

Proverbs 11 – Righteous Promises

Some people believe that hard-nosed, intimidating ruthlessness is the only path to success. They value wealth at all costs, even viewing that single-minded pursuit as the way of wisdom. At times, this attitude does seem to help people get ahead in life. But we should not be fooled. Their success begins and ends with the material.

Proverbs 11 teaches another way, where success comes here on earth and continues on throughout eternity. That way values righteousness more than riches and lives by God's standard and design.

We should understand that living by God's standard and design isn't easy or popular in today's culture. Life is filled with difficult decisions that tempt us to devalue the priority of righteous living and to exchange God's wisdom for worldly "wisdom." However, we must remember that whatever difficulty we face in life is only temporary. God delights in those who seek Him and promises to rescue and deliver those who turn to Him and walk in His righteousness. This is not only a promise for the life to come, but also for our days here on earth.

Pursuing righteousness, then, is not only something we do because we should; we pursue righteousness because it is good for our souls, both now and for eternity. Righteousness rescues us from sin and death (w. 4,6,8,9,21). It brings us joy and reward (w. 10,18). It clears our path (v. 5), causes us to flourish (v. 28), and repays us with life-giving fruit (w. 30,31). Righteousness turns out well and leads to eternal life (w. 19,23).

Checks and balances were intended to keep Israel's social order on an even keel and prepare their leaders for responsible and fruitful ministry. God provides us with the means of acting justly, the devil teaches us to turn God's instruments of righteousness, into the means of defrauding one another.

Deceiving One Another

11 The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him. ² When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. ³ The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity. ⁴ Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

Pride occurs when one has over-the-top self-esteem, and places one's happiness, esteem and honor over others. Pride springs from ignorance of God, of ourselves and others. The means used by the prideful to accomplish its goals will bring disappointment. In seeking glory, it finds disgrace.

Pride made Nebuchadnezzar a brute. Daniel 4. It destroyed Herod with worms. Pride turned Lucifer into Beelzebub. Pride causes man to rebel against God because by pride

he assumes God's crown and dignity. No wonder, then, that God looks upon all those that are proud, and disgrace them. *"But with the lowly is wisdom."* Humble men think of themselves as they ought to think. They desire that God be honored, even at the expense of their own honor. Christ humbled himself, and was highly exalted, and became the brightest example of what he so often declared, *"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."* Philippians 2:5-15

Sincerity is an important branch of the good man's character. The upright man earnestly desires to live perfect and complete in all the will of God. While others live by their interests and passions and in the ways of this world, the upright man desires to know the will of God and to comply with it at all times. He does not deviate from this desire even when it leads him in a direction that is in opposition to his own interests and relationships. The upright man understands that he does not direct his own steps. He humbly commits himself to Jesus.

The Righteous and the Wicked

⁵ The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness. ⁶ The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.

If the righteous man follows the path of God, he will not wander into destruction. His righteousness will correct his missteps. He will not enjoy the path of sin. When Christ's sheep wander into the paths of sin the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and his grace reclaims them. But the wicked wander from mountain to hill, till they fall into the pit of destruction.

"Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" 1 Peter 3:13 Righteousness causes us to walk without guilt or offense. Though we walk among men, we are delivered from harm. We wait upon the Lord and keep his way which leads us to life and peace. When we cry out to the Lord, God delivers us from our troubles and fears. Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and will not lose any of us.

Does Honesty Really Pay?

A little boy found two quarters on the school playground. He picked them up and took them home. His mother made the boy take the coins back to his teacher because she said, "They belong to someone else." That was an early lesson in honesty. It may sound silly but one day, if you lose your wallet, you will want the person who finds it to be silly enough to return it.

Proverbs 11 reminds us that the Lord delights in honesty (v.1) and blesses those who do what is right (v.6). So even though we may give up what seems like some easy money, we gain God's approval. That's worth far more than all the riches in the world. Honesty really does pay!

Our Hope is in the Lord

⁷ Hopes placed in mortals die with them; all the promise of their power comes to nothing. ⁸ The righteous person is rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead. ⁹ With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the righteous escape.

Men find their happiness in hope. The wicked man laughs at the righteous, because he lives by hope. But the wicked man himself does the same. The difference is that the hope of the righteous is aligned with eternity and the hope of the wicked man is bound by time. The expectation of the righteous is that all things are heavenly and lasting. The hope of the wicked is fixed on objects limited by this present life. The present situation of the wicked man never provides him with the pleasure that he hopes for and expects. It is forever within his view but never within his reach. He cannot obtain it.

