

## PROVERBS 24: Selected Verses

<sup>1</sup>Do not envy the wicked,  
nor desire to be with them,  
<sup>2</sup>for their minds devise violence,  
and their lips talk of mischief.  
<sup>19</sup>Do not fret because of evildoers.  
Do not envy the wicked,  
<sup>20</sup>for the evil have no future;  
the lamp of the wicked will go out.

<sup>3</sup>By wisdom a house is built,  
and by understanding it is established;  
<sup>4</sup>by knowledge the rooms are filled  
with all precious and pleasant riches.  
<sup>5</sup>Wise warriors are mightier than strong ones<sup>[a]</sup>  
and those who have knowledge than those who have strength,  
<sup>6</sup>for by wise guidance you can wage your war,  
and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

<sup>11</sup>if you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death,  
those who go staggering to the slaughter;  
<sup>12</sup>if you say, "Look, we did not know this"—  
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?  
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?  
And will he not repay all according to their deeds?

1,2,19,20 – Why would anyone envy the wicked? Is it that they have what they have despite their wickedness? Or is it that they get away with things that others don't? Do we sometimes feel that trying to be a good person is not worth it? Do we expect or hope for some material, tangible or relational benefit for being good? Or is goodness a value in and of itself that is its own reward? Sometimes we need some encouragement to do the right thing, don't we? Sometimes fear of getting into trouble with someone or avoiding feeling guilty are motivators for doing good as much as doing good because it's simply good.

In these proverbs, there's the promise that the wicked will get what's coming to them eventually as a world created and governed by God has a moral structure to it that deals justice in the end. But is this true? Sadly, unless your motivation for goodness is rooted most essentially in the value of goodness in and of itself, even when it costs you, expecting some tangible benefit for doing good or the punishment of the wicked because they do bad, may leave you disappointed. The world is not fair even though we would hope it to be. And sometimes, even though the wicked may repulse us, we can envy them secretly in our hearts.

We need encouragement, inspiration and the Holy Spirit to commit to good no matter what. What do you think?

3-6 – These proverbs all centre around wisdom and the importance of cultivating wisdom as a foundation for all one's relations and activities. Two areas are noted in particular: 1) the home and family relations, and 2) achieving some kind of victory in the face of conflict. Let's start with the first. 1) While it is true that wisdom (specifically: how to love well in all our relations) provides the best foundation for family relations, we know that in a world of vulnerable and imperfect humans, sometimes wisdom is not enough to hold a family together. But without wisdom, it definitely cannot hold together. 2) What kind of victory do we want to achieve through the cultivation of wisdom? Using the metaphor of military success, these proverbs point to the wisdom of knowledge over might, and consultation with others rather than going it alone presuming to have all it takes in oneself. We need to know and understand a situation with empathy and dialogue with others much more than using force to make something as we want it to be no matter the resistance and disagreement from others. What do you think?

11-12 – There are many needs in our world and many terrible things we hear about or witness on our screens everyday. What can we do about it? Often, very little. And yet, is there anything we can do? To pretend ignorance or simply helplessness may convince those around us, but God weighs the heart and knows the truth. Either we sharpen our conscience by heeding it and engaging in some way, or we keep dulling it until we have convinced ourselves that either it's none of our concern, or we are helpless to do anything. So then, where do we begin? Jesus talks of loving your neighbour. The original word (in Greek) is *plieseion sou* (the person next to you). Who is the person next to you who can use your support, listening, empathy and meaningful presence in some way? What resources are at your disposal that you could tap into without impoverishing yourself? These are questions for all of us. To care is something we can all do if our hearts are committed and cultivated in the art of love. What do you think?

PRAYER: Thank you for calling us, O God. Thank you for distressing us when trouble happens in the world around us. Our distress tells us we are your children and that loving, caring and grieving are what makes us most beautifully human too. Thank you for opening doors of opportunity for us to care in some tangible way, as simple or modest as it may be. Thank you for family and friends, especially when they help ground us in love and care. Thank you for those around us with whom we can share, learn and grow in understanding. And thank you for the motivation to do good regardless of whether such good will be acknowledged by others. Despite the unfairness in the world and how often wickedness is not met with justice of some kind, thank you for confirming in our spirits that goodness is a most precious gift to be embraced in and of itself. In Jesus' name we pray this way; Amen.

