

**Proverbs 4: 1-9; “The Instruction of a Father”, A Sermon for Father’s Day,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on, June 20th, 2021,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

Here in these verses, Solomon is making his appeal to his children to hear him, to give their attention to know understanding. That is, he was asking them that they would pay attention to things worth knowing; that they would store up the knowledge of the Lord in their minds and hearts. He is saying that they ought to honor him in this good way; that they would pay attention to the things which he would try to teach them; particularly God’s Moral commandments, the commandments of His holy law, and the principles of truth which God would have them to receive. And most of all, that they would get wisdom.

Similarly, there are fathers among here this morning who ought to be honored because they have tried to speak to us about how to be wise and holy in the sight of God. They have tried to show us Christ in both their words and their deeds. I would say that these fathers should be honored today, by us, for the following reasons. 1st – Because they have shown us the importance of good doctrine. 2nd – They have shown us the importance of personal fatherly instruction. 3rd – They showed us the importance of having wisdom as it is personified in Christ and in His Church. And 4th – They show us by their example that they have obtained the ornament of grace, and will obtain the crown of glory.

1st of all – They should be honored because they have given us good doctrine.

Verses 1 and 2 – “Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.” It is interesting to note that Solomon had 2 daughters as well as one son. He was writing this book to his son Rehoboam, but here in our text we find him addressing all of his children. Who were his children? Well, we find it written in 1st Kings 4, verses 11 and 15, that Solomon had a daughter named Taphath, and another daughter named Basemath. Each of these daughters married one of Solomon’s 12 appointed governors we are told in that passage. It is certain that Solomon had a sincere desire that all of his children would come to know the Lord, and that they would live in accordance with the wisdom of the Scriptures.

But even though he was the author of 3 of the books of the Bible, it is not evident that any of his children ever actually did come to know the Lord. That is, it appears doubtful that they ever actually received his words, the words of God’s word to them. It is doubtful whether they ever came to treasure them in their hearts. It does not appear likely from the Scripture Record that they did. And so, we must conclude from what we do know of their lives, that they did not honor either God or their father. They did not keep the 5th commandment of the 10 commandments, Honor your father and mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”

We cannot be positively sure of this, but there is no real indication in the Scripture that Solomon’s children honored their father by receiving his words or walking in the ways that he instructed them to walk in. But, you and I are called to do both, to honor God and also to honor our earthly father if he knows the Lord, and walks in His ways. Solomon did not have any godly children, but with God’s help, and by His grace, we can be spiritual children to him and honor him, if we will receive his words. In other words, by God’s grace we will hopefully take better heed to the words of Solomon than his own children did. We will be those who will receive all that God has to say to us, through him.

Those who are fathers among us today, they should be honored by you if they have tried to teach you, as their children, the way of the Lord. If they have instructed you as a father should, you will receive his good doctrine, his sound teaching of the Bible. A father, if he is wise, he

realizes that true spiritual understanding in his children comes by God's working in their minds and hearts. In 1st John chapter 5, verse 20, it says – "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ." "This is the true God, and eternal life." But he also knows that God uses means. And the means that God honors is fatherly instruction; instruction in the sound teaching and good doctrine of the Bible. How does this happen? It happens, fathers, when you read your children the Bible on a regular basis. Let me ask, do you have family devotions? Because faith in God and in Christ, which is essential for salvation, comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

If a father, after dinner, can pick up the Bible and read just a paragraph or a chapter of the Bible for his children, and give them a simple explanation of the meaning, and pray with them, this is a very good thing at whatever age the children are, if they can understand your words. God will honor it, and the children should honor their father for doing it. But the father must also set a good example for his children as well. Right after John tells us about God giving us real and true spiritual understanding by His Spirit, He says – "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Solomon was the wisest man of his day, the wisest man in all the world, and yet, there were points in his life where he did not keep himself from idols. The Lord had revealed Himself to him twice, and yet he let his many wives lead him astray when it came to worshiping false gods. He had to repent of it, and he did repent of it, but O, the harm to his children. Fathers, be consistent in your obedience and set a good example in worship.