The wicked often comes into the same trouble from which the righteous man is delivered. The Philistines came into David's place, when Saul was pursuing him in the wilderness of Maon. 1 Chronicles 14:8-12. Haman and his sons were hanged on the gallows designed for Mordecai (Esther 8:7); and the enemies of the Jews perished on that day which was expected to be fatal to the Jews (Esther 8:11). Herod thought he could destroy Peter, but God put Peter's keepers and Herod himself in his place. The Jews, in the days of the apostles, persecuted the Christians; but the unbelieving Jews were put into their place, when the Roman eagle was brought into their land and sanctuary. These things are done by God, as often as he sees it proper for his own glory, and for the advantage of his people.

The Influence of the Righteous

¹⁰ When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. ¹¹ Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed. ¹² Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue. ¹³ A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. ¹⁴ For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.

The righteous fear God, and live in the practice of justice and love towards men. These virtues produce esteem, even by those who have no experience with the power of

religion. They realize that things go well for the righteous and when it goes well with them, their neighbors rejoice. But when the wicked falls, there is shouting because the wicked was consumed with their own prosperity and power for the gratification of self. There was great joy in Judah when righteous princes were raised to the throne, or good ministers entrusted with the management of affairs. When bad kings perished, their memories were infamous, neither were they honored with burnings, or with a place in the sepulchers of the kings. Wicked men are of no use till they die; and their fall is not a misfortune to others, but a relief.

Righteousness uplifts a nation. The city is preserved from ruin, or at least its ruin is postponed, on their account. A cloud of wrath hung over Judah in the days of good Josiah, and the corruptions of the land were too ingrained to be thoroughly removed by him, yet the threatened wrath was suspended till he died. God then looked for someone to stand in the gap, to turn away his anger from the guilty land, but found no one, and so his anger was poured out upon the land. Ezekiel 22

We are not to despise our neighbor. He is our own flesh, our brother from our common father, Adam. Men were made in the image of God. We do not know whether our neighbor is among those chosen by God or not. So, we assume they are brethren. 1 Corinthians 4:5 *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.*

Much of our wisdom lies in choosing the right friends. A well-chosen friend assists us in our journey to be better. An unworthy friend brings disappointment, aggravation and remorse. So what sort of persons are we to avoid or to choose for our friends? We must not choose one that takes pleasure in telling everything he knows. He will betray your secrets. He will succumb to the irresistible temptation to expose you. Choose friends wisely who have an honest and faithful spirit. You can rest assured that they will not share what you would not want the world to know.

The online description of The Wisdom of Crowds reads, "In this fascinating book, New Yorker business columnist James Surowiecki explores a deceptively simple idea: Large groups of people are smarter than an elite few, no matter how brilliant—better at solving problems, fostering innovation, coming to wise decisions, even predicting the future."

While the Bible makes it clear that the wisdom of crowds may not be reliable and can be dangerous ([Matt. 7:13-14](#)), there is another way collective wisdom can be helpful. In [Proverbs 11:14](#), we read, *"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the*

multitude of counselors there is safety." One of the benefits of the body of Christ is that we can assist one another—in part by working together to seek God's wisdom.

What's In Your Best Interest

¹⁵ Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to shake hands in pledge is safe. ¹⁶ A kindhearted woman gains honor, but ruthless men gain only wealth. ¹⁷ Those, who are kind, benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves.

Friendship may, on some rare occasion, make it our duty to become surety for one that is not a stranger. Friendship must be guided by discretion so that our peace, the welfare of our family and our ability to pay our debts is not at risk. Becoming a surety for a stranger is not a wise decision. It will cause you to lose your money, have difficulties and worry about the outcomes. Do not sign away your peace and/or property.

Proverbs 11 speaks about enlarging one's soul as it relates to mercy. The Pulpit Commentary said, "*The merciful man is blessed in the very exercise of mercy*... The exercise of mercy begins in the pain of self-sacrifice, but it soon bears fruit in inward peace and gladness... [Showing mercy] is elevating and ennobling. Proverbs 11:17 refers to the "*merciful man*," - all who are loving and generous experience the benefits he enjoys. Doing good carries its own blessed reward. It's a wonderful way of stretching our souls. Those who are good to others are good to themselves.

Hazael, a few hours before he murdered his master, did not believe that he was cruel. But this verse teaches us, that to lack mercy, is a sign of cruelty. He is the man who refuses to give bread to the hungry, or water to the thirsty. 2 Kings 8

Stretching Our Souls

A man and his young son went to a repair shop to get a rake fixed. When the job was finished, the man asked what the charge would be. The shop owner replied, "Oh, there is no charge. I'm happy to do it for you!"

