

# The Proverbs

## Lesson 27

### *Proverbs 24*

**Proverbs 24:1** Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; <sup>2</sup> for their minds devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble. <sup>3</sup> By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; <sup>4</sup> and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

The future of an evil man is dreary. After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a commission focused its investigation on three mob bosses who supposedly worked together to accomplish the murder. By the time the commission began their interviews, only one boss remained alive and it is reported that he quoted the words of Benjamin Franklin saying, “Three can keep a secret, if two of them are dead.” Ultimately, evil never wins in this world and those who are evil will almost always walk the fine line between being overtaken by evil or overtaking someone else. The home of an evil person is never totally safe, never totally secure and never totally prosperous. In contrast, the home of the wise person who runs from evil will be filled with the safety and security which are two of the most “precious and pleasant riches” bestowed upon man.

**Proverbs 24:5** A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power. <sup>6</sup> For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory. <sup>7</sup> Wisdom is too high for a fool, he does not open his mouth in the gate. <sup>8</sup> He who plans to do evil, men will call him a schemer. <sup>9</sup> The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men. <sup>10</sup> If you are slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited.

The Greek Septuagint translates verse 5 as “The wise is better than the strong; the man who has prudence than a stout farmer.” If the Septuagint is correct, Solomon highlights the advantage of mental abilities over physical strength. The mentally wise person will seek the council of other knowledgeable people and he will carefully enter into any conflict with great care and planning. His plans are held closely among loyal companions to ensure that the opposing forces will not be able to thwart his endeavors. Not so with the fool who will rush into conflict with brawn and force and who may win the first round, but in the end, will be defeated.

**Proverbs 24:11** Deliver those who are being taken away to death, and those who are staggering to slaughter, O hold *them* back. <sup>12</sup> If you say, "See, we did not know this," Does He not consider *it* who weighs the hearts? And does He not know *it* who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?

Solomon's concern in this passage is for the innocent who are being killed. In such cases, the righteous should rise up and defend the innocent at all costs. The Nazi party was established in 1920 with fewer than 60 members. By 1945, when it was dissolved, it boasted that 8.5 million people had been members. The 8.5 million represented 7% of the total German population, yet, this relatively small percentage killed over 6 million Jews and another 5 million non-Germans in its 25 year existence. The Nazi party was dissolved because the righteous of the world stood up to stop the atrocity in WWII. Today, the Islamic population is 2.08 billion and it is estimated that 25% or 520 million fall within the radical Muslim category. The founding principle of radical Islam is to kill the innocent who do not believe as they believe, live as they live and worship as they worship. Evil is far more prevalent today than it was during WWII and for that reason the righteous must stand to protect the innocent in the world. The LORD expects the righteous to act prudently in such causes and He will aid in such efforts.

**Proverbs 24:13** My son, eat honey, for it is good, Yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; <sup>14</sup> Know *that* wisdom is thus for your soul; if you find *it*, then there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

Honey was the sweetest substance known in the ancient world and Solomon uses it here by comparing it to wisdom. He says that wisdom is to the soul as honey is to the taste. True wisdom leads to salvation and salvation leads to eternity with the LORD. With the limited written Word of the LORD in Solomon's day, we can only speculate on the fullness of his understanding of this concept.

**Proverbs 24:15** Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; do not destroy his resting place; <sup>16</sup> for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in *time of calamity*. <sup>17</sup> Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; <sup>18</sup> lest the LORD see *it* and be displeased, and He turn away His anger from him. <sup>19</sup> Do not fret because of evildoers, or be envious of the wicked; <sup>20</sup> for there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out. <sup>21</sup> My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those who are given to change; <sup>22</sup> for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin *that comes* from both of them?

Solomon delivers several warnings in this passage. First, the home of the righteous is not to be attacked. Second, the righteous should not mourn the fall of the wicked. Perhaps Solomon understands that the LORD does not intend that anyone be lost although He knows there are those who will reject Him. Third, the righteous should not worry about the eventual outcome for the wicked; moreover, the righteous should never wish that they could live like the wicked; the LORD has a plan for the wicked and He will punish all who continue in their evil ways. The LORD never changes His plans and neither should the righteous who belong to Him. The double-minded, ever-changing whims of the wicked will end in calamity.

**Proverbs 24:23** These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good.

In verse 23, Solomon specifically records the “sayings of the wise.” They are not the sayings of the wicked fools. The first deals with partiality. A wise judge understands that showing partiality to one party over another is never good. The facts and evidence must tell the tale in every case, the judge laying aside all personal relationships and perceptions.

**Proverbs 24:24** He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous," peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him; <sup>25</sup> but to those who rebuke the *wicked* will be delight, and a good blessing will come upon them. <sup>26</sup> He kisses the lips who gives a right answer.

A few people in this world have the ability to speak and have their words heard throughout their community, state or nation. In every case, these people hold some management position whether as elders of the people, hired spokesmen or elected leaders. As evidenced in every generation, not all leaders are righteous, not all leaders are truthful and not all leaders have the best intentions for the people. Such leaders may attempt to redirect and sever previous long-term relationships. Since Israel’s inception, America has had a working relationship with her; yet, at least one American President has attempted to destroy that relationship. America has long been at odds with Iran and yet at least one American President has attempted to befriend that nation above all others. In that President’s eye, Iran is righteous and Israel is wicked. The wise and righteous know the fallacies of this President; the fools and wicked believe his words to be true.

**Proverbs 24:27** Prepare your work outside, and make it ready for yourself in the field; afterwards, then, build your house.

In short, Solomon is simply stating that before we proceed with a project, we should have a plan should be in place and all the supplies should be gathered and ready to use.

**Proverbs 24:28** Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips. <sup>29</sup> Do not say, "Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work." <sup>30</sup> I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; <sup>31</sup> and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. <sup>32</sup> When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, *and* received instruction.

Not all neighbors are kind. Not all neighbors are trustworthy. Not all neighbors have made it easy to live next to them in a community. Nevertheless, when those terrible neighbors find themselves in trouble with legal issues, we should never join the effort to destroy their reputations without cause and we should surely never lie in an attempt to increase their punishment.

**Proverbs 24:30** I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; <sup>31</sup> and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. <sup>32</sup> When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, *and* received instruction. <sup>33</sup> "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," <sup>34</sup> then your poverty will come *as* a robber, and your want like an armed man.

The wise person learns from the actions of others. People who do not care for their own property will not care for the property of others. Such people do not make good leaders, employees, neighbors or friends. Poverty will overtake those who are slothful sluggards seeking sleep rather than working prudently with their hands.