

Consent Thou Not

Proverbs 1:10

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“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” - Proverbs 1:10.

I've always thought that the many, many times that Solomon refers to the readers of this wonderful Book as “My Son” are a great encouragement. It isn't merely a manner of speaking, but rather is a method of drawing the readers into a deeper and more familiar form of reading and considering what he was saying to them. As we know, what is taught throughout the Book is a collection of things that Solomon had learned from a long life of failing and falling away from the things of God and being drawn back into fellowship with his God.

We should also remember that Solomon was used by God as a Prophet and speaks in the Books that he wrote for inclusion in the Bible as the very voice of God to man. In a manner of speaking we can hear what he says as if God were speaking it to us, His children in the faith! We ought to take what he says in as the advice from our heavenly Father that it is!!

Solomon had some real failures in his home life. His sons (and I suspect his many daughters [along with a “many” in the son department]) are portrayed in some rather negative ways. In verses 8-19 Solomon speaks of the truth that home discipline is a real moral safeguard against a life of wrong doing and spiritual failure. Again, I mention that this was an area in which Solomon would know well what is and is not a guide to our practice.

We can actually look at the mentioned verses and a kind of “First Paternal Appeal” to his children: “Do Not Join Those Greedy for Unjust Gain”. The appeal opens, like most of the paternal addresses in the Book, with a personal address and an encouragement to heed the instruction as a prized and beneficial possession (vv. 8–9). This first appeal is a warning against those who might seek aid in unjust gain and consists of two parts: the hypothetical invitations of those who seek to “ambush the innocent” (vv. 11–14), bordered by warnings to reject such pleas (vv. 10, 15) and the grounds for doing so (vv. 16–19). The purpose of the warning is to instill in us the wisdom to recognize that while such plots offer companionship and immediate gain, they lead down a path that ends in destruction.

The verse starts as a conditional statement - “If sinners entice you”. “If” is the Hebrew word *im* (pronounced “eem”). It's a particle that is used to do just what we see here - act as a conjunction, and based on the context in which it is used, direct thought in the direction that the writer desires. Here, as we said, it introduces the rest of the verse in a conditional fashion. It speaks of sinners and what they may seek to cause the listener to indulge themselves in. The emphasis here is for the children spoken to are responsible to watch for and avoid.

First, he speaks of the matter of people to avoid. He speaks of “sinners”. This term is reserved in Scripture (not just in Proverbs) to describe unbelievers

for whom sin is continual and who endeavor to persuade even believers to sin with them. Over in James 2:8 in the NT we read:

⁸ *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

James is very clear about this similar matter

Believers are to **“Draw near”**, that is to Pursue an intimate love relationship with God (cf. Phil. 3:10). The concept of drawing near to God was associated originally with the Levitical priests (Ex. 19:22; Lev. 10:3; Ezek. 44:13), but eventually came to describe anyone’s approach to God (Ps. 73:28; Is. 29:13; Heb. 4:16; 7:19; 10:22). Salvation involves more than submitting to God and resisting the devil; the redeemed heart longs for communion with God (Pss. 27:8; 42:1, 2; 63:1, 2; 84:2; 143:6; Matt. 22:37).

Note that James also uses the term **“Cleanse your hands”**. The OT priests had to ceremonially wash their hands before approaching God (Ex. 30:19–21), and sinners (a term used only for unbelievers; *see 5:20*) who would approach Him must recognize and confess their sin. He also speaks of the need to **“purify your hearts”**. Cleansing the hands symbolizes external behavior; this phrase refers to the inner thoughts, motives, and desires of the heart (Ps. 24:3, 4; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 18:31; 36:25, 26; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22). We should note that the two ideas are joined in James teaching. Our actions AND our thinking/feeling or what we value and pursue ought to be given over to holy and righteous living.

This truth is why James summarizes by warning that the unredeemed are often given to the matter of being **“double-minded”**. We need to remember that even though every believer is proclaimed to be a new creature and to be created anew in such a fashion that they would pursue good works and holiness. The Bible is also very clear that no believer is perfect or such that he/she would never sin again! In fact it is clear that we need to be certain that we are NOT, as James says here, double-minded and, while seeking to follow after the Lord, also tolerating sin and the “dirtiness” that results from it, to remain present in our lives. We must keep our selves clean and pure (which speaks of keeping our deeds from sin) and pure (which speaks of keeping our minds and hearts dwelling on godly and holy things, not to mention seeing to it that we are confessing sin and fault.

Another matter to consider here is that Solomon clearly puts forth the truth that

- the way of sinners is attractive to human beings (vv. 10–14),
- but, he makes it clear that it leads to destruction (vv. 15–19).
- You may gain the world but lose your soul (Mark 8:36)

These are all familiar ideas to us who are at least somewhat schooled in the Word of God because Solomon is not the only one to put such ideas into words.

