

PROVERBS

Chapter 24

Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them, 2 for their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble. 3 By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; 4 by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. 5 A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, 6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory. 7 Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth. 8 Whoever plans to do evil will be called a schemer. 9 The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind. 10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. 11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. 12 If you say, “Behold, 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 man according to his work? 13 My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. 14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off. 15 Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the dwelling of the righteous; do no violence to his home; 16 for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity. 17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, 18 lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him. 19 Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, 20 for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out. 21 My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, 22 for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?

24:1–2 Earlier, Solomon had warned against envying sinners (23:17–18), then he warned against drunkenness (23:19–21). Now he follows his teaching about drunkenness (23:29–35) with another warning against envying sinners. Whereas his earlier warning had emphasized the future that awaited those who feared the Lord, here Solomon shows the consequences of evil deeds. (TLSB)

24:1 *Do not envy.* See Ps 37:1. (CSB)

do not desire to be with them. At times we are tempted to envy the wicked, especially when they seem to do whatever they please and get ahead in this world. This is how the Psalmist Asaph felt: “I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:3) (PBC)

24:2 *plot violence.* See Job 15:35; Ps 38:12. (CSB)

Although Solomon doesn’t mention it here, he frequently does point out that in the end they do not get away with evil. Asaph, too, came to see this: “How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!” (Psalm 73:19) (PBC)

24:3–22 Strength and courage of wisdom. These verses explore how the wise are mightier than brute force (vv 5–6) and how wisdom equips one for action (vv 10–12). Fools are not taken seriously in the public arena (v 7). Although evil people can plot as shrewdly as the wise, their

schemes ultimately come to naught (vv 8–9, 15–16). Knowing this keeps the wise from brooding about the wicked (vv 1–2, 17–20). (TLSB)

24:3 *wisdom* – *hokmah* – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

house. Symbolic of the life of an individual or a family. (CSB)

The house serves as a metaphor for life. Rooms filled up by knowledge refer to the various activities and pursuits of life. (TLSB)

is built. Cf. the similar expression in 9:1. (CSB)

understanding – *to-boo-naw'* – *intelligence*; by implication an *argument*; by extension *caprice*:—discretion, reason, skillfulness, understanding, wisdom. (QV)

In this verse God gives us motivation and foundation for building a Christian home. With these rare and beautiful treasures he fills each room. (PBC)

24:4 *knowledge* – *dah'-ath knowledge*:—cunning, know(-ledge), awares (wittingly). *rare and beautiful treasures*. Wisdom promises to bestow wealth on those who love her (8:21). (QV)

24:5 *wise* – *khaw-kawm'* (that is, intelligent, skilful or artful):—cunning (man), subtil, ([un-]), wise ([hearted], man).(QV)

is full of strength. Brute force can be defeated by lesser force, if wisely employed. As any general can tell, it is not merely the size of the armies that determines the outcome of the battle, but how those armies are used. (TLSB)

To be righteous, of course, is to be wise in God's sight. That doesn't mean worldly power. But it does mean power with the Lord. "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). (PBC)

knowledge – *dah'-ath knowledge*:—cunning, know(-ledge), awares (wittingly). (QV)

24:6 *guidance...there is victory* – Ultimately, victory belongs with those who are wise in the Lord. (PBC)

24:7 *wisdom* – *khok-moth'* *wisdom*:—wisdom, every wise [woman]. (QV)

in the gate. The normal meeting place for official business. (CSB)

The protected city gate was where community leaders met and court was held in Bible times. The fool has nothing worthwhile to offer at such assemblies. (PBC)

24:8 *plans to do evil*. See Job 15:35; Ps 38:12. (CSB)

schemer. Called a "crafty man" in 12:2; 14:17. (CSB)

One who is as shrewd as a wise person (cf Lk 16:8) but uses knowledge for evil. (TLSB)

When one is constantly stirring up trouble, he will get a bad reputation. (PBC)

24:9 *devising of folly is sin.* Cf. 1:11–16; 9:13–18. (CSB)

