

PROVERBS 24

¹ Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them

This repeats the theme of Proverbs 23:17. It's a theme needing repetition because we are living between "the already" and "the not yet"! Every day on this side of heaven we are pressed upon by the broken value system of a broken world. Everyday we see people organizing themselves without God and against God prospering. We need to be reminded time and again that Jesus died to redeem us and rescue us out of all of that. Throughout the Bible we see the people of God being influenced by those who worshipped idols. How powerful is that influence?

***Numbers 11:4-6 NLT** Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt. And the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. ⁵"We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted. ⁶But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!"*

These were millions of men and women who saw God prove himself to be the One, True and Living God and judge the gods of Egypt as false. They saw God lead them out of Egypt, part the Red Sea so they could escape the pursuing Egyptian chariot army, then close the Red Sea upon the entire chariot army of Egypt. God was with them as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night leading them to the land of promise. God provided water from a rock and manna from heaven for the millions He had delivered. Yet they were envious of the lifestyle of men and women who were living without God and against God, and who were still worshipping idols they knew to be false. On the way to a land flowing with milk and honey they wanted to go back to Egypt.

Even after they were established in the land of promise they did the same thing — wanted to have the life of people groups living without God and against God. They did it time and again until finally the ten tribes of the Northern kingdom were led into captivity by the Assyrians never to

reappear in the pages of Scripture, and the Southern kingdom of Judah was led into captivity in Babylon for seventy years.

A little over 2,000 years ago the God who redeemed Israel from slavery and death in Egypt came in human flesh (Christmas) and died on the cross and rose from the grave to redeem us from our great enemies of sin and death. And those who have put their trust in Jesus still need the same warning!

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

Colossians 3:1-4 *¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Paul gave Timothy the same exhortation of Proverbs 24:1 —

2 Timothy 2:22 *So flee youthful passions and **pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.***

Paul gave his dear friends in Philippi the same exhortation he gave Timothy

Philippians 3:17-21 *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a*

Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Once again — this is not a matter of isolation. It is not an exhortation against being in the presence of unbelievers. It's a warning against wanting to be with them in their lives without God!

Hebrews 11:24-27 ²⁴*By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.*

Moses was no slave in Egypt. He was royalty. Yet he never longed for or looked back to Egypt with envy! He wanted to be with the God who redeemed him and with the people God had redeemed!

HERE'S THE BIG IDEA — We used to belong to the community of men and women living without God and against God. But by faith in Jesus we belong to a new community — the community of men and women who have been redeemed and rescued from our little *Kingdoms of One*. It's not an easy life. It's not a "here-and-now" life. It's the life of a pilgrim! It's a life that is nothing like it used to be — and at the same time it's a life that only processes the "here-and-now" as it relates to "the not yet" — as it relates to heaven! God knows that we need the company of redeemed men and women to remind us of who we are, who we serve, and where we're headed!

QUOTE: C.S. Lewis — "Dyson and Tolkien were the immediate human causes of my conversion. Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends..."

Hebrews 10:24-25 ²⁴*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit*

of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

³ By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established;

The **house built** can most certainly be taken in the literal sense — the design, engineering and construction wisdom needed in constructing literal houses. It can surely apply to the undertaking of any enterprise.

But throughout the Bible we find the word **house** as a reference to a family. Surely we need to be informed, defined and directed by God to know what a family is supposed to look like and how to build one.

At the close of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus used the building of a house as a metaphor for life! Everyone is building a life. The question is, how are you building it? What are you building it upon?

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.”

The psalmist put it like this (*Psalm 127:1*) — *Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.* Are you letting the Lord build your life according to His wisdom? Are you building your life upon the foundation of Jesus, who is wisdom?

³ By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; ⁴ By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches.

In keeping with the metaphor of building a life the idea is that every “room” of our life, every “area” of our life is to be furnished with wisdom. Every part of our personality, every relationship, made beautiful with the Word!

⁵ A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might,

By now we all know that the wise man or woman is the one who is informed, defined and directed by God, His Word and His wisdom! The man in verse 5 is wise because he knows he’s weak and that God is strong. **That** is the beginning of strength. **That** is what makes a man wise – and **that** is what leads him to the source of strength! It’s when we understand our weakness we turn to God for strength.

***Romans 7:18; 24 KJV** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.... ²⁴O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

***Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

***2 Corinthians 12:9-10** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

***Isaiah 40:29-31** He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹ but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength (**NLT** - will find new strength); they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

⁶ for by wise guidance you can wage your war,

The immediate context is the relationship between wisdom and strength for battle — wisdom and victory!

I love how the Bible explains itself — illustrates itself. I'm so glad that as a young Christian my pastor taught through the Old Testament. It is so rich, so full of living illustrations that prove truth. In the Old Testament the perfect illustration of this proverb is found in the very real history of Israel, specifically two battles they fought when they first entered the land of promise — and the contrasting wisdom employed in those battles, and the contrasting outcomes: the battles of Jericho (Joshua 5-6) and Ai (Joshua 7-8). In the battle of Jericho Joshua received his marching orders from the captain of the armies of the Lord; Jesus. From a human standpoint it was a very strange strategy. But remember, it was wisdom from Jesus. In humility Joshua received those — believed those instructions and obeyed those instructions. The outcome — they defeated the mighty walled city of Jericho. Following the incredible victory over the mighty city of Jericho the Israelites were defeated at Ai. Rather than seek the Lord for marching orders, Joshua chose to send men to scout out Ai. Ai was a much smaller place and the men returned and told Joshua that they need only send a few men up. Bad advice. They were humiliated and defeated by a much smaller army.