Good teaching of sound doctrine by a father must be consistent for it to be taken up by his children. Where does this begin? It begins by the father declaring that God is the only true and living God. It is declaring to your children that the gods of the nations are idols, and that the true God is great and greatly to be praised. It is declaring to your children that, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord". Psalm 96, verses 4-6 – "For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods." "For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens." "Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." Fathers, you should tell your children that the gods of Hinduism, and Buddhism, and Mohammendanism are all false. If you teach them what true religion is, then they should honor you.

The reason that the gods of the nations are idols, that they are neither real nor true, is because they are not the God who reveals Himself in the Bible. They have no life and breath. They are a figment of men's imaginations. But Satan tries to bring these false gods life and breath. He tries to promote false worship in every way that he can. Children, do not be deceived by the false doctrine that there are many gods. There are not many gods, no matter how many people say so, and no matter how persuasively they try to convince you. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Fathers, make the Lord's word, your word, and His law your law with your children. Show them your heart love for God and they will think about it. You are saying – This is what is most important to me, children. You make it most important to you.

2nd – Godly fathers should be honored because they have shown us the importance of personal fatherly instruction.

Verses 3 and 4 – "When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me; 'Let your heart retain my words; keep my commandments, and live.'" You can see here that Solomon is making his appeal to his own son Rehoboam based upon how his father spoke to him, and lived before him. He says to him – When I was my father David's son, when I was growing up in his sight and in his presence, when I was a tender little man, and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me. In other

words, not only Bathsheba taught Solomon many things when he was little, as his mother did indeed do, but it is something for us to take notice of, that David didn't simply hand the teaching off to his wife entirely. He was personally involved in the life of his son, to teach him.

And what did he say? What did David ask for, from Solomon? He asked for him to retain the words that he spoke to him, (to hold on to them and think about them over and over). And he asked that he would keep his personal commandments to him, so that he might live. What does this mean particularly? This means that David taught him God's holy law, the Ten Commandments. He taught him right from wrong, and good from evil, and he did so from the time that he was very small until he was ready to take over the kingdom from him. He gave him personal fatherly instruction.

He pleaded with him, he admonished him, he corrected him where he needed it. Indeed, we can say that a good portion of this book of Proverbs was probably what was communicated on to Solomon from David. He was saying, if you keep my commandments to you, you will live. You will come to live spiritually by faith in the God who I teach you about. And you will live a righteous life in His sight, and God will bless you greatly, because He Himself will give you spiritual life and that more abundantly. So, David gave Solomon instructions on how he should live his life from the time when he was very young, so that when he was older, he would not depart from it.

At this point, I must honor my own dear father for what he did for me when I was young. He did not even know the Lord yet, but he was a moral man. He wanted me to know God, even though he did not know what that meant to know the Lord yet, for himself. But he did have a love for the Bible because he had been taught this from his own father and mother. And so, he used to take me aside into my bedroom when I was very young, and he would have us kneel down beside the bed. And he would tell me to repeat after him the first and greatest commandment, to love the Lord with all my heart, and we would read together, out loud, the 23rd Psalm, and he did read me other small portions of Scripture that he thought would be a good influence on me. This did have a profound effect upon me in terms of my knowing that there was such a God.

The Lord did not save my Dad until he was 58 years old, some 10 years later, and he did not save me until I was 26 years old, but all during my growing up years, we children knew that Dad had a love for the Bible. Why did he have that love, even though he didn't yet know the Lord? Well, it was because his own father had read it to him, and talked to his children about it. And they honored their father for what he had taught them. If this good motion is in any father's heart, his thinking to instruct his children in the Bible, and teaching them right from wrong, and his wanting them to know God at an early age; this is something to be honored.

David wanted Solomon's heart to retain his words and his commands. He was not simply commanding Solomon so that he would obey him implicitly, like he would teach his pet dog to obey him. He was teaching him that his greatest loyalty and his obedience should be to God Himself, and that his loyalty should flow out of his love for God. God is not looking for a rote obedience. A rote obedience is often linked to self-righteousness; always trying to prove something to God or to other people concerning how good you are, how smart you are, how compliantly obedient you are. But God is looking for an obedience from the heart; an obedience which is concerned with what will show forth your love for Him, and for all the people around you.

