

Proverbs 21 guides us along the path of righteousness --

And helps us avoid the pitfalls set up by Satan, his minions of demons, or even our friends who are still being led by the old nature within.

Proverbs 21:1: *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.*

- **Solomon, while a mighty king of his day, admits his dependence on our Lord. We can remark on the many times that he strayed, but in the end his kingdom, like all of the great empires and empire builders throughout history, were but _____ of water that God was directing toward a final plan, that of "separating for Himself a people." Those who have chosen to love Him freely, and with whom He will love in return, and for all eternity. Psalm 22:28 tells us; "*For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations.*" [NASB]**

From the perspective of one who might be living under an unjust ruler, we may question "Where is God, and why has He allowed this evil to persist?" As Christians, we must first realize that Satan is the perpetrator of evil; although he is only capable of operating at a level where God has removed His protecting hand and that which is within God's overall plan. [Job 1:8-12] From God's perspective, our physical life is not the end all; His desire is for all of us to choose to follow Him and reject the way of the deceiver; it is an open invitation to follow our loving heavenly Father into a kingdom of righteousness.

Proverbs 21:2: *Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.*

- **As free-willed humans, we are the greatest "self-justifiers," as we rationalize our way through life, but our God looks on the _____. Jesus addressed this problem when He confronted the religious leaders of His day. "*How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you***

Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. ^{Matthew 23:27 [NLT]} **Jeremiah** wrote in 17:9: ***"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?"*** ^[NLT]

Proverbs 21:3: *to do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord rather than sacrifice.*

➤ The Pharisees mentioned in the previous passage were prime examples of people who could perform religious rituals down to the most minute detail, yet their sacrifices had no value. Religious ritual can suggest that you are trusting in Christ when in truth you are not. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the only propitiation (acceptable sacrifice) that God will accept. Rather than offering our own "cross," we should be thanking Him for the cross He bore on our behalf. Paul wrote: 1st Thessalonians 5:18: *No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* ^[NLT] Our God desires and expects of His children, the _____ of thanksgiving, not meaningless religious ritual; rather, that we live our lives in just and right behavior in imitation of His son, Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 21:4: *Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin.*

➤ _____ is a word that reflects an attitude of self-importance and pride, coupled with arrogance. The different translations all seek a single corresponding word to interpret the word **niyr**, {*neer*}; which literally means *plowing*, or tillage. Struggling to stay within the context of this proverb the NASB and NIV chose the word _____, KJV is literally plowing, while the NLT or writer's intent translation deems it "all evil actions." You may think a person who has learned to speak Christianize, or pray elaborate public prayers, following precisely all religious ritual is a holy person, but as we have already learned, God looks upon the heart.

- **God will not accept the sacrifice of the unredeemed. When a person goes about to establish his own righteousness, God says it is _____.** Paul speaks openly concerning his apprehension for his own people, those lost in self-righteousness. In Romans 10:1-4 he writes, Dear "*brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is that the Jewish people might be saved.* [2] *I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal.* [3] *For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Instead, they are clinging to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. They won't go along with God's way.* [4] *For Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law. All who believe in him are made right with God."*

Proverbs 21:5-7: *The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.* [6] *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.* [7] *The violence of the wicked will drag them away because they refuse to act with justice.*

- **My thoughts go our state lottery systems, and now I am told that the federal government wants a slice of that pie. My point being, people play that thing with hopes of gaining great wealth with little labor. The statistics about the winners is somewhat appalling. Within a very short period of time, most are bankrupt or in worse financial shape than they were prior to winning; many even finding themselves in _____.** On the other side of the coin are those who gain wealth by deception or _____. God's word declares that they are in pursuit of death.

Proverbs 21:8: *The way of a guilty man is crooked, but as for the pure, his conduct is upright.*

- **Perhaps this is why God is so insistent upon being baptized in the Spirit. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit that is charged with the renewing of the flesh-trained mind. If we are right with God, it will be echoed in our behavior. Romans**

12:2: Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. This process of renewing is life-long, and is a provision known as "Sanctification." Hebrews 12:14: Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. The word sanctification in the Greek is **hagiasmos, {*hag-ee-as-mos*}; meaning *purification or a purifier* and is also often translated as holy or holiness. We are to become Christ's ambassadors on this earth; therefore our _____ is a reflection of Him, so it must always be _____.**

Proverbs 21:9: *It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.*

➤ **Of course, that knife cuts both ways, for a woman living with a _____ man would be equally as awful. Some folks didn't marry the mate that God had selected for them for a variety of reasons.**

There is a fictitious story of a person who went to the local wizard to ask him if he can remove a curse, he has been living with for the last 40 years.

