

Proverbs 23: 15-28; "My Son, Give Me Your Heart", A Sermon prayerfully delivered on the day before my son Benjamin went off to college. Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 24th, 2009, in the Morning Worship Service.

These being the days when our children and young people are going back to school, I wanted to preach this sermon as an exhortation and a plea to them. But I want to preach it also, to all of us here today, because each of us is in the school of life, and needs to apply these truths to our own heart if we would know God, and walk with Him closely. Those young people who are college bound will enter a world of being around, and being with, many other young people who will have an influence upon them, and upon whom they will also have an influence. It will be a time of their learning and growing and experiencing many things. They will hear many teachers, attempting to teach them many things, and they will have to weigh what is said to them, and try to learn whether this is something that God would have them to receive and act upon; or not receive and not act upon. From God's standpoint it will be a time of testing, a time of opening up of opportunities, a time of teaching them about the meaning of life. Some of those things which they will experience while they are in college will be good, and some things will only be the attempts of the evil one to derail, if he can, their future usefulness in Christ's kingdom and cause. If our college young people are spiritually weak they may possibly be derailed from following Christ at all. But our hope and our prayer is that, perhaps, because of wisdom being given to them by God, they will not only escape the corruption which is in the world by lust, but they will overcome the world and their flesh, and God and Christ will become the most important thing in their lives. This time of going off to college is often the most important and critical time of decision in their lives. And so I thought it would be appropriate to give to them, and to all of us here, the most important of injunctions that a parent can give. "My Son, give me your heart." It is no doubt Solomon who gave this admonition to his son because he realized the temptations of the world and the flesh. He realized the consequences of a young life wasted in sin and worldliness. He realized the consequences of an older life being ill-spent. And so, much of the book of Proverbs was written with that in mind. Solomon wanted his son's life to be useful and fruitful to God. He wanted him to be happy and blessed. He knew how much of his own life had been spent in vanity, and so he would warn his son of the sins which would take his heart away from what he had taught him as he was growing up. He would point his son in the direction of pursuing the knowledge of the Lord and the fear of the Lord so that he would be a wise man in God's sight, not have his heart dragged away; to always be trying to please the people who loved the world more than God. So what I want to do this morning is to give you 3 injunctions which Solomon gave to his son, so that in heeding them, we all as a congregation of believers will be able to rejoice in all that

God is doing in the hearts and lives of our young people, and in our own heart as well.

The 1st Injunction which Solomon gave his son is found in verse 17: "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous in the fear of the Lord all the day."

This injunction is prefaced, in verses 15 and 16, by a condition and a promise - "My son, if your heart is wise, my heart will rejoice--indeed I myself; yes my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak right things." This is how it ought to be in the relationship of a parent with his child. He shows that finding wisdom has a condition attached to it, of personal responsibility. In God's sovereignty, a person's conversion to Christ, and their whole salvation is not something indefinite. It is not something which is only a possibility; but in His holy mind, it is most definite, and He will not fail to call them to Himself, if He has predestined them to eternal life. There are no contingencies with God. But from our human standpoint, as a father looks at his son, and thinks of his son, he has a very great concern. That concern is that his young man, or young lady, would be wise. His concern is that their heart would be wise. It is something that he has been concerned about long before that young person ever goes away to college. He knows that there is a way which seems right to a man, but the ways thereof are the ways of death. And as his son or daughter is growing up, he takes pains to teach right from wrong, good from bad; wise from unwise to them, so that they will understand that the ways of the Lord are right, and that the righteous will walk in them. It is God's will that he teach them to walk in the fear of the Lord. From a very young age he instructs them concerning right and wrong, and attempts to show them the consequences of disobedience. He lovingly uses the rod of discipline on them if they fail to heed his instruction. But beyond this, he knows that it is the parent's responsibility to learn to reason with his children over every issue of what they might do to dishonor God and ruin their own lives. He knows, or he should know, that it is a parent's duty not only to inform his children of what is right and wrong, but also to reason with them, and even to plead with them that they might do the right things; the things which would please God, and the things which would rejoice a father's heart. Even when a child is younger, the parent, if they are faithful to God and His word, will explain to their child that it is wisdom in the heart that God is looking for, not just an outward compliance to God's rules and the rules of the house. And so; it is heart directives that the parent begins to inculcate; not just an outward conformity to God's law. It becomes a very personal thing between the parent and his child. The father and mother will say to the child, "My son if your heart is wise, you will not do certain things. If your heart is wise; you will keep God's commandments; both His negative commandments and His positive commandments. And the parent will study to make his own commands those which are fully in line with God's commands in the Scripture.