The word for “sinners” is the term **𐤏𐤃𐤏** (*khatta*) and is the common word for “sinner” in the OT. Because the related verb is used once of sling-shot throwers who miss the mark (Judg 20:16), the idea of sin is often explained as “missing the moral mark”. But the term should not be restricted to the idea of a sin of ignorance or simply falling short of the moral ideal. Its meaning is more likely seen in the related Akkadian term “to revolt, rebel.” It is active rebellion against authority. It is used here in reference to a gang of robbers.

This makes good sense in the light of the fact that Solomon was very aware of what it was that God expected of both he and his children. The fact is that he “missed the mark” in his pursuit of obedience to God. Not to run him down, but it is plain that he was less than sterling in his pursuit of obedience to God and obedience to Him.

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The counsel, and we can call it urging, of the verse is that God’s people recognize the folly and genuine nature that lies around us. There is real danger that seeks to draw us toward sin and real “attraction” to a love of what defiles us and leads us into the matters can result in offense to God. This is why Solomon tells his children (and we, his readers) that the answer, the prevention of this is to “draw near” to God.

The sins of murder and robbery are used as illustrations of such folly. It is clear that young people especially, but all people really, will sometimes receive input that conflicts with the instruction of those who hold positions of guidance over and around them. They (and we) must choose which advice to follow. Frequently “sinners” (v. 10) may claim that benefits can be achieved more easily and quickly by following their way. But Solomon tells us that the way of “sinners” is not all it promises to be. That way actually leads to destruction and death.

The temptation spoken of here is not something unique to any one person of “kind” of person. What Solomon is putting forth here is not only for his children and the rest of his family. We remember that he is acting here, in the Book of Proverbs, as a Prophet of God and so speak to more than just those who are in the immediate circle that “hears” what he is saying. As with all other Scripture Authors, the intention of God is that his writing be for all of the spiritual family and descendants of God’s working to draw men to himself and serve His purpose and will. We must be aware of the danger and defilement that a sinful world has for us and both cleanse our hand and purify our hearts. It is essential that we see to it that our actions and habits work to lead us closer to God, as well as our desires, wants and emotions draw us to His side and deepen our walk with Him. We must be as certain as possible that we do not fall into the trap of being doubleminded, seeking to be closer to our Lord and yet being drawn aside toward the various sins and temptations that we face and in so doing, dishonor our Lord and fail to be what He desires us to be.

Rehearsing our interpretation of the verse here we remember that the address, “my son,” is from Solomon, and yet from One greater than Solomon (comp. 23:26). Perhaps it is rather a figurative than a literal term. It is addressed to all the sons of men, specially to the young. The “sinners” warned against are open and avowed libertines, put in contrast here with the father and mother whose good counsels should be heard and followed. The exhortation is to one who has been well brought up, and will need, therefore, to be *enticed* into deliberate wickedness. Not to “consent” is to say “No” with heart and voice.

By way of illustrations we can think of:

- Eve and then Adam suffered themselves to be enticed, the latter with open eyes.
- The prophet of Judah yielded at last to the sophistries of the older prophet, against his better judgment.
- On the other hand, Joseph, Job, Nehemiah, and a host of other saints, have had the spiritual strength, when tempted, to say “No;” and have been proof against seduction, ridicule, threats.

We should also think, by way of application that it is an essential part of the wisdom of true seeking of the Lord to know *when* to say “No.” We absolutely understand and remember that occasions will, indeed, arise, perhaps daily, because, it is a given that “sinners” abound around us. A compliant disposition, while it is very well thought of and openly manifests even a common popularity, may entail ruin. Better forfeit the favour of man than of God. When the world is most friendly it is most to be feared. A round, blunt refusal meets its blandishments with most success. Enticement (as represented in the text) is more or less based upon the assurance of (1) privity, (2) gain, (3) generosity on the tempter’s part. To the first, God’s child will oppose the thought, “Thou God seest me.” To the second, the reflection, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” To the third, the consideration, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” Safety lies only in prompt and absolute refusal, accompanied, if possible, by withdrawal from the injurious company. Two convictions will lead to this: the one of the extremes to which a guilty compliance may lead; the other of the exceeding danger of a first false step. After all, it is at the choice of my own will to yield or not. Satan’s servants, it is true, are diligent and subtle. The human heart is deceitful. Sin is very attractive when partially seen under some aspects. But grace is given to God’s children to will to say “No,” and to say it, and to know *when* to say it.

*O God, enable me to seek and use this grace, that no enticement
may draw away my heart from Thee!*