All of us have had our own versions of Ai. This mornings Bible Bus had a radically encouraging verse in the face of our defeats.

***Micah 7:8-9** Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. ⁹ I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light;*

The Bible makes it clear that the believer faces spiritual warfare on a daily basis. God has graciously given us wisdom for warfare.

He informs us about the nature of our warfare: It is spiritual in nature

***Eph. 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over*

this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

2 Cor 10:3-4 though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy stronghold.

He informs us as to the identity of our adversary

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

He goes to great lengths to inform us about the way to victory (by way of the real history of Israel and in the books of the New Testament). He informs us that Jesus always leads us into victory —

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession,

Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

⁶ **for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.**

This **abundance of counselors** is not a substitute for seeking God in prayer for wisdom, or looking to God's Word for wisdom. They are a part of the process.

In humility, you seek wisdom from God in prayer and in the prayerful reading of Scripture. You also humbly seek out the wisdom of God from those who know God, who have treasured up the Word of God and the wisdom of God in their hearts; men and women who have walked with God into victories and who have had to learn from their defeats.

QUOTE: Brooke Fraser —

Cheers to the furrows on our brow — To each hard won victory

Cheers to the losses that grew us up — Killed our pride and filled our cup

A toast to the lessons not yet learned — And to the trials that will teach them

Humility moves us towards counsel. Pride moves us away from it. It shuts us out from a multitude of counselors because we are afraid of hearing we're wrong!

This **abundance of counselors** does not mean going to **everybody** and seeing what the consensus is. Don't do that because you will end up so confused you won't know what end is up.

This multitude of counselors refers to those men and women God has placed around you — provided for you as a source of counsel by their lives, their relationship with God and their grasp of the Scriptures. In the local church that should be pastoral leadership and those who lead in various areas of ministry within the local church.

The same holds true for me as a pastor, for those in pastoral leadership. Whenever I am looking at a decision that effects my family or Metro I have a progression I work through. ¹ Go to Jesus! As we saw yesterday morning in Isaiah 9, His name shall be called *wonderful counselor*. I Look at the Word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to lead me into truth. Sometimes God puts a specific passage on my heart. Most often I find Him directing me, counseling me, confirming or correcting me, as I read through the Bible in a year. ² I will ask my wife — she loves Jesus, loves the Word, loves me and sees things in ways that I don't and can't see them! ³ I will go to a handful of men outside of this ministry whose lives and ministries have been influential in pointing me to Jesus. They are men I respect; men who have a history with God and integrity with man. They are men who are mature, men who love me enough to give me even a painfully honest response! ⁴ I come to the men God has blessed me with at Metro. We talk about. We consider it. We weigh it out. We pray about it.

***James 1:5-6 NLT** If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. ⁶But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person*

with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

⁷ Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth.

It's too high for him because he's so high-minded. The wisdom of God is HIGH!

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

To get wisdom you must be lowly — and that's the paradox of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is upside down compared to the kingdom of this world. You need to be lowly to get wisdom in God's kingdom.

in the gate he does not open his mouth — The person who is high minded will never get wisdom because he won't ask. Like men drivers not asking for directions.

⁸ Whoever plans to do evil will be called a schemer. ⁹ The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.

The **DEVISING** of folly is sin. We sin before we ever commit the sinful act. There is sin in the planning - even if it's not carried out!

Matthew 5:21-22 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;

Matthew 5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

DON'T MISS THIS — **Devising** sin is the precursor to the sinful action!

Micah 2:1-2 Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. ² They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.

DON'T MISS THIS — **Devising** sin is an act of moral agency. God holds us accountable for our moral choices

Micah 2:2 Therefore thus says the Lord: behold, against this family I am devising disaster,

Apart from Jesus that is our reality! But Jesus has saved us from the wrath we deserve for our failed moral decisions.

If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small.

This is a heavy one. Apart from grace and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit we all tend to have a higher estimation of our spiritual maturity than the one God has. Then the day of adversity comes and we faint. In our failure we discover the truth about ourselves and we're stunned. God isn't — but we are.

Whether it's looking in the mirror, or looking at your spouse or kids, looking at a brother or sister in the Lord or a co-worker in ministry — in love you have to look at yourself, or that person and say, *"You just found out what you're made of."*

DON'T MISS THIS — That is why our Lord allows the day of adversity to come.

QUOTE: Spurgeon — *God always begins to work in a way that looks like Undoing and not doing.*

QUOTE: Elizabeth Elliot — *God will not protect you from anything that will make you more like Jesus.*

It's so important that we not interpret those days of adversity as meaning that God doesn't love us, or that God is upset with us. God wants to prove us. He knows what's in our heart — but we don't know what's there.

Deuteronomy 8:2 And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

God wasn't testing them so **He** could discover what was in their hearts. He was testing them so **they** would know — **they** would see — what was in their hearts! Jon Courson used this illustration. He used to drive to church and put his coffee mug on the floorboard of his car. Because of the weather in Oregon the roads would have a lot of potholes. Many times he would hit a pothole and the coffee would spill out on the floor. He would get so mad at the pothole. One day it dawned on him that the pothole didn't put the coffee in the cup — the pothole served the purpose of getting the coffee out of the cup.

The day of adversity didn't put the messy stuff, the weak stuff in my heart. But it was designed by God, permitted by God to show me what was in there — or what wasn't there that needed to be there!