But the loving and faithful father will say something else to his young man or young lady. He will tell them, "I will pray and expect and hope that you will keep these commands, my son, because you love me, and most of all, because you love

God." This is where a Christian parent sometimes fails, if they are not careful. They may think that the heart cannot be addressed by them, the parent. They know that only God can work in the heart; God is sovereign; and so they leave that domain of the child's heart to God alone. If God is merciful they praise Him for His mercy to awaken them to righteousness. But if that child or young person is straying into the world's ways of expressing themselves; or even worse, the Devil's ways of expressing themselves, they tolerate those expressions as something which must not be addressed. They will pray for their child, but they will not address their worldliness, their pride, their foolishness, their sensuality, or the dark thoughts that their child may harbor, or even express. They have forgotten that God uses the means of loving parental confrontation and expectation, and verbally reasoning with them, to bring them to Christ, and to the good and right way of living and doing things. But I hope that you will understand that the Bible knows nothing of a parent's permitting that kind of freedom of expression in their household, or approving of it when they go off to college. The Bible teaches that a parent is to have the expectation that if they have taught the child the good and right way, that their child will live out that teaching when they go away to college. The parent expresses this to his child; that he is expecting that they will "give them their heart." "If you are wise, my heart will rejoice." "Yes, my inmost being will rejoice...."

Now, this being wise of heart will be shown forth by the child or young person in the ways which the Scripture here describes. In verse 16 we have the first indication of wisdom in a child being "when his lips speak right things." A young person or a child who is wise does not feel that they have to argue with their parent continually in order to get their own way. They are satisfied to rest in their parent's love and instruction if their parents are godly. They respect their parent's authority over them, and they will even come to them and ask them for counsel and advice. They will learn to be careful, not careless with their words. I am not at all saying that parents are infallible in their wisdom, or that a child should not ask many questions. Questions are good and right when they are asked from the perspective of humility; of wanting to learn how to think and how to do things in the right way. Often times a child or a young person will attempt to challenge their parent's viewpoint of things, or even their authority because they believe that the things which their parents are teaching them and expecting them to listen to and obey, are very confining. They do not feel free. They look at other young people their age and those young people seem to have greater freedom to go places and do things and express themselves in ways which seem to indicate that their parents do not care if they indulge themselves in things which are bordering on sin. And because of this, a person raised in a Christian home may come to envy sinners and worldly-minded people. They may actually come to think this way; "When I get the chance to leave home, then I will have my freedom to do what I please; and I will finally get to do those things which my parents have told me all along were not right or good for me. I will experiment with these things, and see and decide for myself whether they are really wrong. But here in this verse we are told that we should not let our heart envy sinners. Why?"

Because their sinful pleasures and pursuits will not show you the real meaning of life. Because sin's pleasures are passing, and you will be missing the really good things which God really does give to those who live by faith in Him. The real meaning of life is found in knowing God, and following Christ. And so the young person must ask themselves; Am I really willing to lose all the good things which God could bless me with, if I were to be disobedient to God and the teaching of my parents? Am I willing to dishonor God and my parents just to prove to myself that sin really is good or bad?

I say to you that this is where it is good to be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day; for surely there is a hereafter," as it says in verse 18. Oh that the Lord will place in the heart of every young person in this place this morning an excitement about knowing the Lord and serving the Lord with the strength of their youth. Oh that you might see how full of blessing and goodness the Lord is; how full of wholesome and even exciting possibilities He Himself is to the person who fears Him all the day. God in his time, always gives good things to those who fear Him; the very best of things in this life. I do not necessary mean riches and honor; but more, He gives the peace and satisfaction with what you are doing in life. When you walk closely and humbly with Christ, there is a satisfaction which goes beyond words and beyond description. This is why worldly-minded people are so often bored with life. They do not see; they do not understand the fullness of blessing that there is in the Almighty God. They do not have the joy of knowing and walking with Jesus. They do not know the reality of the beauty of holiness and glory of Christ working in their heart. All because of unbelief. Give Christ your heart, my son, and you shall prove His goodness. You see; going away to college gives you the opportunity to prove the truth of whether God and Christ are enough for you. Your parents cannot give you your future. And having your freedom from their immediate oversight will not prove good for you if you cannot handle that freedom wisely. God is the One who gives you every good thing. And if you will pray to him that your heart would not envy sinners; if you will pray to Him to be shown the good ways of righteousness and let God and Christ satisfy your soul, and keep you pure and holy unto Himself, do you not think that He will be full of good things, full of surprises in what He will give to you and what He will show you?

2ndly - The 2nd Injunction which Solomon gives to his son is found in verse 19 of our text.

