AVOID THE PATH OF THE WICKED

By Keith Greer

"Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on" (Proverbs 4:13-15)

The word "warn" means "to give notice beforehand of danger or evil, or to call to one's attention." God, in His infinite wisdom, gave man many warnings in this life. Why has God given us this particular warning in Proverbs?

Since we are living in the world, we are going to come into contact with a variety of people everyday. Often the lives of our neighbors, friends, and sometimes even our loved ones will not direct or encourage us to walk "the straight and narrow". We see the evil choices that are made by many, but do we have to follow them down the same path? The apostle Paul told the Romans to " ... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)

During the many years that I have been a child of God, it has amazed me to watch the influence that the world has upon many of my brethren. Why is it not the other way around? Jesus told us to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) Why do we not have the effect on them that they have on us?

The answer, I believe, is quite simple.

"Be not deceived; evil company corrupts good habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) Our preference should always be to those of like precious faith."... .in honor preferring one another." (Romans 12:10)

Often, brethren stumble and are overtaken in sin because they "set themselves up". We need to be careful about finding ourselves in "situations" where the "atmosphere" is geared toward the wicked. It is much easier to "yield not to temptation" when we do not put ourselves in difficult situations.

Perhaps the best solution in "avoiding the path of the wicked" can be found in Titus 2:11-12. "For the grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

How easily the world can influence us in the wrong direction. Please allow me to give you one example of how this is accomplished. Do your children participate in sports? Little League, soccer, school athletics, swimming, you get the picture. Nothing wrong with sports in and of themselves. Yet, do they take priority over spiritual matters? What do you do when your children must "play on " Wednesday night? Sunday afternoon? During a gospel meetings? Do we justify our absence and theirs because they have a "great talent" and duty to the team? What about their duty to God and spiritual training? How do we teach our children that God is first in our lives, when they soon learn that "sports" are more important than meeting with God's people? Sadly, many parents learn this vital lesson too late when

their kids are older and have no desire for the God or the church—what happened? Might be "reaping" what we've "sowed."

Living godly in an ungodly world is not easy. We are not promised that it will be easy, but our Lord suffered it first, and " … was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) Isn't a home with God in heaven for eternity worth it? ***