

fact that we belong to Christ; are members of His body; are sheep of His flock and are, together, His Bride. This is visibly signified to the children of believers in their baptism - that they belong not only to Christ, but are also members of His Church. Dear children, it is the great longing of both your parents and your elders, that just as you should delight in your union with Christ, that you should also delight in the communion of saints.

B. *Rejoice in the company of saints (vv 18-19).* Parents, one of the greatest ways to reinforce the primacy of your covenant child's relationship to the Church is to demonstrate to them, in addition to teaching them, the joy of being with other Christians. 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD' (Psa 122:1). May Christian households not only proclaim the excellencies of Christ, but also experience the joy of being with and a part of God's people. And so we find this great exhortation: '*rejoice with the wife of thy youth*'.

IV

The Judgment upon all who fall away (20-23)

Having been called to attention and given these commands, the Lord warns His Church as to His judgment on those who should reject His Word. May we heed these righteous threatenings:

A. *The foolishness of unfaithfulness (v 20).* The commands, their blessings and their warnings have been put forth. And so the question is put forth: 'And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman?' To walk away from the Lord, the Lord's Church and a godly heritage is great folly. Do not be mistaken, dear children; nor make light of such sin, faithful parents.

B. *The reminder of God's omniscience (v 21).* The temptation may be great, as time goes on, to depart from the wife of thy youth and go to that strange woman. Even more often, the temptation may become great simply to depart from her in your heart - to live as the pharisees and hypocrites

who obeyed God externally, but hated Him in their hearts. We are reminded of this truth: 'For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings'. This doctrine of God's omniscience (and omnipresence) - as with all His attributes - is meant to provoke us to the fear of and love for God. Let us not forget the One Whom we serve.

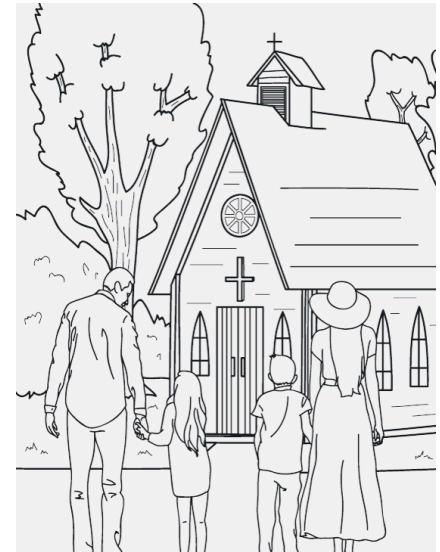
C. *The ease of being entangled with and ensnared by sin (v 22).* Sin easily entangles us - that is, we are easily found in its midst because temptation is so pervasive. But sin also is wont to ensnare us - that is, once we have succumbed to sin, we are all too easily brought back under its mastery. Therefore, let us flee in the hour of temptation, that we should always, by God's grace, rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

D. *The sorrow of departing from the church (v 23).* To go to that strange woman - false religion and worldliness - is to face both in this life and in eternity great judgment. The one who departs from the heritage of faith 'shall die without instruction'. What a weighty warning, indeed.

Conclusion

Parents: shrink not from these teachings and threatenings of God's Word both in your own lives and in the raising of your children. Yet, do not rest on your own strength, the Lord calls and keeps those who are His. Rest in His grace and do not grow weary in this precious vocation, for 'your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (1 Cor 15:58). *Covenant children:* the flesh, the world and the devil would seek to draw you away from God's Covenant of Grace. Do not turn from the Lord - the Only and Blessed Saviour - and His people. May you always, therefore, *Rejoice with the wife of thy youth.*

Father, bless Thy covenant children, that they should walk in the fear and admonition of Thee, the LORD our God; and that they should always rejoice with the wife of their youth. Through Christ our Lord, AMEN.