The man did not feel right about accepting charity, however, so he persisted in trying to give a payment. Again and again, the owner refused to accept any money. Finally, he said, "Can't you let a man do something now and then just to stretch his soul?"

That store owner's reply was a powerful sermon on the joy and happiness that can come from a little "stretching of the soul." His attitude is an example of the truth of [Proverbs 11:17](#), which says, "*The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.*" I challenge you to be loving and generous toward others. You

will find that doing good carries its own reward. It's a wonderful way of stretching your soul.

A Wicked Man's Deception

¹⁸ A wicked person earns deceptive wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. ¹⁹ Truly the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death.

Verse 18 begins, *“A wicked person earns deceptive wages,”* meaning that the results of sin, despite sinners' foolish expectations, are not good. It finishes, *“but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward,”* meaning that the results of virtue are good. The larger truth here is that we reap what we sow. The next proverb focuses on the same idea and highlights the contrasting results: *“Truly the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death”* (v19).

The servants of Satan would be rich and happy if Satan kept all of his promises. But he cannot give anything without divine permission. Those who trust in Satan's promises will be paid with fire and brimstone. The devil was a liar from the beginning, but men trust him more than the God that cannot lie. The devil places pleasure and profit before them. God sets an everlasting hell before them. The devil is leading them to everlasting misery.

Punishment of the Wicked

²⁰ The Lord detests those whose hearts are perverse, but he delights in those whose ways are blameless. ²¹ Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free.

The next two proverbs shift the emphasis to God's perspective (vv 20–21). The Lord “delights in” righteous people but “detests” the wicked. In the end, He will make sure that justice is done and that people reap what they sow. We are all on a road to somewhere—the question is what road, why did we choose it, and where does it lead. Uprightness is a noble quality and it gives the Lord delight. God boasted to the devil of Job's integrity. Christ takes notice of the Lord.

To learn humility, and with it wisdom and righteousness, we look first to the perfect model ([Phil. 2:5–11](#)). For Jesus to become a human being was a big step down! Then *“he humbled himself”* even further *“by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”* Yet in the end, just as in the proverbs above, His righteous actions led to a just reward.

²² Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion. ²³ The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath.

Solomon does not deny that beauty is good quality. He compares it to a jewel of gold. But he denies that beauty without discretion is lovely. The nature of a pig is not altered by the jewels in his snout. With all its decorations, a pig still loves to roll around in the mud. A beautiful woman may be admired, but when her vanity and foolhardiness are detected, admiration is turned into disgust.

A righteous man will not indulge the desires of the flesh and of the mind, but will try to limit his wishes to the eternal. When he indulges in the flesh, he desires things that are not good for him. God knows infinitely better than his people do what is good for them, and who will give them what is good though they don't ask for it, and who will not withhold anything they need. For this reason, the desire of the righteous shall always end in what is good for them, for what is in the will of God.

Greed Is Foolish (v24 – 28)

²⁴ One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.²⁵ A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.²⁶ People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell. ²⁷ Whoever seeks good finds favor, but evil comes to one who searches for it. ²⁸ Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

"He got greedy" is a modern proverb of sorts that we use when people go for a little bit more than they should and things go bad. This kind of greed is often easy to recognize in others, but it is hard to recognize in ourselves. We think greed is a rich man's problem. The Bible, however, says it is everyone's problem, including those who follow Jesus.

So often we are not content with what we have. We want just a little bit more. It starts when we are young with whatever we see on television. We just have to have it. The problem is that we never grow out of that. Expenses always increase to meet the income because we want more, more, and more. We think we have to have a bigger TV, a nicer home, and a newer car. We always crave just a little more.

The problem is complicated by the fact that greed is hard to define. After all, it is not wrong in and of itself to want money, a house, provision for your family, and other things. But at any moment these desires could become greed or covetousness. John Piper defines greed as "desiring something so much you lose your contentment in God". Therefore, greed is thinking that you need this or that to be happy. It's thinking, "For me to be happy I need God _". Once you fill in that blank, you travel the road of greed into the world of unbelief. God is no longer enough. Jesus no longer satisfies your soul. Proverbs is not against money. In fact, Proverbs often links God's financial blessings

with wise behavior. But desire for more becomes a very bad thing if you love, trust, or find your satisfaction in money or things rather than in God.

