

PROVERBS 28: Selected Verses

⁴Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
but those who keep the law struggle against them.

⁵ The evil do not understand justice,
but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.

⁹ When one will not listen to the law,
even one's prayers are an abomination.

⁶ Better to be poor and walk in integrity
than to be crooked in one's ways even though rich.

¹² When the righteous rejoice, there is great glory,
but when the wicked prevail, people go into hiding.

²⁸ When the wicked prevail, people go into hiding,
but when they perish, the righteous increase.

¹³ No one who conceals transgressions will prosper,
but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

¹⁴ Happy is the one who is never without fear,
but one who is hard-hearted will fall into calamity.

²⁶ Those who trust in their own wits are fools,
but those who walk in wisdom come through safely.

4,5,9 - In these verses there is a contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The measure of the difference is how much they respect and 'keep' the 'law.' So what is the law? The Hebrews knew well the importance of the law. It is religious and spiritual, given by God, and it is about all one's relations personal and social. The other key thing about the law is that it is not something you create for yourself. There is a larger law given, established, and grounded in the created order of things by God. For us as people of faith the supreme law is the law of love, and all other, more specific laws are given and established so as to promote the way of love in all relations. There is fairness, justice, treating others with respect, consideration and a seeking of their good as much as our own. There is also the need to offer repentance and reparations when we transgress the law and hurt someone whether there was intention in it or not. We protect the vulnerable and hold abusers and transgressors of the law responsible, but we do not take revenge on them. Treating everyone, friend or foe, with dignity and respect is also obedience to the higher law of love.

So then, the temptation for any of us with some privilege and power over others is to try to 'forsake the law' for our own interest in disregard of how such action affects others. Living

under a higher law binds us and shapes us so that we are serving love in all that it requires of us. Our faith is that only in such service may we find genuine abundance, freedom and peace. When have you had to struggle between what you were tempted to do and what God as Love demanded of you?

6 - This verse is simple, clear and compelling, especially when we consider our world today and those who rule in it, whether in government or business. What's of more value to us? Is it money or is it integrity? Even though we'd like to think that we don't have to make such a choice, we know all too well that there will inevitably come situations where we must make a choice. Upon that choice our characters, our consciences and our integrity are formed. God help us if we amass a pile of wealth but sacrifice our souls in so doing.

12,28 - Why do people go into hiding? Why do we hide ourselves from certain people or avoid certain situations? It's fear. But why are we afraid? Is it because we are pursuing justice at a time and in a context where injustice has the power? Or is it because we are aligned with injustice and don't want to be found out for guilt, shame or accountability? When in your life have you had to make a choice or taken a stand that has cost you? Are you willing to receive the displeasure of someone because you feel compelled to take a stand for what is right for yourself, someone else or a particular situation?

13 - Hiding our sins versus confessing them... The first step is admitting that what we are thinking and/or doing is sin. Then we need to pray for the courage to confess and to change. Finally, we need to make reparations with the person(s) affected as best we can. Sometimes they aren't ready to forgive us. Sometimes even when they do forgive us there remains an element of bitterness. And sometimes the choice is to go in different directions with our peace. May we be given the insight, courage and commitment to trust that the journey of confession will be life-giving however it plays out.

14 - Why may you not be afraid? Is it because you have a clear conscience? Is it because you are strong in faith and hope against most any uncertainty? Is it because love is rich and full in your life that you have few complicated feelings about people and situations? The one reason you should not be free from fear is because you are "hard-hearted" and don't care enough. Sometimes we have to harden ourselves to get through a situation or push against someone in resistance who would take advantage of us or use us. But becoming hard-hearted as a way of coping through life can lead to the calamity of never knowing genuine love which is how true abundance may be found. Are you open to intimacy and prepared to share yourself in your vulnerability? Are you discerning enough to know when to be more careful? Are you far too plagued by fear because of a bad experience or desperate because of your emptiness, loneliness or need which makes you vulnerable in a bad way?

Pray for guidance, pray for protection, pray for wisdom and pray for inner fullness that is free from desperation and open to trust.

26 – There is pride and there is foolishness. There is humility and there is wisdom. It's good to be self-reliant. But it is also good to consult with and learn from others. We need to build a network of trusted confidants and advisors. We need genuine, caring community. We can't just go it alone, with our own wits. Even as we learn and grow through life's experiences we need the constant wisdom of others to build up our own. Who are your trusted others? If they are truly to be trusted, they contribute to the growing of your confidence not the diminishing of it. What do you think?

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for a humility that leads to seek out others in order to grow our wisdom. Thank you for the confident assurance given us by our faith in you. Thank you for the fear that seeks your favour because we want to do right even when it's difficult. Grant us the courage we don't always have and grant us the faith that doing the right thing in obedience to you will always bless us no matter the cost in how others may respond. Thank you for the conviction of conscience that does not allow us to rest until we confess a sin, seek out forgiveness and seek out ways to atone, reconcile and make peace. Continue to grow your wisdom in us and the courage with faith to act on it. In Jesus' name; Amen.