Sin is the opposite of fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things. The fact that people devote much time, energy, and brainpower to planning defiant behavior against God does not hide the truth that such behavior is folly. (TLSB)

scoffer is an abomination to mankind. Because he is proud, insulting (9:7) and quarrelsome. (CSB)

Since scoffers are always stirring up trouble (cf 22:10), nobody really likes them. (TLSB)

The mocker is the person who would rather make fun of others than offer constructive criticism; he, too, will come to be detested. (PBC)

24:10 *faint.* Or, “fail to act.” This same word is used to describe the failure of the Israelites to take over the Promised Land (Jsh 18:3). Of course, even the bravest feel fear, but it does not prevent them from taking action. (TLSB)

adversity ... small. Wordplay; Hbr for these words is similar. (TLSB)

24:11 *those who are being taken away to death.* Perhaps innocent men condemned to die (cf. 17:15; Isa 58:6–7). (CSB)

Apostolic Constitutions: “Sums of money as are collected ... appoint [them] to be laid out in the redemption of the saints, the deliverance of slaves, and of captives, and of prisoners, and of those that have been abused, and of those that have been condemned by tyrants to single combat and death on account of the name of Christ” (ANF 7:435). (TLSB)

stumbling to the slaughter. Although this may refer to people under the threat of an unjust execution, it most likely refers to victims of street crime. (TLSB)

24:12 *who weighs the heart perceive it?* God knows even our thoughts and motives (see 16:2; 21:2; Ps 94:9–11). (CSB)

Some people pretend not to see muggings and other forms of violence, much as the priest and the Levite pretended not to see the man who was robbed in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:31–32). But claiming ignorance will not work with God, who knows whether or not we saw people in need and refused to help them. (TLSB)

The thought that God will hold us accountable can be frightening. But Solomon also encourages us. He speaks of the Lord as the one “who guards your life.” With God’s strength and Christ’s forgiveness, we have boldness – even on the last day. (PBC)

24:13 *eat honey.* Gathered from wild bees, which built their hives in the rocks (Dt 32:13). Chiefly used as a sweetener in baked goods. However, this is not dietary advice; it sets up the next proverb. Wisdom, like honey, is equally sweet. Hippolytus: “He uses ‘honey’ figuratively, meaning divine doctrine, which restores the spiritual knowledge of the soul” (ANF 5:172). (TLSB)

This verse is more than dietary advice; it leads into the following verse. Solomon is saying, “As honey is sweet to the taste, so wisdom is sweet to your soul. It’s tasty and, what’s more, it’s nourishing. (PBC)

24:14 *wisdom is such to your soul.* It nourishes and brings healing. (CSB)

hokmah – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

future... hope. See Ps 9:18; 37:37; Jer 29:11. (CSB)

Wisdom brings a hope that will never be cut off. When the Bible speaks of the hope believers have, it speaks of a positive, certain hope. It is the hope that is ours in Christ. (PBC)

24:15 *lie not in wait.* Cf. Ps 10:9–10. (CSB)

Any attempt to cheat or steal from another person is “lying in wait.” (PBC)

Solomon does not appeal to any sense of right and wrong held by the wicked but describes the futility of their plots. *as a wicked man.* Direct address (“O wicked man”) to anyone tempted to harm a righteous person. (TLSB)

24:16 *seven times.* Many times. (CSB)

Seven signifies a complete number, as if to say, “As many times as He needs to, God will rescue His people. (PBC)

rises again. God promises to uphold and rescue the righteous (cf. Ps 34:19; 37:24; Mic 7:8). (CSB)

Though the righteous fall daily, God always raises them up again. The righteous also look forward to an eternity of bliss. Meanwhile, the wicked stumble just once and are down for good, since God does not help them back up again. (TLSB)

24:17 *Do not rejoice when enemy falls.* Vengeance belongs to God and not us. We are to help our enemy when he is in need (25:21). Perhaps that enemy can become our friend and, more significantly, a friend of God. (PBC)

