



THE DECEPTIVE AMBUSH OF SIN

PROVERBS 1:8-19

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Dallas Willard (in Renovation of the Heart) gives a chilling description of the state of many of our children:

The little souls, bodies and minds of children absorb the reality of assault and withdrawal from their parents. They are attacked or frozen out. You can almost see the children shrivel. Their only hope of survival is to become hardened. Constant posture of withdrawal or attack on others and on oneself. Hardened, lonely little souls, ready for addiction, aggression, isolation, self-destructive behavior and for some, even extreme violence, they go out to mingle their madness with one another in nightmarish school grounds. They turn to their bodies for self-gratification and to control others, or for isolation and self-destruction.

It is into this destructive, painful world that Solomon now turns his attention. He has already established the theme of Proverbs: *Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction* (1:7). In this hostile and sinful world, every one of us has to make a choice of whose voice we are going to listen to. Solomon exhorts us to cling to our Creator and humbly trust and submit ourselves to Him and His plan for our lives.

Now Solomon give us 10 messages, each beginning with “My son” or “My child” (1:8-9:18). They begin with an exhortation to listen to the message of the father, are accompanied by a motivating sentence and then conclude with a summarizing statement.

Message #1: Avoid quick gain through violent action, because it ambushes your life (1:8-19):

1. Ultimate value of wisdom (8-9)
2. The deceiving emptiness of sin (10-18)
 - a. The dazzling enticement of sin (10-14)
 - b. The masked stupidity of sin (15-18)
3. The ultimate disaster of sin (19)

Listen, my child, to the instruction from your father, and do not forsake the teaching from your mother. For they will be like an elegant garland on your head, and like pendants around your neck. (Proverbs 1:8-9)

Solomon begins each of his messages with the exhortation to listen to the instruction of your parents. However, we may have not been raised by the wisest parents. One of the many gifts of being saved by the grace of God and becoming a new creation in Jesus Christ is that we get to be re-parented, and as we receive this instruction the Holy Spirit will direct us. The parents in the book of Proverbs are not real people, but an ideal couple. Proverbs gives us an opportunity to be re-parented by divine wisdom.

Solomon says that listening to the teaching of your parents sets you apart and will become an elegant garland on your head and a precious necklace around your neck. When sinners approach this son, as the father and mother knew they would, they will show the child how right mom and dad truly are.

My child, if sinners try to entice you, do not consent! If they say, "Come with us! We will lie in wait to shed blood; we will ambush an innocent person capriciously. We will swallow them alive like Sheol, those full of vigor like those going down to the Pit. We will seize all kinds of precious wealth; we will fill our houses with plunder. Join with us! We will all share equally in what we steal." (Proverbs 1:10-14)

The goal of these “sinners” is to rob for their own gain and ambush the innocent. Sheol is the grave, but to the Old Testament saint it is personified as a terrifying enemy: it snatches people away (Job 24:19), sets snares (Ps. 18:5) and entangles victims in its cords (Ps. 116:3). It is viewed as a place where existence is reduced to almost nothing. The irony is that they will be swallowed up by the grave, not the victim.

Why do our sons or daughters not stay away from such evil? In vs. 11 the gang member says, “Come with us!” and in vs. 14, “Join with us!” Gangs and groups address issues of identity and belonging. They promise “family”, validation and adventure.

My child, do not go down their way, withhold yourself from their path; for they are eager to inflict harm, and they hasten to shed blood. Surely it is futile to spread a net in plain sight of any bird, but these men lie in wait for their own blood, they ambush their own lives! Such are the ways of all who gain profit unjustly; it takes away the life of those who obtain it! (Proverbs 1:15-19)

A gifted hunter is always figuring out new ways to attract and deceive their prey. Hunters wear camouflage clothing and hide in carefully prepared blinds while using decoys and bird calls to lure the quarry. They deceive the hunted into seeing himself as the hunter, then spring the trap and reveal the truth when escape is impossible.

Solomon's point is that the appetite for grain will overrule the bird's sense of danger. Sooner or later their eyes behold only the grain and seek to satisfy their appetites. The Hebrew phrase *kol-bosea basa* ("all who see profits by violence") is a proven path to destruction. So it is with those wicked men who live such a life. They are overwhelmed by their appetites and trap themselves by the pursuit of quick gain. Solomon says that they run on a path and hurry to shed blood, but their own blood will be shed. Jesus says, "All who live by the sword will die by the sword" (Matt 26:52).

We might not be tempted to join gangs that will shed blood of the innocent, but we are susceptible to all kinds of other compromises towards quick gain.

Instead of waiting on Him to solve our dilemma in His own way and in His own time, we step in and make critical mistakes and manipulate towards what we think is going to be a quick and painless escape. As it turns out, we ambush our own lives.

How are you ambushing your own life for quick gain?

How are you trapping yourself through sinful shortcuts?

Your assignment this week is to ask someone who knows you and loves you this question:

Is there something you see in me that consistently ambushes my life?