

## BIBLE GATEWAY Proverbs 28 :: NASB.

Verse 2 states, *“Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes; but by a man of understanding and knowledge right will be prolonged.”* At first, the meaning of this passage is hard to understand. But when the histories of kingdoms of Judah and Israel are considered, the meaning become plainer. None of the rulers of the northern kingdom were righteous. In fact, the moral and spiritual path drifted further and further from God. As a result, very few of the kings reigned for more than a few years or even months!

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While the southern kingdom of Judah was hardly righteous, it did have some good Kings. Kings such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah loved and served the Lord God, and the kingdom of Judah enjoyed periods of stability and peace.

A look at history will show the same thing to be true. Evil rulers eventually fall. Often, they fall due to a rival that takes over. Then that rival must guard against others that want to do the same thing. A land, and the people, will not see stability and peace during such times.

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However, a Christian can take comfort from the fact that this world is not a Christian's home. In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter addressed his readers as pilgrims. In 1 Peter 2:11, he wrote, *"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."* Will bad things happen in this fallen world? Yes! But a Christian life is based on the hope, the anticipation, for a life that is beyond description with the Father. Paul wrote in Romans 8:18, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

Verse 5 states, *"Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand all."* People, that have given themselves completely over to evil, truly do not understand the value of mercy or justice. Justice and mercy are only valuable if they will get something out of it. Victims may be helped, but only so far as it will further their own goals.

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In reading the Gospels, it seems incredible that the Pharisees, Scribes, and Jewish leadership refused to even consider that Jesus was the Christ. Many of them personally witnessed the miracles He performed. They recognized that the miracles were genuine and not staged, but they not only refused to believe, but plotted how to have Him killed!

The Apostle Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, persecuted the Church, but his motives were not evil. He believed that what they were teaching was blasphemy, and he was determined to stamp it out. However, once he came in the presence of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he realized his great error, repented, was baptized, and turned his efforts into serving the Lord.

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But there are people that will refuse to listen to reason or respond to a call for mercy or justice. They only know violence, intimidation, and the immediate satisfaction of their lusts. Christians must understand that such people exist and they serve the Devil.

The second half of the passage reads, *“but those who seek the Lord understand all.”* A person who loves God, strives to do His Will, and prays will grow in spiritual understanding and maturity. Today, a mature Christian will know what is morally right in every circumstance and will correctly judge what is the right action to take and takes that action.

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Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,*

*for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" What comfort can be gained from these words! There is no anxiety over what direction should be taken, there is no confusion over what is right or wrong, and there is no wondering what to do in life. IF a person will trust the Lord God AND make the commitment to grow as a Christian, then the answers will be clear.

Verse 6 states, "*Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.*" Too many people have the idea that if they just had more money, a better job, or more financial security, they would be happy. It is true that these might allow a person to do more on a day to day level, but riches do not automatically lead to happiness and they most definitely do not lead to righteousness and spiritual maturity.

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In fact, the opposite is true. In Matthew 13, Jesus told the parable of the Sower to the crowd. Afterwards, the disciples asked Him to explain the parable to them. In one case, the seed had fallen in among thorns, and Jesus said in verse 22, "*Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.*" Paul warned in 1 Timothy 6:6-10, "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into*

*this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*

This life will end for everyone, and the amount of money or power a person acquires in this life will be meaningless. It is better to build up treasure in Heaven rather than in the world.

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Verse 13 states, "*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*" Personal sin is a weight that will grow and fester until it destroys its victim. Many people try to cover up sins or delude themselves into thinking that their sinful actions are not "that" bad. Afterall, "Everyone does it!"

There is one, and only one, solution for sin because the consequence of sin is death. The answer, of course, is Jesus Christ. The instructions for dealing with sin are very clear. A person must realize that he/she is lost because of sin. That realization will only come by

hearing, understanding, accepting AND obeying the message of Good News. That means a person MUST acknowledge personal sin AND determine to forsake that life of sin. It means a full commitment to submit and obey the Kingship of Jesus Christ. And it means that person must die to sin through immersion in water. Without obedience to the Gospel, there is no eternal hope.

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Now, a person may gain a reputation, power, status, and money in this life; but sin will ultimately bring that down. How many famous people were looking forward to the final days being filled with admiration from others, but then sinful actions suddenly come to light and that person's "golden years" of triumph are destroyed?

Verse 15 states, "*Like a roaring lion and a charging bear is a wicked ruler over poor people.*" Wickedness looks to the weak as victims. A wicked man will abuse such people to build up his own worth. "Besides, if they were worth anything, they would be better off!" But that is the attitude of the evil and the world.

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But when a wicked man, or woman, comes into power over a nation, the physical conditions become worse. There is no consideration for the people, no compassion for the poor, and no planning for the future of that nation. Wickedness is self-centered, self-absorbed, and selfish.

However, how a Christian conducts himself in such conditions should be very different. Paul wrote, in Titus 3:1-2, *"Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men."* Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2: *"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."*

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The Church was established during the time of a very brutally efficient government - the Roman Empire. Yet, the message of Jesus Christ spread rapidly. Even during intense persecution, Christianity spread. Rulers bring order instead of anarchy. But rulers will also stand before the Living God and their actions will be judged. This life is temporary, and Christians must look to what is ahead - the hope that

is offered through Jesus Christ.

Verse 20 states, *"A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished."* There is an old popular story told about a miser named Ebenezer Scrooge. He was a man that was obsessed with becoming wealthy. In his blind quest for riches, he wound up losing everything until he was given the chance to change.

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This same story can be told about too many people. Possibly, they came from poor conditions and grew up with the determination to never go through that again. It may be that they simply made professional and financial success the goal of their life.

Whatever may be the motivation, life goals MUST begin with the awareness of God and His authority. James wrote of such a man in James 4:13-16, *"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."*

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Here was a man busy with the business of life. It would appear that he was fairly successful in his efforts. He sounded confident that he would make a profit. But God never really entered into his planning or considerations. Instead of confidence, he was guilty of arrogance, and James' conclusion was very blunt. *"All such boasting is evil."*

Verse 24 states, *"Whoever robs his father or his mother, and says, 'It is no transgression', the same is companion to a destroyer."* One of the basic commands in the 10 Commandments was to honor Father and Mother. In Mark 11:9-13, Jesus condemned the Pharisees when *"He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'— (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.'*"

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When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He looked down on His Mother, Mary, and entrusted her care into the hands of John. John 19:25-27, *"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."*

For Christians, God's Word is very clear. Parents are to be honored. It does not matter if they deserve honor, if they have been good or bad parents. Parents are to be given respect. Now, a parent may demand that a grown child reject Jesus Christ. While that insistence must be ignored, that does not change the fact that a child is to show respect to his/her parents.

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