The Wizard says, "Maybe, but you will have to tell me the exact words that were used to put the curse on you.'

The afflicted says without hesitation, 'I now pronounce you man and wife.'"

Proverbs 21:10: *The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.*

➤ **The _____, which encompasses the mind, intellect and will; when embodied in the personhood of the _____, takes pleasure in ungodly schemes, even their close friends and loved ones receive no mercy from them.**

Proverbs 21:11: *When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.*

- **The _____ can be made wise by observing the punishment of the wicked, but the person guided by God's Holy Spirit receives course correction and _____ directly from Him.**

Proverbs 21:12: *The righteous one considers the house of the wicked, turning the wicked to ruin.*

- **This proverb can have a double meaning, depending on the translator's interpretation of the Hebrew word tsaddiyq, {tsad-deek'};. The Righteous One can be a reference to God as the Judge or to the righteous person, walking the path of godliness. In either case, the goings on behind the closed doors of the _____ is not a secret and will be judged accordingly.**

Compiler's note: I heard a very funny, albeit lengthy story the other day, and whether true or not, it illustrates the proverb well.

Clutching their Kohl's shopping bags, Ellen and Kay woefully gazed down at a dead cat in the mall parking lot. Obviously, a recent hit. No flies, no smell...

What business could that poor kitty have had here?' murmured Ellen...' Come on, Ellen, let's just go...'

But Ellen had already grabbed her shopping bag and was explaining, 'I'll just put my things in your bag, and then I'll use this tissue....' She dumped her purchases into Kay's bag and then used the tissue paper to cradle and lower the former feline into her own Kohl's bag and cover it. They continued the short trek to the car in silence, stashing their goods in the trunk. But it occurred to both of them that if they left Ellen's burial bag in the trunk, warmed by the Texas sunshine while they ate, Kay's Lumina would soon lose that new-car smell.

They decided to leave the bag on top of the trunk, and they headed over to K & W Cafeteria. They went through the serving line and sat down at a window table. They had a view of Kay's Chevy with the Kohl's bag still on the trunk.

BUT not for long! As they ate, they noticed a large woman in a red gingham shirt stroll by their car. She looked quickly this

way and that, and then took the Kohl's bag without breaking stride. She quickly walked out of their line of vision. Kay and Ellen shot each other a wide-eyed look of amazement. It all happened so fast that neither of them could think about how to respond.

'Can you imagine?' finally sputtered Ellen; 'The nerve of that woman!' Kay sympathized with Ellen, but inwardly a laugh was building as she thought about the grand surprise awaiting the female thief.

Just when she thought she'd have to giggle into her napkin, she noticed Ellen's eyes freeze in the direction of the serving line. Following her gaze, Kay recognized the large woman in the red gingham shirt with the Kohl's bag hanging from her arm. She was brazenly pushing her tray toward the cashier. Helplessly they watched the scene unfold: After leaving the register, the woman settled at a table across from theirs, put the bag on an empty chair and began to eat.

After a few bites of baked whitefish and green beans, she casually lifted the bag into her lap to survey her treasure. Looking from side to side, but not far enough to notice her rapt audience three tables over, she pulled out the tissue paper and peered into the bag.

Her eyes widened, and she began to make a sort of gasping noise. The noise grew. The bag slid from her lap as she sank to the floor, wheezing and clutching her upper chest. The beverage cart attendant quickly recognized a customer in trouble and sent the busboy to call 911, while she administered the Heimlich maneuver.

A crowd quickly gathered that did not include Ellen and Kay, who remained riveted to their chairs for seven whole minutes until the ambulance arrived. In a matter of minutes, the large woman with the red gingham shirt emerged, still gasping, and securely strapped on a gurney.

Two well-trained EMT volunteers steered her to the waiting ambulance, while a third scooped up her belongings. The last they saw of the distressed cat-burglar was as she disappeared behind the ambulance doors..... the Kohl's Bag perched on her stomach!!

God does take care of those who do bad things! And once in a while...He allows us to witness!