David knew that for Solomon to be blessed by God, and for him to be able to accomplish the goals which he would make for himself in his life, that he needed to understand first, what God expected of him, rather than what he (David) expected of him. David knew that just commanding Solomon to do certain things, and his implicitly obeying him simply because he said so, was not enough. This is why Paul says in Ephesians 6, verse 1 – "Children, obey your

parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Yes, parents are to be obeyed because God would have the children see that He Himself has given them a loving authority over them in their father and mother. But their authority is not to be used as tyranny, but as loving guidance. Yes, it is true that children must be disciplined when they disobey the parent’s command. But that discipline is always administered in love, so as to point the child on to God, to loving God and obeying God for themselves; not just because Dad and Mom tell them that they have to, or they will be punished.

The godly father will always be pointing his son or daughter on to recognize that their greater obedience is to God Himself, when they are seeking to have their child obey them. The parent wants obedience to himself always to be seen in terms of that greater obedience to God. Let me show you this from the lives of David and Solomon. I want you to turn with me over to 1st Chronicles 28, verses 9 and 10. It says here – “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.” “If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.” “Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it.”

Notice what all is being said here. David is exhorting Solomon to know God for himself, and he exhorts him to serve God with a loyal heart, and with a willing mind, a mind willing to do His will. This is the most important of messages for us as fathers, today, to tell our sons as well. That there is nothing more important than serving God with a loyal heart and a willing mind. How does this come about? By the exercise of personal faith and obedience to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. David further explains to Solomon, in Old Testament spiritual language, what we should explain to our sons; that is, he tells Solomon that the Lord will be searching his heart and that God will totally understand all the thoughts and intents of his heart. And that if Solomon will seek Him, He will be found by him.

What glorious instruction this is! He goes on to tell Solomon, in the presence of many persons in his army, the plans for the temple that he had wanted to build. He said that the Lord wasn’t going to permit him to build it, because he had been a man of blood. But he said that God had told him that his son Solomon would do it. Sometimes fathers, you may not get to accomplish all that you have wanted to accomplish with your life, in doing things for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. But perhaps the Lord will ordain that your son will get to do what you have wanted so much to do.

If you as a father know that your son would like to follow in your footsteps to serve God in such a way as to fulfill the desire and dream and vision that you have had all of your life to do since you came to know the Lord, you should exhort them, even as David exhorted Solomon in verse 20 of chapter 28. He said to his son Solomon – “Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God – my God – will be with you.” “He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.” So, knowing this, let us honor our fathers today, if they have sought to help in the building of the kingdom of God. Let us work to build upon what they have done and what they have shown to us is a good work, helping in promoting the progress of Christ’s kingdom and His glory.

3rd – Fathers should be honored because they showed us the importance of having wisdom as it is personified in Christ and in His Church.

Verses 5-8 – “Get Wisdom!” “Get understanding!” “Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.” “Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you.” “Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom.” “And in all your getting, get understanding.” “Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her.” Now, if we were to define wisdom Biblically, we should understand it as the right application of Biblical knowledge. If wisdom is the principle thing for any son to get, then we

must see her essentially and integrally linked with Christ, our Savior and Lord, in His blessed Person. For He is wisdom personified because of the Perfection of His being the God-Man. And He alone, as our glorified Savior, rightly dispenses wisdom to the mind and heart of any believer, through and by means of His Holy Spirit, in connection with the will of the Father, so that we will become righteous and holy.

But wisdom is mentioned here as a female in these verses, and thus it may bring confusion to the mind of the untaught person. Let us believe with all of our heart, that wisdom Personified is to be found essentially in Christ. Listen to Colossians chapter 2, verses 1-4 – “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” “Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.” “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”

So, how is a young man, or anyone for that matter, to obtain this wisdom? They ask of God, and He gives it, as it says in James 1: 5. Wisdom comes from God to all who ask; to all who seek to find her. But I want you to understand that the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of in the Scriptures as Christ’s Bride. Mystically and spiritually, Christ’s Church is talked about in many places in the Bible as a female. Therefore, this is how we ought to view ourselves in relation to Christ’s wisdom. Wisdom is essentially in Christ, but because we, Christ’s Church, are united to Him, we have wisdom to give to each other, and wisdom to give to others around us, needy people in the watching world. Christ’s Church has this wisdom because we are each united to Christ, and thus we are spiritually betrothed to Christ. Individually and collectively, we are united to Christ spiritually.

