words, ... I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.**
 - 1) *Way and path* refer to lifestyle, behavior.
 - 2) Augustine, *Souls rise more to spiritual things the more they die to fleshly things.*
 - 3) It is good when fathers give and live proper instruction.
 - b. It is life (10b), **that the years of your life may be many.**
 - 1) This is not a promise but a principle.
 - 2) Following wisdom helps keep a person off the wrong paths.
 2. Contrast between righteousness and wickedness (12-19)
 - a. A description of the way of righteousness (12-13)
 - 1) It is a road where one can walk safely (12), **When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.**
 - a) Instruction will keep one from stumbling into folly.
 - b) Augustine, *I don't know what temptations I can resist, and which ones I can't. But there is hope because You are faithful.*
 - 2) It is the way that leads to life (13), **Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.**
 - a) 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - b) Athanasius, *If we live as though dying daily, we won't sin.*
 - b. A description of the way of wickedness (14-17)
 - 1) A strong warning not to pursue wickedness (14-15), **Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.**
 - a) The major stumbling block in this passage is the way of evil men.
 - b) Augustine, *There are two causes leading to sin: either we don't know our duty, or we don't perform the duty we know.*
 - 2) Wickedness enslaves those who pursue it (16-17), **For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.**
 - a) Folly is addictive and violence is their food and drink.
 - b) Athanasius, *The devil is food for sinners. In the same way, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the heavenly bread, is food for the saints.*
 3. Review 18-19
 - a. Righteousness is a bright path (18), **But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.**
 - 1) The path of the righteous grows brighter as one stays on the path.
 - 2) Ambrose, *Faith is profitable when her brow is bright with a beautiful crown of good works.*

- b. Wickedness is a dark and dangerous path (19), *The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.*
 - 1) The path of the wicked grows darker and more sinister.
 - 2) Rufinus, *Crime doesn't consist in the deed but in the will.*
- B. Practice self-control (20-27)
- 1. Exhortation of a father (20-22)
 - a. Be attentive to, listen to, see, store up instruction concerning wisdom and righteousness (20-21), *My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.*
 - 1) Internalize wisdom so it will flow from the heart, note converse Mark 7:21-23, *For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.*
 - 2) Gregory of Nyssa, on self-control, *We must never let our minds dwell on anything where pleasure has hid its bait.*
 - b. It is life (22), *For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.*
 - 1) Proverbs 8:35, *For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD,*
 - 2) 1 Timothy 4:8, *for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*
 - 2. Personal disciplines (23-27)
 - a. Guard your heart (23), *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*
 - 1) Out of the heart comes one's actions, note Luke 6:45a-b, *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.*
 - 2) Origen, *The Word of God promises to take away the stony heart of those who draw near to Him.*
 - b. Control your tongue (24), *Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.*
 - 1) Another stumbling block on the way of life is dishonest talk.
 - 2) Note again, Luke 6:45c, where Jesus relates one's heart to one's speech, *for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*
 - c. Watch where you are going (25), *Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.*
 - 1) Cyprian, *Let us lift our eyes up to heaven, lest the earth deceive us with its delights and enticements.*
 - 2) Lactantius, *Remember that we are being watched at every moment by the One Who will be both Judge and Witness.*
 - d. Keep on the path (26-27), *Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*
 - 1) Again, paths and ways refers to one's conduct.
 - 2) When a person takes his eyes off the path, he is prone to stumble, Deuteronomy 5:32
 - 3) Note streets in foreign cities.
 - 4) Augustine, *You shouldn't rely on yourself to live well...God in His goodness, has given us any holiness we might have.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Augustine, *...don't do good to be seen, but so that God may be revealed through them (good works).*
- B. Cyprian, *If the Son was obedient to do His Father's will, the servant should be much more obedient to his Master's will.*