Proverbs 21:13: *He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered.*

- **Those who shut their ears to the cries of the _____ will be ignored in their own time of need, but doubtless care is to be used in the exercise of charity. Discernment is a gift of insight by God's Holy Spirit; we all know the stories of the chemically dependent, who though begging for food money, choose only to spend it on their addiction; yet, as ambassadors of Christ, we must never turn a deaf ear to those who are truly in need, especially when we have the ability to help.**

Proverbs 21:14: *A gift in secret subdues anger, and a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath.*

- **Perhaps Solomon had the story of the Patriarch Jacob in mind when he penned this. Do you recall the story of how Jacob defrauded Esau out of his birthright and then fled to Haran to avoid retribution? Genesis 25:29-34 Upon his return some many years later, Jacob sent ahead of his arrival, a large gift in hopes of quelling his brothers _____. Of course, it was unnecessary since God had already pacified Esau's attitude.**

As Christians, if we offend someone our first step toward reconciliation should be prayer, and the second is to seek their forgiveness; remembering that Christ came into the world to save souls, and he will reckon severely with those who become a stumbling block to the progress of others who are being called by His Holy Spirit. John 6:44: *For people can't come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me,*

. . . [NLT]

Proverbs 21:15: *The execution of justice is joy for the righteous but is terror to the workers of iniquity. ^[16] A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead.*

- **We saw this proverb back in chapter 10: 29, so let's just look at the spiritual aspect of it. Can you imagine the joy of**

the _____ at the Judgment throne, as they are accepted into the kingdom; or the _____ of the unrighteous of our Lord as they are rejected, joining those of the assembly of the dead. ***Matthew 25:32-34, 41: "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; [33] and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. [34] "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [41] "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; [NASB]***

Compiler's note: For those who hold to the theology of "once saved always saved," there will be a struggle to include this passage in their religious understanding. "A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead" is an obvious reference to an apostate; one who knew the ways of our Lord, and yet, for various reasons, have chosen to continually ignore them, returning to the wiles of our old nature instead.

Proverbs 21:17: *He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.*

➤ This, of course, has gone upside down in our current culture through the fascination, rewarded by excessive financial windfalls, especially in the sports, entertainment industry. People in the right place at the right time are suddenly catapulted into extreme wealth with little labor. Often, the distraction of sudden prosperity and preoccupation with _____ will cause them to forget their heavenly benefactor; the results of which may not become evident until that fateful day at the Judgment throne of God. The proverb speaks to a lazy person or one who spends all of their time "partying." There was a time when God would have provided for all of our physical needs, but because of Adam's rebellion,

the penalty of hard labor was handed down to all humankind. **Genesis 3:19: *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, . . .*** ^[NASB] Paul address the subject in **2nd Thessalonians 3:10 . . . *if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.*** ^[NASB]

Proverbs 21:18: *The wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the treacherous is in the place of the upright.*

➤ **Although Solomon would not have known, nor had any understanding of the process of Sanctification, his wisdom was God-given and his pen was inspired by God's Spirit, writing in his day for us in our day. The most obvious Old Testament application of this proverb would be future to Solomon's day. A time when God would use wicked Assyria as a tool to refocus Israel's attention, He would later send Jonah to offer righteousness, in the _____ of the upright, to Assyria. Jonah 4:11; (God Speaking to Jonah) Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city [Capital of the Assyrian Empire] in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"**

Compiler's note: You will need to look through your own life to find personal examples of where God may have used unsaved or wicked people to bring about a change in your own behavior, draw you closer to our Lord, or even to avoid a detour onto the broad way that leads to destruction.

Proverbs 21:19: *It is better to live in a desert land, Than with a contentious and vexing woman.*

➤ **We also covered a very similar passage back in 19:13 of Proverbs. This contentious and _____ behavior cuts both ways; an abusive, berating husband would make the wife desire to live alone also. What we must remember is that God has placed the husband as the priest of the home and charged us with the wellbeing of the family, both spiritually and physically. Paul writes in Colossians 3:19: *And you husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly.*** ^[NLT]

Proverbs 21:20-21: *There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up. ^[21] He who pursues righteousness and loyalty finds life, righteousness, and honor.*

➤ **The treasure in the home of the _____ is, of course, the path that leads to eternal life; a course set out by Jesus. Most often in Scripture, oil is a figurative picture of God's Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is placed in new believers (referred to by John the baptizer as a baptism by the Spirit). John 1:33: "And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' ^[NASB] And of course we see that baptism of a Christ like nature filling believers from Pentecost on. The _____, or the Spirit of God, is the one who ushers the new believer through the narrow gate and then continues to keep them along the narrow way as He renews our minds and helps us to know the will of God. ^[Romans 12:2]**

Compiler's note: did you notice that Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit, and in that immersion a change of character comes over us as His Spirit places a new Christ-like nature in each adopted child of God so that we may be restored to the pre-Lapsarian state of Adam's creation. The Spirit of God writes thru Paul's pen in Ephesians 3:19; "May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." ^(NLT2)