Greed Is Foolish Because It Hurts You

Greed hurts us in all kinds of ways. Greed might make you a workaholic who misses out on time with family, or it might make you a miserly kind of person who refuses to be kind to others. The Bible says that kind of lifestyle will injure you personally.

One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor: A generous person will be enriched, and the one who gives a drink of water will receive water. People will curse anyone who hoards grain, but a blessing will come to the one who sells it. These verses sound counterintuitive to us. We think that holding on to our money and stuff will mean that we have more of it, but the Bible says hoarding what you have does not mean more; it means less. While it may seem counterintuitive, we can observe this truth in nature. Generously sowing seed and generously watering the ground will lead to much fruit.

Greed Is Foolish Because It Hurts the People Around You

Your desire for more hurts those around you—the people you love. Greed might cause you to fail to meet people's needs or drive your family into the ground. Proverbs 15:27 says, *"Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household"*. Craving money and going after it by any means necessary always has repercussions on those closest to you. If you are a workaholic, cheat on your taxes, or misuse petty cash at work, inevitably it will have consequences on those you love. You hear story after story of people who had everything by worldly standards and were still miserable. Not only were they miserable, but so were their families. We see biblical examples of this with Achan in Joshua 7 or Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Greed brought down the wrath of God. We can see modern examples of this all around us.

Greed Is Foolish Because Money Doesn't Last

Proverbs 23:4-5 says, *"Don't wear yourself out to get rich; because you know better, stop!"* As soon as your eyes fly to it, it disappears, for it makes wings for itself and flies like an eagle to the city.

Proverbs tells us to be wise enough to exercise restraint in our pursuit for money. It does not say, "Don't work hard," but rather it teaches that there should be a rhythm of work and rest in your life. There comes a time when enough is enough. Do not neglect your family, lose your relationships, or let your happiness fluctuate in pursuit of something that is fleeting. Have the wisdom to recognize that there are things that are more valuable than money. Do not waste your life on things that do not last! Money has wings, and it flies away!

Greed Is Deadly Because It Is Unbelief

Proverbs 11:28 says, *"Anyone trusting in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage."* Greed is trusting in and finding happiness in money rather than in God. The

problem is not wealth but it reveals you have made money or stuff an idol. If your joy is determined by your money and possessions, you are falsely worshiping something other than God. If you are constantly anxious about provision, it reveals that you believe you need something other than God to be happy. When money and stuff are seen as the path to a happy life, you are in idolatry. Jesus says that you *cannot serve both God and money* (Matt 6:24), and Solomon says the exact same thing.

Here's the bottom line: greed is a belief and worship issue. You believe and worship your way into greed, and you must believe and worship your way out of it. Jesus, through his death, provides forgiveness and salvation to those who repent of greed and believe in him. He also grants his perfect record of contentment to those who believe in him. If you are in Christ, this is who you are: the perfectly content son or daughter of God. Now live like it!

Life Giving Fruit

²⁹ Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise. ³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives. ³¹ If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!

The eye of God is always upon us, and he observes how we behave in our different relationships. Inappropriate behavior will bring disappointment and disgrace. At times we are a curse instead of a blessing to our own family. A man bring adversity to his family when he is domineering, quarrelsome and burst into a temper every time things do not go his way. He brings the curses on himself and his house when he is wasteful, neglects the spiritual welfare of his family, and encourages them to do wrong by setting a bad example. The evils that he brings to his dependents are double for him. He has all the marks of a fool. Even if providence does not bring these punishments upon men today, we know that there is a judgment-day coming.

³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives. A righteous man is like the greatest tree of paradise, which was planted by the hand of God himself, and distinguished above all the trees in the paradise of God. His fruits tend to produce and nourish a greater life than any of the trees of the garden of Eden. Christ is indeed the life of souls and those who are not united with him continue in death. But Christ is pleased with the faithful and imparts blessings to them.

³¹ If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner! Solomon observes that the righteous man reaps according to his sowing and so does the ungodly sinner. We are to remember that the righteous has trials and are disciplined.

David suffered many afflictions, but he acknowledged that his sin and foolishness were the causes of them. David and his family suffered as a result.

But the cost of the errors of the righteous is confined to this life. They may suffer much severe correction, but there is no condemnation to them. Romans 8:1 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*... Jesus delivers them from the wrath to come, and in his blood, they have a complete forgiveness of sin so that their trials and tribulations are not because of divine wrath, but trials of their faith, or the discipline of his Heavenly Father.

Now, if the righteous are chastised, what do you think will happen to the unrighteous. Believers suffer for sins committed and are forgiven. But the wicked suffers the anger of God.