"Hear, my son, and be wise; and guide your heart in the way." Now I want you to notice that it does not say, "Hear my son and be wise and God will guide your heart in the way." That is no doubt true, but the emphasis here is upon the son guiding his own heart in the way. What is the way? It is in the way of God's commandments. For look at what follows. "Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." In other words, what Solomon is asking his son to do is to take a definite stand against excesses in his life. And particularly in regard to food and alcoholic beverages. He is warning his son against running with those who gluttonous eaters of meat and those who like to go out drinking. There are no doubt

many persons, not only on college campuses, but all around us in our society that go way too far in their eating and in their drinking of wine and other alcoholic beverages. There are many in our society that are gluttons in eating meat. Our fast-food restaurants promote this kind of eating. Our many buffets bear testimony to it. Solomon says, and it is God speaking through him to every one of us here today; "If you are wise, you will not run with the kind of people who are continually running into these excesses." And when you away at school there will always be some who will promote these kind of eating binges and drinking binges. Don't run with them. Is there anything wrong with eating meat? No, not unless it is to excess. Is there anything wrong with having a glass of wine? No, not necessarily. But one drink may lead to another and another if you are with a person who pursues these things excessively. You, yourself, may come to accept going out drinking as a normal thing in your life, even though you never intended to do so from the start. Perhaps it is because you want to get to know people and to have friends. And you may place these kinds of physical highs in the place of pursuing after God Himself and righteousness. Gluttony is a sin. People may joke about eating too much, and people may laugh about it, or laugh at it, but God is not pleased with it. God gives real indications of the seriousness of this sin in several places in the Bible. One is in Proverbs 23, verses 1-3, just before the very text that I am speaking from. "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite." "Do you desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food." That is; do not be led astray in thinking that the table of a rich and powerful man, such as a king is, with all of his rich food and fine talk, may not become a snare to you to keep you from doing what would be pleasing to God in any given situation. It is through this kind of eating and drinking that God's commandments may be largely forgotten and set aside. You must be more careful than that. You use all of God's good gifts with moderation. Don't make a god of your belly. The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Spirit.

Turn over to Deuteronomy 21: 18 with me for another Biblical example of these sins. "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. "And they shall say to the elders of his city, "This sons of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." "Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear." You see; the son who engages in the sins of gluttony and drunkenness has already broken through the teaching of a godly father and mother and not will not listen to anyone. Our society today would be horrified if parents and the men of the city proceeded to stone a sinful and rebellious young man. But that is what these sins deserve. They are sins of the abuse of God's good gifts of food and drink, but they are also the sins of a rejection of parental authority, and ultimately of God's

authority as well. They are saying, "I will take these good things that you have given to me, God, and I will use them and abuse them to my heart's content and satisfaction. They are saying, "God you gave me these good things, but I have every right to do what I want to with them; even to excess. Verse 22 of our text in Proverbs 23, however, says, "Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old." Why do they try to teach you moderation in eating and drinking? Because they know that sinning in the way that you eat and drink you will be brought to poverty and to drowsiness. When you indulge in such sins you spend a lot of money continually to satisfy yourself with them, and in the process they lead you to stay up too late at night partying and you drink enough that you become very drowsy and very irresponsible. That is why the men of the city were instructed, under the law, to stone such a person to death. Where did the sins of gluttony and drunkenness gain their foothold upon him? They got ahold of him through his stubbornly refusing to listen to his father and mother on the subjects of what would be wise and moderate to do. He did not give his parents, or God, his heart.

So what is the young man to do? He is to "guide his heart in the way", our text says. That means that he deliberately determines that by the grace of God he is going to prioritize what is important in his life and he will pursue that. He will be praying to do the right thing in all the many situations of his young life. There are a couple of verses that I think will help at this point. Turn with me to Psalm 112. To guide your heart in the way will mean learning to guide your affairs with discretion. The Psalm starts out by saying, "Praise the Lord!" "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments." This is essence of what it means for a young man to be able to "guide their heart into the way." It is to live in the fear of the Lord. And to live in the fear of the Lord means to delight yourself in His commandments. And we can easily deduce from this, that to delight yourself in His commandments means that you must delight yourself in Him. To delight yourself in Him and His commandments, you must have the grace of Christ. With His grace, what may at first seem to be burdensome becomes light. With grace, obedience becomes an adventure, not simply a demand. You know that God expects you to keep His commandments out of love to Him. You love Him because He sent His Son Jesus to obey God's law in your place, and to die in your place on the cross as a substitute for your sins. If you have trusted in Christ, God has forgiven you all of your sins for Jesus' sake, and you know that God is never going to punish you for your sins in the strict sense which His law demands. He may, and He will, discipline you as His child, but He will never punish you as His law demands and deserves. He is a God of perfect justice; but His justice has been satisfied in Christ. You are seen by Him to be in Christ if you have believed in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Many blessings will most certainly flow to the believer in Jesus. It goes on to say, here, in verse 2, "His descendants will be mighty on the earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed." "Wealth and riches will be in his house, and his righteousness endures forever." "Unto the upright there arises light in the

darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." "A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion." "Surely he will never be shaken." "The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance." "He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast trusting in the Lord." You see, this is how a young man becomes strong spiritually, and prospers spiritually. He guides his affairs with discretion. He looks at living his life for God as a business which he attends to every day. He studies to deal graciously and generously with people around him every day. He goes about to be compassionate toward people every day. He sympathizes with their problems and weaknesses. He thinks about them and prays for them. And he asks God what he would have him to do in relation to them every day. His heart is steadfast in the pursuit of doing what is right and what is pleasing to God and he knows that because of the faithfulness of God that God will help him at every point to understand how to do His good and perfect will. He knows that he does not have to fear anything as long as he guides his affairs with this discretion. Discretion is the quality of being discrete. And being discrete is having the freedom to judge or choose. It is having the good judgment which comes from receiving and acting upon the truth of the word of God. It is exercising carefulness in speech or action, and using wise caution. In acting in these ways, according to the grace given to us in Christ, a young man even leaving home, and his parents, will do well because God is with him. All this comes from the fear of the Lord.

Then the 3rdly - I would like to couple the 3 final injunctions that Solomon gives to his son all together: "Buy the Truth and sell it not", "Let your father and your mother be glad", and "My son, give me your heart."

I believe that these last 3 are all linked together like a golden chain. There is the objective truth of the Word of God which should be bought and not sold by the young man. There is the hope of the parents who have faithfully taught and have tried to live out that word before their young man. And then there is two-fold pleading request; "My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways." Let us observe that being a Christian is a matter of buying the truth. There is a cost to being a true and faithful Christian. It is that you are willing to give all that you have in order to obtain Christ, and you are willing to give all that you have in order to follow Him. Young man; if you would find Christ and follow Christ, you must become like the merchant of Matthew 13: 45. It says there in that place: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." What is the pearl that is being spoken of here? Is it not Christ, who Himself said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man comes to the Father except by Me?" It will indeed cost you everything that you have to have and to follow the Lord Jesus. "Whatever it costs, Lord, let me obtain Christ, and follow Christ." Christianity is so very practical. At every turn it confronts the desires of our hearts. Right after it says in verse 26, "My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways," it says, "For a harlot is a deep pit and a seductress is a narrow well." "She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men." The reason that these things are placed so

closely together is so that the young man and the older man might understand how easy it is to fall into sexual immorality, but how hard it is to recover from it. God must have your heart, young man. The father on earth pleads in verse 26 for his son to give him his heart. He has tried and will try, to set him a good example of not going to harlotry. He knows that we live in a generation where the harlots do not have many houses, but they have many men's hearts. And why? Because now in our generation we have the video harlots and the video whores who parade themselves around before our eyes on the internet and the television. And they lie in wait as for a victim. "If a man looks upon a woman to lust for her in his heart, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart," Jesus says. A faithful and loving father will love his wife and his eyes will only be for her. I exhort you fathers to live out a good example of the faithful husband before your sons and daughters. Your example will plead louder than your words in this regard, but both will shine in this crooked and perverse generation. But I want you to see in this passage, that it is also the Father in heaven who is pleading with all of us who are His sons, or would become His sons, "My son, give me your heart." If the Father who sees in secret knows that it is your desire to be pure, then He Himself will reward you openly.

It will cost you something to be able to be pure in this filthy video generation. It will mean that you will "pluck out your right eye" in order to do it. You will have to cut off all opportunities for the flesh in regard to its lust, and mourn and weep and repent and flee immorality when you find it trying to take up residence in your heart. But God would have you to give Him your heart. This is the heart battle of young men and older men, and not a few women. These sins must be put to death in our heart and fled from every time they present themselves. It will mean not only for the young man, but every person who wants to be pure, cutting off the opportunities for the eyes, the heart, and all of the body to sin in this vile way. Don't go to web-sites where you might see someone's nakedness. Pray to cover the naked, not to expose them. Don't go to sites, even like U-tube, unsupervised, if you cannot resist roaming around in the site. Cultivate a tender conscience in regard to sexual things. Say with Job, as he related his determination to be pure of heart sexually in Job 31: 1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" "For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?" "Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity?" "Does God not see my ways and count all my steps?" Make a covenant, between you and God with your eyes. And then, as I close this sermon, let us remember to pray earnestly to God, for our young people, that God would make them to be like shining lights in this crooked generation. This is our heart's desire, that they would know Christ and follow Christ. "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him." So, young people, let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice, that you know God and that you are following Christ in the very practical ways that we have talked about this day.