Walking in the Lord: An Exhortation to Parents and Covenant Children

A Pamphlet to Encourage
Covenant Families in Faith and Life

'Rejoice with the wife of thy youth'

Introduction

The book of Proverbs is presented throughout as the exhortations of a loving father to his son. Indeed, as the Word of God, we ought to understand these Proverbs not only as general instructions on wise living, but also on how the Church is to understand her relationship to the LORD and to the world - as the exhortations of our Heavenly Father to His adopted children. In Proverbs 5, we see a clear exhortation toward covenant children - that they should '*rejoice with the wife of thy youth*' (5:18b). We may rightly interpret this to mean that covenant children should always be faithful to the Lord as members of His visible Church, and flee from that strange woman - that is, from false religion and all forms of worldliness. What a timeless call to perseverance, for we live in an age when temptations for young Christians to fall away lurk around every corner. May this overview and outline of Proverbs 5 serve two primary purposes: (1) to exhort covenant children to persevere and not fall away from the true faith in and worship of God; and, (2) to encourage parents to not waiver in raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

I

The Blessing of Godly parents (1-2)

Proverbs 5 opens with a call to attention - that we may learn what it is to know, love and fear the LORD. Consider, dear children, what a blessing it is to be raised hearing and learning the precious Word of the Lord - to trust His promises, to hear His instruction, to sing His Psalms! Such is a grace many have not had. Consider the instruction of the Lord carefully and attentively! It is to your benefit, that you should gain understanding and keep knowledge. It is a wonderful grace that the Father gave us His Word, and it is a great love that parents should continue to teach that same Word to their children (cf. Psalms 78:1-8). The heritage of faith is not something to spurn, but to delight in!

II

The Warning against false religion (3-14)

How is it, though, that covenant children may 'rejoice in the wife of thy youth' - that is, remain steadfast to Christ and His Church? We must first heed the warnings against that 'strange woman,' who is false religion (whether it be false teaching and worship, or any form of worldliness). How pervasive this strange woman is, 'For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call passengers who go right on their ways' (9:14-15). Consider well, dear children; and teach well, faithful parents, these four instructions:

A. *We must be aware of her wicked ways (v 3).* Sin appears enticing and promises great things. Whether it is the allurements of sinful pleasures or the self-declaration of prominence, intelligence, or popularity, the strange woman of sin uses all methods in order to deceive those which are pledged to the Lord. Christian parents, do not let your children be ignorant of her ways! Teach them the make and model, as it were, of Satan's most common arrows, and then show them how they may best avoid them (by fleeing) and defeat them (by the Scriptures). How unfailling the words of our Lord, 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves' (Mt 10:16)!

B. *We must know the end of her ways (v 4-5).* The results of sin are shown to be only two-fold. In life, they bring grief: 'her end is bitter as wormwood'. In death, they bring destruction: 'her steps take hold on hell'. Like poison, sin may taste sweet at first, but it never sits well.

C. *We must be on guard against her deception (v 6).* While the general tactics of Satan are always the same, they often change in appearance: 'her ways are moveable, *that* thou canst not know *them*'. Beware her shifting craft, and instead, 'ponder the path of life,' which shall never change nor fade.

D. *We must flee her at all costs (vv 7-14).* If your desire, as it rightly ought to be, is to 'rejoice with the wife of thy youth,' you must remove yourself from the way of temptation. How great the pressure can be to conform to the world, but how much greater the cost of such sin! When brought into temptation to forsake the faith and neglect the household of faith, dear children, run! If it should cost you honour, wealth, even life itself, it is well worth it. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Mt 10:28).

III

The Exhortation to faithfulness (15-19)

The command may not only be summarized negatively, *Remove thy way far from her*, but also positively, *Rejoice with the wife of thy youth*. And so, our instruction continues in Proverbs 5.

A. *Our primary community is to be with the saints (vv 15-17).* We are called to 'drink waters out of thine own cistern' (v 15). That is, we must satisfy ourselves in Christ, who is the fount of living waters, rather than the broken cisterns of ungodliness (Jer 2:13). Our closest community, likewise, must be within the people of God: 'Let them be thine own, and not strangers' with thee' (v 17). Here we are reminded of the Christian's duty: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' (2 Cor 6:14). This refers not only to marriage, but to the bond of camaraderie that develops in all of a Christian's relationships. We belong to the true Israel of God, the household of faith. And while it is good that the foreigner should come into the camp, as it were, we ought not place ourselves outside of it. True, we are to be a people of hospitality, mercy and evangelism. But we are also to be mindful of the