

Proverbs: Contrasts Between the Righteous and the Wicked

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Proverbs 1:20-33 (ESV) ²⁰ Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice;
²¹ at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
²² "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?
²³ If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.
²⁴ Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,
²⁵ because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,
²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you,
²⁷ when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.
²⁸ Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.
²⁹ Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,
³⁰ would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof,
³¹ therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.
³² For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them;
³³ but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."

INTRODUCTION

A. Many proverbs are written in the form of contrasts or comparisons, which is an effective way to show the superiority of one behavior versus another.

B. In this lesson we will consider a number of proverbs that present the contrasts between good and evil, the righteous and the wicked.

1. Wicked people, from God's perspective, are not only those who do terrible things, but are also those who serve themselves instead of Him.
2. **Matt 25:26-30** - ²⁶you wicked and lazy servant... ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

I. "He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life, and he who pursues evil will bring about his own death." (11:19)

A. The greatest contrast between good & evil is given in terms of life & death.

1. **Prov 12:28 (NKJV)** In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.
2. This contrast calls us to make a choice between good and evil similar to that which Moses required of Israel in **Deut. 30:19**: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants."

B. The choice seems easy. But Satan complicates our choices with the deception of his lie, "You surely will not die!" (**Gen 3:4**).

1. The pursuit of evil is self-destructive, but the wicked are foolish and do not believe in the danger of their evil deeds.
2. They are short-sighted; they exchange the promise of an abundant life, both now

and in the future, for the lusts of the present.

II. "The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness." (11:5)

A. Many of God's promises of blessings are fulfilled by righteousness itself.

1. Righteous choices keep a man away from trouble.
2. Our choices to do the right thing put us in positions that are favorable to us. By practicing humility, honesty, love, goodness, kindness, generosity, etc., we often receive the same in return from like-minded righteous persons.
3. **Proverbs 12:8 (NKJV)** A man will be commended according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised.

B. A wicked man creates difficulties for himself by his own wickedness.

1. His choices often place him at the center of trouble. He goes to places where trouble happens and keeps company with troublemakers.
2. His behavior puts him at a disadvantage with others. His dishonesty, laziness, cruelty, greed, etc., will win him no friends or favors.

C. **Prov 12:3 (ESV)** No one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will not be moved.

1. Those who build their lives on wickedness are like the foolish man who builds his house on the sand (**Mt 7:26-27**).
2. In contrast, those who build their lives on righteousness are like the wise man who builds his house on the rock (**Mt 7:24-25**).

Proverbs 10:6 (ESV) Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

Proverbs 10:16 (ESV) The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.

Proverbs 11:8 (ESV) The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead.

Proverbs 12:12 (NKJV) The wicked covet the catch of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit.

Proverbs 12:21 (NKJV) No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil.

Proverbs 13:21 (NKJV) Evil pursues sinners, but to the righteous, good shall be repaid.

Proverbs 13:25 (NKJV) The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the wicked shall be in want.

Proverbs 15:6 (ESV) In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.

III. "The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes." (10:28)

A. God promises a righteous man great rewards, which gives him gladness.

1. Hope is the confident expectation of good things to come. God continually bestows temporal blessings, and promises eternal blessings.
 2. A righteous man can have gladness even while suffering (**Matt 5:10-12**).
- B. A wicked man rejoices in his temporal pleasures and expects them to continue.
1. **Proverbs 11:7 (NKJV)** When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of the unjust perishes.
 2. **Proverbs 11:23 (NKJV)** The desire of the righteous is only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.
 3. **Luke 12:16-21** - the foolish farmer.

IV. "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who pursues righteousness." (15:9)

- A. A man who pursues righteousness stirs up God's love.
1. **Proverbs 12:2 (NKJV)** A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn.
 2. **Proverbs 11:20 (NKJV)** Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their ways are His delight.
 3. **Repentance** is our desire to turn away from sin and to turn toward pleasing God. Because of our godly sorrow and repentance, God's heart is moved toward us and for us instead of away from us and against us.
- B. But a wicked man doesn't care that he insults and offends God, so God in his disgust turns His face away from him. Sin is disgusting to God.
1. **Psalms 5:5** says, "You hate all who do iniquity."
 2. **Psalms 34:15-16 (NKJV)** The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
 3. **Hebrews 10:29-31 (NKJV)** ²⁹Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

V. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (14:34)

- A. When the people of a nation possess a general quality of righteousness, the blessings and favor of God are provoked upon the whole nation.
- B. However, when the people of a nation practice sin and wickedness, the nation is a disgrace. Shameful conduct provokes the wrath of God against a nation.
1. **Proverbs 28:12 (NKJV)** When the righteous rejoice, there is great glory; but when the wicked arise, men hide themselves.

- a. A righteous man will use his position to benefit everyone. But when wicked men attain positions of authority they will use their power to oppress and defraud others for their own benefit.
- 2. **Proverbs 29:27 (NKJV)** An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, and he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.
 - a. Explains the attacks on Christians among the intellectual elite in the media, the government, and education.
- 3. **Proverbs 11:10 (NKJV)** When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting.

VI. "The evil will bow down before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous." (14:19)

- 1. The frequent success of the wicked appears to contradict the wisdom of the Proverbs, but their success is temporary, while their fall is certain and eternal.
 - a. **Proverbs 11:18 (NASB)** The wicked earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness gets a true reward.
 - b. **Proverbs 29:16 (NKJV)** When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases; but the righteous will see their fall.
 - c. **Proverbs 12:7 (NKJV)** The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.
- 2. The ultimate justice of God and the true reward of the righteous will be realized when God judges the world.
 - a. Each soul "will be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (**2 Cor 5:10**).
 - b. Then "the wicked will bow down before the good."

CONCLUSION

These proverbs reveal the wisdom of choosing righteousness over evil. Righteousness is always the right choice.