

Driven Away or in Hope

Proverbs 14:32

Attribution

“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.” - Proverbs 14:32.

There have been a number of references up through the portion of the Book of Proverbs to the ultimate results or consequences that come to the wicked or the righteous. It is one of the great contrasts in Solomon’s mind as he lays out for us the series of matters that men (not males) face as they walk through life. His purpose, of course, is to get us to think through the need that we have to see to it that what he calls our path proceeds in a righteous and god-honoring fashion.

Likewise, it is important that godly people understand that those results/consequences are inevitable and come due to the “path” in which we walk. Along this thought Solomon wishes us to know the fact that it is **“By his wickedness is the wicked driven forth”**. The term “driven forth” is a term that is not frequently used in Proverbs, let alone in the OT. It means that they (the wicked) have a very undesirable end from life. That is, he is by the terrible results of his life, is by his death swept away from this earthly life (comp. Ps. 36:12; 62:3).

Many interpret this to be teaching that Solomon is referring to both the calamity that is a part of life as well as the anticipation of coming death is being referred to here. If this is so, we can hear Solomon speaking of the shelter (or lack of same) that is a built in part of the lives of the wicked and the godly.

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“Driven away” speaks, obviously, flight, compelled flight actually, from whatever it is that is the source of affliction. We can understand it to be material opposition, financial issues, or any one of a number of other things. Whatever it seems to be, the conclusion we have to draw is that Solomon is telling us that “the wicked” have no resource upon which to call to give them shelter or protection from whatever it is that is set against them. They are “driven away” or caused to flee in its’ face. He wants us to understand that it nothing lacking in a natural ability that is the cause. Rather, it is his “wickedness” that is the basic and fundamental cause of this being “driven away”.

We should note that the second part of the verse suggests that this part of the verse also extend even to the matter of death. **But the righteous hath hope (even) in his death.** Ho “is confident,” viz. in Jehovah; comp. Ps. 17:7, where the same absolute use of the participle “trusting” occurs (the “trustful” in general, believers). As in chap. 11:7, and if possible even more distinctly than in

that passage, we have expressed here a hope in the continuance of the individual life after death, and a just retribution in the future world.

Those who trust and obey the Lord have a sense of security in catastrophe. The contrast is with the wicked who are cast down (*yiddāheh*; NIV, “brought down”) in the time of calamity; the righteous even in death have a “refuge” (*hōseh*). So the idea is that the righteous hope in a just retribution. A problem often raised is that nowhere in the Book of Proverbs is hope for immortality found. Rather death is seen as a misfortune (see Notes). Nevertheless, this verse may be a shadowy forerunner of that truth.

Proverbs hints at life after death infrequently. Some scholars think this verse refers to God’s granting courage to face death with dignity and serenity. The prepositional phrase must be “in his time of trouble” (i.e., when catastrophe comes). Cf. CEV “In times of trouble the wicked are destroyed.” A wicked person has nothing to fall back on in such times.

We have to conclude that it is the contrast between wickedness and righteousness in life, as a characteristic of ones’ “path” (as Solomon puts it). It is that characteristic path of life that results in the end that is stated here.

To summarize our look at this passage- On the nicely balanced arms of this proverb two truths are sustained and held out to view.

- The death of the wicked is contrasted with that of the righteous. In the case of the former there can be *no hope*, since he dies, if not in the act of sin (as often happens), at least in a state of sin. And being thus unprepared, to him death is a most unwelcome visitor, to whose power he reluctantly yields.
- Whereas, the other, the good man, the true Christian, has that within him which overcomes the fear of death—a humble but sure “hope full of immortality.”

As is pretty much always the case with our discussions of the Proverbs of Solomon, there are several illustrations that can help us more clearly understand exactly what is that is intended here. Some transgressors have been as it were chased out of the world, like chaff before the wind of God’s judgments.

- Such were Dathan and Korah, Hophni and Phinehas, the profane youths of Bethel, Ananias and Sapphira.
- Others, like Saul and Judas, have been driven, by despair or by conscience, to put an end to their own miserable lives.
- Some have died confidently, having “*no bands (or pangs) in their death*” (Ps. 123:4), yet with no assured hope. They did not desire to go, but their souls were required of them, and they departed.
- How different from Job, who saw in the cloud, dark with the shadow of death, the rainbow of hope painted (Job 19:25–27)!
- How unlike David, who in his last words rests upon “the Rock of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:3)!
- What a contrast to Stephen, with angel’s eye seeing heaven open; and to St. Paul, ready, yea longing, “*to depart and to be with Christ*”!

By way of application we can see that Solomon tells us that to the test of death, all who are not found among the “quick” must be brought. And for those “that day” will be an equally decisive test. Would it not be wise to try myself betimes by the examples which have gone before? Am I living that godly life which would warrant my having a good hope were my summons to come today? Or should I be found, if overtaken by death *now*, in the hopeless condition of those who die in their sins? It would be well to meditate often on “death, judgment, and eternity.” Am I indeed prepared, or at least preparing, for each of these inevitable states? Let me try myself by the examples of the saints, and by the rule of life they followed. It is possible to be at ease in the midst of sin and danger, like a ship quietly frozen in by her own element, and unmoved in her solid bed. But what will be the fate of that vessel when the ice suddenly breaks up? And what the fate of an un-awakened soul when judgment is at hand? True, there are *degrees* of hope, and all good men have not the same measure. Sometimes, moreover (as at sea), the first approach to the shore is through rough waters. Then these subside, and as all was hope, so all is peace.