The way that we are united is that He is our spiritual Head, and we are the body. Here in verse 5 we find that the apostle Paul is rejoicing in the good order and the steadfastness of faith which he saw in these believers who were in the church at Colosse. He was rejoicing in the wisdom that had found its way into the minds and the hearts of these believers by faith in Christ and by their inclining their hearts to the wisdom of God’s word, to know it and to do it. This wisdom was essentially in Christ, but it had been communicated to them by the Spirit. And it was being lived out by them in their church, and in front of a watching world.

This wisdom was being displayed by their church in the preaching and teaching of the word, and by the way that their church was ordered in terms of their serving and obeying the word of Christ. This is the same practical wisdom that must be sought for by all Christians. It is found when they are regularly going to church to hear God’s word, and then the one who has believed in Christ, begins seeking to do God’s will in every particular of their life. They will need this wisdom of Christ and the help which others in the church can give them, to help them at every point of their learning Biblical obedience. They will need much wisdom also in their attempts at furthering His cause and kingdom and in the promotion of His truth, personally speaking.

I think that verse 5 could be read this way: Get Christ! Get understanding by going to church and learning His word. Do not forget nor turn away from the words of Christ’s mouth which you will hear at church from the minister’s mouth, which is wisdom’s mouth for the people there. Do not forsake her; that is, the church. If you keep coming and regularly attending and join with these other believers and become a contributing member, then this wisdom will preserve you in terms of living your perseverance in living the Christian life.

If you love the church, she will keep you accountable to God and to Christ. She will be a means of your being preserved and kept in the faith. If you love the church, the people there, the other believers there, they will help you to stay on the straight and narrow path of life by their

words and their good example. This is the principal thing in living the Christian life; being part of a local church of God's people. It is there at church that you will find the wisdom of God which leads to salvation, and as the months and years go by, you will then come to know the wisdom of Christ which will lead you into a greater love for God's purposes, and a greater service to Him in the church, and outside it, in helping other people to the glory of God, in your everyday life.

If you exalt the church; that is, if you think highly of the fellowship between people in the church and work hard at serving other people in the body of Christ, she will exalt you. The church will promote you and she will bring you honor, when you embrace all that is being done for Christ in that context. This is why we honor the godly fathers here today. They have gotten wisdom and lived it out in front of their children. They have lived it out in the church, and also before a watching world.

And 4th – We should honor godly fathers because they show us by their example that they have obtained the ornament of grace, and the crown of glory.

Verse 9 says – “She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.” These actions of wisdom appear to me to relate to what wisdom herself brings to us if we have her in our life. Wisdom is a living entity in our lives, as believers in Christ come to know, because they perceive the working of the Holy Spirit to convey all the spiritual blessing of Christ to us, wisdom being one of them. Since wisdom comes to us from Christ Himself, who is the Personification of wisdom, she will, if we walk with her on the paths of uprightness, she will convey to us spiritually, she will place on our head, an ornament of grace. Not everyone will see this ornament. But God through Christ will place it there spiritually, and many in the church may recognize it.

It will come to be there over time when you as a son, or you as a daughter hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother, and then you live the life of obedience to God's word. This leads you live the godly life of proven character, and this will be, as it were, a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck as it says in Proverbs 1, verses 8 and 9. This is not a literal physical ornament, but something recognized by people around you, as God's having given it to you; that is, this wisdom. You will remember what happened when David was first coming into prominence in Israel, that Saul did not like him because the women had come out singing about David and him after David slew the Philistine. They said – “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten-thousands.”

And Saul thought, what more can David have but the kingdom. He was envious of David and he sought to kill him. In 1st Samuel 18: 12 it says – “Now Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul.” “Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. “And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him.” Therefore when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.” “But all Israel and Judah love David, because he went out and came in before them.” This was David's ornament, the people recognizing that the Lord was with him. If you are wise, you too will come to have this ornament.

The crown of glory which is mentioned in verse 9b is the crown which the Lord rewards those persons who are faithful to Him. They will receive it on the day when they finish their course faithfully and enter heaven. It will openly be made manifest on the Day when Christ returns. Listen to Revelation 2: 10 – “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.” “Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.” “Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.” So, wisdom herself shall deliver this crown to you from Christ Himself. So you be faithful.

