

Houses of the Wicked and the Righteous

Proverbs 14:11

Pastor Bill Farrow

“The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.” - Proverbs 14:11 (3:33; 10:25; 12:7).

As is true any number of times in the Book of Proverbs (and is actually seen in many of the other Books of the OT) the writer shows a real concern that his readers see and understand that in God’s eyes (remember that the writers of the Books of the Bible were acting as Prophets of God in the delivery of their written message). there was a functional difference between Solomon here calls wickedness and uprightness. For other writers, it can be seen to be called goodness verses evil and other like it.

Solomon especially calls his readers to consider the effect that wickedness and/or goodness (or, here, “uprightness”) has in the general sense the persons’ entire life and path of living. This is what he means when he makes reference to the “House” and the “tabernacle” of the two groups.

“House” is the Hebrew word, a common one, “bêt”, a singular noun and functions as what is called a “construct”, which means that it is tied, grammatically, to the object it has in view, here, the word “wicked”. It is not referring simply to wickedness done in a house, but rather to the one who gives the house its’ “color” as referred to. It can speak, either of the house itself, or of the household that occupies that “house”. It is even used to speak of a Palace or a Temple, or even, in couple places, of a prison.

On the other hand, the word for “tent” in the verse is the Hebrew word “ohel” which is rendered in a couple different ways depending on the version you are looking at is in much the same grammatical form and so is likewise tied to its’ object, the righteousness of those occupying it. Like the prior picture of a “house”, it is speaking of the nature of those within the tent. Now, notice that, with regard to the physicality of both the house and the tent, we are not talking about the aspects of the two that can be seen. Rather we are talking about the habits and characteristics of those who call it home.

In the prior verse, Solomon spoke to us and told us that, at its depth, suffering and rejoicing are personal and private. No one is able to communicate them fully (Cp. 1 Sam 1:10; 1 Kin. 8:38; Matt 2:18; 26:39–42, 75). Solomon’s point here says that, though each person lives their lives personally and privately, there are still bearing on them the results of righteousness and wickedness that he speaks of in a variety of other contexts in the Book.

First, he tells us that the “The house of the wicked shall be overthrown...”. As we’ve looked at in other studies, Solomon speaks of the wicked in two ways:

- It speaks of the nature of the unredeemed at different times, they are wicked.

- It speaks of the acts that men indulge themselves in from time to time, in the indulgence of their flesh.

Here, Solomon enlarges the idea a bit, and speaks of what is, really, a combination of the two ideas. He speaks a “house” or those who are together in some fashion, whose life or “path” is characterized by sin and wickedness. He is underscoring for us that there are consequences for the wicked things that characterize such a “path” or life.

In same fashion, Solomon wants us to understand there are consequences that accrue to the one whose path or life, his “tent” as it is described here. Just to mention, for the wicked, that consequence is for their “house” or their life, generally speaking, is “overthrown”. This word is a various serious word, speaking of being overthrown, destroyed or even exterminated. It carries the idea being made unusable.

However, the consequence rendered to the “upright” are much better. We’ve looked at this word before, as Solomon has spoken using it in other places in the Book. It speaks of the quality of being straight, smooth or in a right or correct fashion. The consequences of this path or style of life are that they will “flourish”. This is a word that was most often found appearing in passages all over the Bible having to do with farming and planting. It is the Hebrew word “yipriah” and speaks of a thing (often a planted thing) that flourishes. We also see it speaking of “breaking out” or becoming apparent when it was not before. Solomon says that the upright one, the one whose life or path has demonstrated the following of the path that God has laid out for His people will “flourish” as a result or demonstration of God’s blessing.

We should note, in both the case of the wicked and the upright that this consequence seems to be implied as falling or realized on the entire “house” or “tent”!! We ought also note that Solomon is not necessarily talking here about financial or fiscal consequences. It seems obvious that he is speaking of spiritual results, perhaps regarding ministry to those that are a part of the tent or house, or in other areas of service to God. Surely, it could be speaking of the entirety of life, which would include more physical and even fiscal blessing. But we want to be sure that we avoid thinking of financial or other such gains here. That, almost surely, is NOT Solomon’s intention. Both sin and godliness reap just consequence to the course an individual’s life pursues, and we ought to be sure that we make that a pillar of our perception of how our God intends for us see the pattern that we ought to pursue.

Just by way of rehearsing our interpretation. - There is a double contrast here drawn. The “wicked” man imagines himself to have built a sure “house;” it shall be overthrown. The “upright” man regards himself as a pilgrim dwelling in a tent; it shall endure when the other is not. We may regard the “house” and the “tabernacle” as signifying either the state of life or the family. In either view the instability of that which was deemed stable is set against the stability of that which was not counted upon as lasting.

As is always the case, there are a number of illustrations from the Bible that are applicable to us:

- The case of Saul and David might well be in Solomon's mind. What a contrast did the two afford in their histories! The son of Kish, by wrong-doing, forfeited a throne and a dynasty which he might well have deemed secure. The son of Jesse, because he pleased God, had his "house and kingdom established (typically) for ever" (2 Sam. 7:16).
- Ahab's house, multiplied beyond all human average, was at one stroke swept away, as he himself had been (1 Kings 21:20–22; 2 Kings 10:1–11).
- Job, on the contrary, upon whose "tabernacle was the secret of God" (Job 29:4), survived his "fiery trial," and saw his fourth generation.
- The Rechabites, who dwelt in tents, had the promise of a sure house (Jer. 35:19).
- The saints who have lived in faith, confessing themselves "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," have "a city which hath foundations, prepared for them by God" (Heb. 11:10, 16).

We should also think in the direction of an application for our thoughts and regarding the use of these ideas. No truth more clearly shines forth in the Bible than this, that the God-fearing shall be satisfied, the godless disappointed in the end. To the *end* I must look by faith, for it is not to be seen, except partially, in this life. To sense, indeed, how often it appears as though prosperity were the portion of the wicked, misfortune of the righteous! The light of the sanctuary reveals that this is for a little while only; as the drama unfolds their positions are seen to be reversed (Ps. 73). Even upon earth, however, there is much to recommend the choice of the godly man. In his feeblest and most down-trodden estate there are the elements of true stability. For what can take from him the sweet assurance of God's favor? On this assurance he builds "a house not made with hands." He has confidence in the character of those who shall come after him, knowing that though grace does not run in the blood, it does in the promise and in the current of faithful parental tuition. For himself, though he should die homeless, he believes there is prepared a *mansion* above. Whereas, the wicked, however strong his dwelling-place and built up his family, has the certain prospect of overthrow in the next world, if not in this.