Warning to the godly, who might be tempted to rejoice when the wicked suffer. God does not desire the death of sinners but rather their repentance (Ezk 18:23). Passages of Scripture that celebrate the defeat of enemies (e.g., Ex 15) usually praise God for His deliverance rather than focusing on the destruction of the enemy. (TLSB)

Your personal enemy rather than a national foe. (TLSB)

24:18 *turn away his anger from him.* Edom was made desolate because she rejoiced over Israel’s destruction (see Eze 35:15). (CSB)

Toward the one who rejoiced at his enemy’s fall (v 17). (TLSB)

If you gloat over your enemy's troubles, God will turn His wrath away from the enemy and toward you. (PBC)

24:19 The first line of this text echoes David's words in Psalm 37:1. It's interesting that Solomon quotes his father on this item. Every generation of believers struggles with the temptation to envy the wicked. And so each new generation must address the issue. (PBC)

24:20 *no future*. For himself or his posterity (see Ps 37:2, 28, 38; contrast v. 14; 23:18). (CSB)

lamp ... will be put out. Symbol of joy and life (cf 13:9). When the lamp of the wicked is extinguished, they, unlike the righteous, have no future (cf 23:18). (TLSB)

This signifies calamity or his life come to an end. In contrast to this, in the last chapter of Proverbs we read of the noble wife whose "lamp does not go out at night" (31:18). (PBC)

24:21–22 Both the Lord and the king inflict punishment on those who disobey them. (TLSB)

24:21 *Fear the LORD and the king*. Submission to civil authority is also commanded in Ecc 8:2–5. 1Pe 2:17 says, "fear God, honor the king," and Ro 13:1–7 urges the same obedience. These passages all view the king as a terror to the wicked (cf. 20:8, 26). (CSB)

Kings and rulers are servants of God and are, therefore, to be honored as such (Rm 13:1–2, 5–6; 1Pt 2:17). Moreover, the kings of ancient Israel were to be governed by God's Law and to implement it (Dt 17:18–20). Just as Pr 1–9 begins and ends with an appeal to fear the Lord (1:7 and 9:10), so this section ends with the same appeal. The advice of these chs is to be understood from the viewpoint of faith in the Lord. (TLSB)

"The fear of the Lord" appears at key places in the Book of Proverbs: the end of the Prologue (1:7), the second last verse in the entire book (31:30), and here, at the end of another section. These two verses (21-22) bring to an end the Sayings of the Wise section, sometimes referred to as Thirty Sayings. The only difference is that here "my son" is enjoined to fear not only the Lord, but right along with Him the king. In the NT, Peter refers to the first line of this passage when he writes, "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17). (PBC)

24:22 *disaster will arise suddenly*. God's judgment is more common (see 6:15; 11:3, 5), but the power of the king is seen in 20:26. (CSB)

22:17–24:22 Solomon knows that true piety is more than simply avoiding evil but is based on trust in God. Thus, he urges us not to envy sinners but to fear the Lord, for the Lord has graciously promised us a glorious future (23:17–18; 24:1–4, 13–14). • Lord, as we learn in secular institutions and from pagan neighbors, may we be moved to grow in godliness, while ever remembering that true righteousness is ours through Christ alone. Amen. (TLSB)

More Sayings of the Wise

23 These also are sayings of the wise. Partiality in judging is not good. **24** Whoever says to the wicked, "You are in the right," will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations, **25** but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them. **26** Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips. **27** Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house. **28** Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips. **29** Do not

say, “I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.”
30 I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, 31 and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. 32 Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, 34 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

24:23–34 An appendix to 22:17–24:22, giving a few additional sayings of the wise. (CSB)

Seems to be a second compilation of proverbs of other wise men collected by Solomon and are distinct from the first compilation (22:17–24:22). These two compilations serve as appendixes to Solomon’s preface (chs 1–9) and the collections of his own proverbs (10:1–22:16). (TLSB)

24:23 *wise – khaw-kawm'* (that is, intelligent, skilful or artful):—cunning (man), subtil, ([un-]), wise ([hearted], man). (QV)