➤ **Jesus gave us a parable that will help us to understand the plight of the _____ person, here is part of it as He relates the "seed" to the Word of God; ^{Matthew 13:19-20} *The seed that fell on the hard path represents those who hear the Good News about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches the seed away from their hearts. ^[20] The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and***

receive it with joy. ^{Matthew 13:22;} **The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced.** ^[NLT]

Proverbs 21:22: *A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.*

- **The proverb is stating that brute force is never superior to godly wisdom. People may put their _____ in their own power, money, and position, but none will ensure eternal life in heaven. Jesus said: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.* ^{John 14:6 [NASB]}**

Proverbs 21:23: *He, who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.*

- **This proverb is straightforward and needs little comment. Someone wiser than I once said, "a word once spoken can never be retrieved; regrettably, there have been times in my life when I have said things that hurt others, as I am sure there have been in yours. Paul records for us the way of Christ in Ephes. 4:29; *Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.* ^[NLT] As part of our ongoing sanctification, let's practice together guarding our _____, may we all learn to look for the good in others and be encouragers.**

Compiler's note: A dear friend of mine, who refers to his wife as an encourager, often remarking, "she is Susie Sunshine;" then, using a hyperbole he has quipped; "That woman can find good in anyone; 'She' might even say 'well, Adolph Hitler was an innocent baby once, wasn't he?'"

Proverbs 21:24: *"Proud," "Haughty," "Scoffer," are his names, who act with insolent pride.*

- **In the previous passage, we covered one of the two subjects that are tops on God's hate list. The first is an out of**

control tongue, but the second is really the power behind the unruly member, pride. God, through Solomon's pen, has dealt over and over on the misuse of the tongue and unfettered _____. Psalm 101:5: *I will not tolerate people who slander their neighbors. I will not endure conceit and pride.* Psalm 138:6: *Though the Lord is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud.* [NLT]

Proverbs 21:25-26: *The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work [26] All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back.*

- **The lazy person is continually conniving a way to gain wealth without _____, while the righteous person's focus is not on gain; rather, it is on pleasing God, seeking to _____ rather than get.**

Proverbs 21:27: *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, how much more when he brings it with evil intent!*

- **The wicked person refers to the natural born person, who is rebellious toward godly ways, following their own path to destruction. We read about them back in Proverbs 16:25: *There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.* [NLT] This fellow may go to church, and even sing in the choir, but does so with a hidden agenda of personal gain for power or position. God says that their sacrifice is an _____.**

Proverbs 21:28-29: *A false witness will perish, but the man who listens to the truth will speak forever. [29] A wicked man shows a bold face, but as for the upright, he makes his way sure.*

Dr. McGee points us to the false witnesses who testified against Jesus for a clearer explanation of this proverb. Matthew 26:59-61: *Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death. [60] But even though they found many who agreed to give false witness, there was no testimony they could use. Finally, two men were found [61] who declared, "This man*

said, *'I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'*"
[NLT]

- **The priest selected the false testimony of only these two men, who were apparently able to tell a _____ lie convincingly. How would you like to be in the shoes of those two, when they stand before Jesus at the Great White Throne Judgment?**

Proverbs 21:30: *There is no wisdom and no understanding, and no counsel against the Lord.*

- **We do not have to defend the Bible; the Word of God is truth and our _____ is not so powerless that He can't defend His Word. Paul spells out our responsibility to the Word in 2nd Corinthians 13:8: *Our responsibility is never to oppose the truth but to stand for the truth at all times.* [NLT]**

Proverbs 21:31: *The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord.*

- **Jesus shares a common-sense truth in Luke 11:21: "*When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed.*" [NASB] If the strong man is Satan, our armor must be found in the _____, for the battle is spiritual.**

David understood this truth when he wrote in Psalm 27:2-3: *When evil people come to destroy me when my enemies and foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. [3] Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will know no fear. Even if they attack me, I remain confident.* The psalm goes on to say that His confidence was in the Lord. [NLT] This is a lesson Asa also learned as his words are chronicled in 2nd Chronicles 14:11: *Then Asa cried out to the Lord his God, "O Lord, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O Lord, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"* [NLT]

We are to prepare ourselves, armed with the Word of God to fight against the wiles of the enemy who seeks to destroy us. Paul writes to Timothy, and by proxy, God writes to us through Paul's pen in 2nd Timothy 4:2: *Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.* [NLT]