

**Background/Intro:** In his wisdom passages, Solomon addresses to most important choice people have to make in their life; each person has to make a choice to either follow God or reject Him!

**The Path To Take (Proverbs 4:11-13)** <sup>11</sup> *I am teaching you the way of wisdom; I am guiding you on straight paths.* <sup>12</sup> *When you walk, your steps will not be hindered; when you run, you will not stumble.* <sup>13</sup> *Hold on to instruction; don't let go. Guard it, for it is your life.*

- Solomon's desire is to guide people on the path to successful life
- Solomon shares the wisdom he received from God saying we should pursue the *straight paths* [seemingly the easiest one to follow on our life journey] – The straight paths are the best paths to take to get to the final goal or desired destination
  - ◆ When walking, straight path helps us to avoid hinderances that could impede progress
  - ◆ When running, straight paths with help prevent stumbling that could injure or take us off the right path
- Holding on to, not letting go of, and guarding instructions in wisdom are the keys to a more successful life – *it is your life*

**The Path To Avoid (Proverbs 4:14-19)** <sup>14</sup> *Don't set foot on the path of the wicked; don't proceed in the way of evil ones.* <sup>15</sup> *Avoid it; don't travel on it. Turn away from it, and pass it by.* <sup>16</sup> *For they can't sleep unless they have done what is evil; they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.* <sup>17</sup> *They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.* <sup>18</sup> *The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday.* <sup>19</sup> *But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they don't know what makes them stumble.*

- Don't follow the path taken by evil people; their appetites for wickedness leads to more wickedness [It consumes/destroys us]
- [1] *don't proceed* on, [2] *avoid*, [3] *don't travel on*, [4] *turn away from*, [5] *pass by* What? – *the path of the wicked* !
  - ◆ Like any good teacher, Solomon knew a key to learning is repetition
  - ◆ The multiple action verbs express extreme urgency – By all and/or any means, get off the path of evil immediately!
  - ◆ Avoid, run from, flee from, don't yield to the temptation of the path pursued by the wicked
- The wicked are addicted to doing wrong [that's the bondage power of sin; it requires God's supernatural power to break it]:
  - [1] They have trouble sleeping when not committing evil that makes others stumble
  - [2] Their diet or sustenance is wickedness, eating the *bread of wickedness* and drinking *the wine of violence*
  - [3] Their way *is like the darkest gloom* and they actually *don't know* [lack of wisdom] *what makes them stumble*
    - Pursue God's wisdom and *the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter* – The believer who comes to know God through Jesus Christ grows and is enlightened daily
    - The wicked are in bondage to sin and without Jesus Christ, they have no power to break this bondage!
      - Recall Jesus said: *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!* [ignorant of God's ways]
      - Accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior breaks the power sin in the believer's life, and also gives the believer the power to stay on the right path through the power of Holy Spirit

**The Choice To Make (Proverbs 4:20-27)** <sup>20</sup> *My son, pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings.* <sup>21</sup> *Don't lose sight of them; keep them within your heart.* <sup>22</sup> *For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body.* <sup>23</sup> *Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.* <sup>24</sup> *Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly, and don't let your lips talk deviously.* <sup>25</sup> *Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead.* <sup>26</sup> *Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.* <sup>27</sup> *Don't turn to the right or to the left; keep your feet away from evil.*

- Solomon states again that these words of wisdom are: [1] *life to those who find them* and [2] *health to one's whole body*
  - ◆ *listen closely to sayings...Don't lose sight of them...keep them within your heart*
- **Guard your heart** [seat of moral decision (ancient Heb)] *above all else, for it is the source of life* – Our daily decisions impact/shape our lives in significant ways so Solomon/parents/teachers want us to keep the seat of decision pure and undefiled! – In reality both physically [pumping blood to body] and spiritually [God's wisdom], the heart is *the source of life!*
  - ◆ Make guarding your heart a priority!
  - ◆ Satan wants us to make corrupt decision so that we never turn to God for forgiveness and relationship with Him
- Other advice: [1] Don't speak/talk dishonestly or deviously
  - [2] Keep your eyes focused on your path to avoid obstacles – *keeping our eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:12)*
  - [3] Stay on course the right path to avoid evil – *Don't turn to the right or to the left*

**God's wisdom is the key to real life – Jesus said: *I'm come that they might have life...more abundantly (Jn 10:10)***