

A Study of
Proverbs 1:8-19
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Words of wisdom, good stories, warnings, paternal direction . . . these can all be descriptions of the book of Proverbs. The pages of this twentieth book of the Old Testament are laced with advice and seasoned with timeless wisdom. In fact, the words of this book are all the more pertinent to a generation such as today's; a generation living in an unprecedented age of perversion, desecration, and utter deviance to the laws and precepts of a Holy God. As the leader of a great people Solomon knew the ways of men, the world, and the devil. He had dealt with them all on a regular basis and because of this he penned this book. If there were a key word that can be extracted from the fourteen sermons of the Proverbs it would definitely be "*wisdom*". Solomon is constantly exhorting us to listen to, chase after, attain, holdfast to, and embrace wisdom at all costs. He attributes all of the positive aspects of life on this earth to the possession of Godly wisdom, which is why he places it in such high esteem. Throughout this book he constantly gives the reader practical advice, not only on how to embrace this wisdom, but also on how to avoid the pains and pitfalls that accompany our journey through life.

The author opens this first sermon of Proverbs with a beautiful expression of a paternal term. His use of this denotes a tender regard for the reader.¹ The instructions found amongst these pages are not being documented because Solomon thinks highly of himself, or because he wants to make some extra money playing the motivational speaker circuit. On the contrary, he expresses true compassion and concern for his intended audience. So much so that he uses the most intimate expression a man can use, he calls his reader "son". From the context of these letters we have reason to believe that Solomon was not speaking to his own sons. Although, they probably would have read

the teachings of their father they do not seem to be the intended audience. No, those that he saw as his children were those who would heed the advice that he so longed to share. In fact, his children have spanned all the way to the generations of today. Countless people open the pages of this book and sit under the tutelage of Solomon, and as they do it seems as though they travel back to the days of a glorious and flourishing Israel. They enter the King's court and approach his throne. He extends his hand to them, "welcome my son; sit, I have much to tell you".

This lesson begins with a command not only to listen to the words that it contains, but also to couple them with the lessons received from ones parents. He is adhering to the concept that those who are in authority over us and those who care most for us possess knowledge that we need to implement into our lives. Solomon goes on to say that if we do not forsake this instruction it will be as a "garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck". These are expressions of beauty and wealth, ornaments that signify to others that we are a people that retain great possessions, of course, those possessions being wisdom, instruction, and knowledge.

Solomon now goes on to the core message of this sermon, and interestingly enough, it is found early on in the tenth verse. "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them". Through the verses that follow he will describe, in detail, the folly of these people, and ultimately, their demise. Yet right here, at the beginning of his message, is the heart of what he is trying to express to us – *do not be enticed by sinners!* No matter how attractive their offer, flattering their tongue, or manipulative their mind is, do not be

¹ Jamieson, Fausset, Brown; Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible: online – www.crosswalk.com

swayed in to their company. He then provides verses eleven through fourteen as an example of such a situation.

Thousands of years after Solomon extracted these proverbial gems from the recesses of his mind and they are just as relevant to the trials and tribulations of present day life as they were the day he first uttered them into existence. The words may differ but the situation is the same. Corrupt men wishing to corrupt men. Perhaps a modern day translation of these verses would be, "Come with us, we've got it all planned out. We'll hide in that alley and wait for the first poor, lost sucker to wonder our way. We'll kill him and then rob him. Join us and you'll get a cut of the cash. C'mon, it's easy money. Don't ya wanna get rich?" Perhaps it is not expressed so forthrightly, but through this initiation process people join gangs in the inner city every day. With the promise of fast times and easy money sinners entice those around them to be whisked off on a one-way trip to damnation. Yet Solomon, of course, knows the evil that lies in wait within the hearts of sinners. It is an evil that is all consuming; unfortunately, it is themselves that it will eventually consume. This is yet another message that can be extracted from the upcoming verses of Solomon's sermon.

So, having expressed his concern, what does Solomon propose that we do in such circumstances? Run! Run fast and run far in the opposite direction! Not only are we instructed not to go along with them, but also we must not even "set foot on their paths" (v.15). The reason for this extreme caution is that "their feet rush into sin" and "they are swift to shed blood" (v.16). One can understand the extreme nature of Solomon's advice because when traveling upon the roads of the wicked how easily we can get swept up by the tide of people rushing towards sin, and before the night is over we are left on the side

of the road, with the blood of the night's frenzy stained upon our hands. This is a fate that Solomon, our parents, and even God longs for us to never actualize; and praise the Lord, that by following these words of caution we never will!

No hunter would ever lay his net in sight of his prey; simply because, no animal, regardless of how sweet the bait, would enter this net knowing full well his outcome. Yet the Devil is a hunter that counts upon the foolishness and uncontrollable appetites of his prey – the sinner. Solomon regards these sinners to be less intelligent than the average bird!² By the warnings of God Himself, they see the net that lies beneath the ill-gotten gain they wish to possess but run after it anyways. In so doing, they are trapped, and the blood of others that once stained their hands now becomes their own. Solomon does not mince his words in this matter, the works of all who sin will come undone and end in ruin. No matter how bright the prospects of this lifestyle seem we must realize that it will all end in vanity.

Having come to the end of this message we can see that Solomon achieved the goal he so desired. Sitting before him in the splendor of his courts, his eyes plead the case of wisdom, a wisdom that has burdened his heart beyond the comprehension of any other man. He has been down life's path. He knows the ways of the world and the hearts of men . . . and they both sadden him. Through compassion and glaring clarity he was able to expose the net that awaits us. We are now without excuse. So, if one day we find ourselves thrashing amongst the coils of Satan's snares, crying out against the night, we will be unable to claim ignorance; for the net was placed before our very eyes!

² Henry, Mathew; [Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible](http://www.crosswalk.com): online – www.crosswalk.com