

Proverbs 21:5-14

⁵ The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Once again, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon uses contrast to inform us. The primary contrast is between two kinds of people and their approaches to living. The secondary contrast is between the outcome of their contrasting approaches to living. One leads to abundance while the other comes to poverty.

the diligent — This is the first type of person. The dictionary defines diligent as: industrious, hard-working, conscientious, meticulous, painstaking, thorough. Relative to that definition I love this quote from C.S. Lewis:

The only fatal thing is to sit down content with anything less than perfection.

The dictionary also adds this definition to diligent: *persevering*. Relative to that definition I love this quote from Kiel and Delitzsch:

“Like the stars, without haste — but without rest — let every one carry about his own burden,”

The plans of the diligent — The first approach to living involves **Plans**, thinking ahead. The word plans immediately brings to mind the idea of forethought — thinking ahead. In our vernacular, we would say that the diligent person is very intentional. They have goals and a plan, a path, to accomplish those goals. My pastor had this goal when he began pastoring a group of 25 Christians in Costa Mesa: “They would be the best loved and best fed sheep in all of Orange County. If it didn’t serve that trajectory it had no place in his life or ministry.

That approach to living has certain outcome.

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance — The Handbook on Proverbs says this:

The word **surely** points to the inevitable consequence or outcome of the action in the first part of the line.¹

Abundance = profit, benefit (This same word is used in **Proverbs 14:23** In all toil there is profit)²

Solomon doesn't say this, but the breadth of Scripture, and plain common sense endorses it: It is **good** plans plus **hard** work that result in abundance. I'll try illustrate with a football metaphor. Dreaming up a bad game plan, then working hard all week on executing that bad game plan; and every player giving 110% attempting to execute that plan for all 4 quarters in the game, does not guaranteed a victory. You were working hard on a plan that couldn't succeed. In that context, bad plans + hard work ≠ victory.

Having said that, a great plan without diligence does not **surely lead to abundance**. Apply this to your relationship with Jesus. You might have a great plan to study the Bible, pray, serve and fellowship. But you have to pick up your Bible. You have to get on your knees. You have to show up and pour out of your time, talents and treasure. You have to make the effort to be with other believers. **Proverbs 14:23 In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.**

but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

In contrast to the persistent, hard working person is **everyone who is hasty** — those who desire is to “get rich quick” (See Prov. 13:11; 28:20). The word **only** is used in the same way as the word **sure** in the front of the proverb — it points to the inevitable consequence of trying to get rich quick. You will “never have enough” and “end up poor.”³

¹ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 441). New York: United Bible Societies.

² Holladay, W. L., Köhler, L., & Köhler, L. (2000). *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill.

³ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (pp. 441–442). New York: United Bible Societies.

I want you to think about how many advertisements you hear on a daily basis that try to sell you any number of things that will give you immediate results with no effort! They're planning on getting rich quick by appealing to the desire to have immediate benefits without hard work, or by appealing to our desire to get rich quick. Every time you hear one of those ads remember that God has informed you that the exact opposite is true and He directs you to plan well and work hard. Abundance in the vertical axis of our lives; profit and benefits in the horizontal axis of our lives are all rooted in the grace of God. But our part involves **good plans** and **hard work**.

The next 2 proverbs deal with two specific ways people try to get rich quick: fraud and violence.

6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.

H.A. Ironsides illustrates the emptiness of wealth gained by deceit by way of a story about an Arab lost in the desert. He was dying of starvation when he came up a package that had been dropped by a caravan. He opened it — desperately hoping to find some dried dates. He dropped it in utter disappointment and groaned, “It’s only pearls!” Those pearls were worth thousands of dollars, but they could not feed a starving man.

That is wealth that is gained by lies. It can never satisfy. The idol of wealth and materialism will be served by lies! Like every other idol, this one will always fail you. Anything you have to lie to obtain is itself a lie — it’s a vapor!

QUOTE: H.A. Ironside — *He who possesses it will be in deepest and most abject poverty after all.* ⁴

⁴ Ironside, H. A. (1908). *Notes on the Book of Proverbs* (p. 283). Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros.

You see, gratifying lust is a deadly trap! The KJV is helpful here: *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.* Seeking to get treasure by lying is in reality seeking death!

QUOTE: John Owen — *Sin, that ever vigilant predator, stands ready to pounce at the first sign of weakness—how will even the strongest among us resist its ferocious assault?*

⁷ The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just.

Violence is behavior that harms, ruins, mistreats, or oppresses other people. ⁵

violence of the wicked — Behavior that harms, ruins, mistreats, or oppresses other people has an origin. It springs from the heart of the man or woman that has rejected God.

Matthew 15:19 *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*

This proverb echoes the theme of **Proverbs 1:19** — violence destroys those who practice it. The language is powerful and graphic. Reyburn and Fry say that the Hebrew verb translated **sweep them away** is literally “drag them away” (NIV) — like fish caught in a net.⁶ What an incredibly accurate picture of the violent history of gangs, mobs, drug cartels, and sex traffickers.

⁸ The way of a guilty man is perverse; But as for the pure, his work is right.

Some definitions:

⁵ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 443). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁶ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 443). New York: United Bible Societies.