Plural, as in 22:17. Sayings in vv 23–34 are Solomon’s collection of proverbs from unnamed wise men. (TLSB)

partiality in judging is not good. Favoritism is evil because God judges justly (2Ch 19:7), and judges are God’s representatives in the courts. (TLSB)

This literally means to recognize faces. We humans tend to be influenced by a person’s earthly position. But “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). (PBC)

24:24 *will be cursed by peoples.* Just as they “curse the man who hoards grain” (11:26). (CSB)

Among no people is conscience so blunted, that he who absolves the crime and ennoble the miscarriage of justice shall escape the vox populi [voice of the people]. (PBC)

God abhors injustice, esp when people call wickedness good. Even when God justifies us sinners, He does not ignore the evil we have done. Only because Christ paid the penalty for our sins can we be declared righteous. (TLSB)

24:25 *good blessing.* Blessings await those who stand for law and order. When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, God held out this promise: “Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you” (Deuteronomy 16:20). (PBC)

24:26 *kisses the lips.* Cf. the “pleasant words” that are “sweet to the soul” in 16:24. (CSB)

Symbolize friendship and love. An honest answer, even if it contains a rebuke, is a sign of true friendship and love. (TLSB)

Like a kiss, honesty represents concern, love, respect, and friendship for another person. (PBC)

24:27 *ready for yourself in the field.* Plan carefully and acquire the means as you build your house. (CSB)

Get the crops in first. Then build a house and settle permanently. This proverb has a particularly useful application to marriage. One ought to be financially and spiritually stable before getting married. (TLSB)

house. Building the house is a metaphor for marriage and family life (verse 3). In Ruth 4:11, Rachel and Leah the wives of Jacob (Israel), are described as the women who “together built up the house of Israel.” From that family the nation of Israel came. (PBC)

24:28 *witness ... without cause.* Warning against perjury. In biblical times, the outcome of a trial could easily be determined by one false witness supporting the lies of another. Even if someone had been maligned by a neighbor, that person should not commit perjury. (Cf v 29. (TLSB)

The first line refers to slander or libel against our neighbor, that is, our fellowman. The OT takes testifying against another very seriously. We quote from Deuteronomy 19:15-21, where the subject is dealt with at length. (Notice the call for two witnesses, and recall how much difficulty Jesus’ enemies had in meeting this criterion, Matthew 26:59-61.) (PBC)

do not deceive with your lips. Given the poetic parallelism of Proverbs, the second line speaks not of gossip in general but of false witness against the neighbor. (PBC)

24:29 *I’ll pay that man back.* A spirit of revenge is discouraged also in 20:22; cf. 25:21–22; Mt 5:43–45; Ro 12:17. (CSB)

Opposite of the Golden Rule (Mt 7:12). Settling scores with enemies is pagan morality (Mt 5:44–47). (TLSB)

24:30 *sluggard.* The sluggard is synonymous with the man who lacks understanding. (PBC)

24:31 *thorns ... nettles.* Cf. Isa 34:13. (CSB)

thorns. Exact plant is unknown. *nettles.* Unlike thorn-bearing plants, nettles grow primarily in areas that were formerly cultivated but now neglected, as is this vineyard. (TLSB)

24:33 *folding of the hands* – This is the position of what we might call a “couch potato.” The point is not that a little slumber and rest are wrong. Everyone needs rest and relaxation. But the sluggard doesn’t stop with a little. For him it starts with and becomes a way of life. (PBC)

24:23–34 These verses comprise two sets of three topics: conduct in court (23–25, 28), speaking (26, 29), and work (27, 30–34). We are told to be just in judging and honest in our testimony. We are to speak the truth to our neighbor in all circumstances. We are to work hard on the most important priorities and not shirk work like the sluggard. In short, these verses admonish us to engage in the sort of decent conduct that enables societies to flourish. While all societies recognize the value of these behaviors, we Christians seek to live in such ways because the Gospel frees us to serve our neighbors in a God-pleasing way. • Heavenly Father, grant us justice, honesty, and industrious service. Through Christ’s death and resurrection change our hearts and our society. Amen. (TLSB)