The way refers to a course of conduct; a way of living.⁷

guilty = *pertaining to a person that has violated a standard, implying a moral corruption.*⁸

The word **perverse** = *crooked, twisted*⁹

Two ways to look at this: ¹ The path of morally corrupted person is twisted and crooked. There's nothing straight about it. That's why when you apply for a job they want a list of your former employers and recommendations. They want to see if your path is straight! Ladies, you need to think about this in the context of dating relationships. You'd be surprised by how many ladies are positive that the man who left his wife to have an affair with them will never be unfaithful! They tell themselves that they won't be another twist in the crooked path of that man's life.

² This is another proverb that has its roots in **Proverbs 4:23**. It's the condition of the heart that determines the course of conduct. A crooked heart produces a crooked life style. This twisted way of living belongs to a certain person: the guilty person, the morally corrupt person. Moral corruption begins when the vertical axis of our life is corrupted. Nothing in our life can be straight when that relationship is crooked.

There are some whose paths are more obviously crooked than others. When the police are trying to solve a crime they first look for those people who have "crooked ways." But here's the deal. Before God, we all have rap sheets — even the most upstanding citizen who has never even had a traffic ticket. The only way we get our rap sheets expunged is by Jesus

⁷ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 443). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁸ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁹ Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

who loves us and washed us from our sins with His blood. The only way we can have a transformation on the course and trajectory of our lives is by getting a new heart by way of the new birth — and then follow Jesus who will lead us in paths of righteousness ([Psalm 23:3](#)) for His glory and our joy. That's why the enemy of our souls will do anything and everything to keep us from even hearing about Jesus — who alone is straight; who alone is righteous! You can't say anything is crooked unless there's a straight edge somewhere. Our problem is that without Jesus we have no straight edge. We're bent and crooked because of sin. As a result we look at a world that is bent and crooked — and we see it as straight unless it's radically bent (murder, rape)! **It's only** when we stand along side of Jesus that see how bent we are! The enemy of our souls will do anything and everything to keep us from Jesus who alone is righteous — and who alone can wash us and straighten us — make us brand new!

[Jeremiah 31:9](#) With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,

HERE'S THE POINT — For those with us tonight who don't know Jesus Your being here is a miracle! Don't mess with grace! Give your heart to Jesus tonight! For those who feel discouraged with the way people respond when you share the Gospel, remember — you are not wrestling against flesh and blood

[2 Corinthians 4:4](#) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Remember what God did for you!

[2 Corinthians 4:6](#) ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁹ It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

God is informing the single man to choose his wife wisely! She may be very pretty. She may be very wealthy or very bright and have a great job; but you might end up in a big house in a big brawl. And it's better to live as a single man in a little corner on a roof top than in a big house with a woman that is contentious and brawling.

¹⁰ The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.

Again — evil desires don't originate from outside of a man or woman; they originate from the core of who they are. Those closest to him aren't exempt from those desires! He sees those closest to him in one of two ways: ¹ He sees them as a means to gratifying his lusts and uses them to that end; ² He sees them as an obstruction to gratifying his lusts and as a result expendable.

¹¹ When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.

We dealt with the first part of this proverb back in **Proverbs 19:25**.

We've dealt with the second part time and again. The character trait of the wise man/woman is that they are teachable.

¹² The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked; he throws the wicked down to ruin.

The Righteous One The translators of the ESV made sure to capitalize the words **Righteous** and **One** because it refers to God, not man. Only God fully knows the house of man. The term **house** is not a reference to a physical structure. In the Old Testament the term house is used as a reference to a dynasty, good or bad — “the house of David,” “the house of Ahab.” But in the New Testament Jesus uses a man's house as a metaphor for his life.

***Matthew 7:24-27** “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that*

*house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.
26And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them
will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27And the rain
fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that
house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

In keeping with this metaphor — *The Righteous One observes the house (the life)*. In the physical realm, we can only see the structure that’s above ground. A house might have some cracks in the walls and need some paint, but have a solid foundation. The house might look magnificent on the exterior and interior — have the most expensive fixtures and furnishings, but have a corrupt foundation. When it comes to a human life were’ told that God knows what a person’s life is built on!

The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked; he throws the wicked down to ruin.

throws is literally “overthrows or subverts”¹⁰ The life that is not built on the foundation of Jesus is going to be overthrown.

Religion is man’s attempt to have a life that won't be overthrown by trying to remodel what’s on a corrupt foundation.

Here’s the Good News! God can give a life a brand new foundation!

Hymn: The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand.

¹⁰ Buzzell, S. S. (1985). Proverbs. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard.

A helping hand begins with a caring heart. To not listen to the poor person, to not listen to the needs of the down and out is a symptom of a cruel and hard heart. We need to have the heart of God who is continually looking out for the cause of the poor. Social justice is a big thing to God!

¹⁴ A gift in secret averts anger, and a concealed bribe, strong wrath.

This can definitely be a reference to bribing judges and other great men.

Another way of expressing this is — *If someone is angry with you, you can give him a present when no one is looking, and his anger will finish.*¹¹

Have any of you married men ever left the house when things weren't very pleasant between you and your wife? Men — take God's advice every time.

¹¹ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 448). New York: United Bible Societies.