

“CHOOSING YOUR COMPANIONS”

A Study in Proverbs: Part 2

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INTRODUCTION

Last week we saw that the believer must not be the companion of violent and greedy persons who desire to prosper at the expense of others (1:10-19). But Proverbs has much more to say about the wrong kind of companions that we ought to avoid

There is a fine balance between separating from those that would be a bad influence on us and who would hurt us spiritually and hurt our testimony, and becoming Pharisaical in our avoidance of everyone whom we think is not as good as us or unworthy of us. We must be salt and light, and we must show an interest in and care for others who are not where they need to be spiritually—and we **must try to help them!**

Isolating ourselves from everyone who is not spiritually strong is not following the pattern given us by our Lord Himself—who ate with tax-collectors and sinners, who allowed the sinful woman to anoint his feet and wash them with her tears, who stopped to speak with the Samaritan woman, who reached out to failing and stumbling disciples to get them back on their feet.

But, there is a difference between having **Redemptive Friendships** and having Companions in an **Unequal Yoke** that is forbidden in Scripture (II Cor. 6:14ff).

In this study from Proverbs we look at some of the areas of forbidden companionship that the Lord warns us about.

- I. EVIL PEOPLE (24:1) (*Those who cleave to evil and to whom evil clings*)
 - A. We must not be Envious of evil men—allured by their “full cup” (*Ps. 73:12-13*)
 - B. Do not Desire to be with them—partners with such men make themselves partners in greater sins (24:2)

- II. LOOSE WOMEN (2:16; 5:8)
 - A. Wisdom will keep you from such persons with low moral standards(2:16)
 - B. Keep away from her, and don’t go near the door of her house (5:8)—**or internet site!**
The text does not merely say not to enter—don’t go near. *Contagion level is high.*
Lead us not into temptation. That is presumption—we throw out God’s protection.
Don’t linger—GET AWAY! **II Tim 2:22—Flee youthful lusts; Mt. 5:28-29—even the Look.**
Realize the seriousness
We might have to change some details of our lives:
 - Change your friends Change your reading selections
 - Change your job Change your internet habits and Media habits—get filters and accountability partners.

III. FOOLS

A. (13:20b)—“A companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

“Fool he ends that fool befriends.” Note how the second line goes beyond the expected antithesis of line 1—Companion of wise men becomes wise—of fools **is destroyed**.

The Hebrew allows two choices of ideas: 1) Shall suffer harm—evil results; 2) Shall himself become evil—I prefer this concept due to an intentional word play in Hebrew.

Joash was wise while Jehoida was his wise guardian (II Chr. 24:2). When Jehoida died Joash became the companion of fools (24:17) and became evil (even killing Jehoida’s son) and perished (24:18, 25).

When have the godly companied with fools without injury to their profession and hazard to their souls? See II Chr. 18:3 and 19:2—Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Bridges gives an apt comment:

If we can live in a worldly element without feeling out of our own element, if we can breathe a tainted atmosphere, without sensibility of infections; if we can familiarize ourselves with the absence of religion in the ordinary intercourse of life, is there no ground of alarm, lest un-subdued worldliness should be regaining dominion?”

See Eph. 5:11—“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.” Connection we cannot avoid—I Cor. 5:10—else would need to go out of the world!

But our delight and voluntary association must be with the saints of God! (Ps. 16:3)

B. 14:7—“Go from the presence of a foolish man.”

Go away to a safe distance and look back to reflect upon one’s former condition.

The second line shows that you won’t find a word of genuine knowledge in him.

You don’t profit from a fool; don’t waste your words. Don’t cast your pearls before swine!

Don’t loiter with him; leave as quickly as possible—like you are standing in the rain.

It is much easier to keep out of the stream than to stem the torrent once in it!

C. 9:6—“Forsake the foolish [simple ones] and live.” *These are people who lack character.*

Instead, go straight forward and get both life and understanding (9b).

James 4:4—can’t love both Christ and the world. **Make a choice.**

IV. REBELS (24:21) “Meddle not with them that are given to change.” [Don’t associate with them.]

As line one shows—these are people who neither **fear God** nor **the king**—political rulers

These people hate authority, are self-willed, speak evil of dignitaries (II Pet. 2:10)

They love change for the sake of change; want to be leaders of a faction or splinter movement in the government or church. They want change for the sake of change.

Cf. **Korah’s rebellion** (Num. 16:1-13); **Absalom’s rebellion** (II S. 15:10-13); **Israel’s kings** (I K. 16)

Don’t associate with them—their ruin will fall upon them; “both” the Lord and the king will ruin them (24:22).

V. DRINKERS AND GLUTTONS (23:20-21)

A. The Command

“Be not among winebibbers (heavy drinkers of wine), among riotous (gluttonous) eaters of flesh (meat).”

Compare the “stubborn and rebellious” son of Dt. 21:20—he is so described.

Note that gluttony is paired with drunkenness.

The word for gluttony has the idea of squandering the value of the flesh for itself.

The passage does not merely say not to be a glutton, but **not to be among them**.

Compare Lot living in Sodom. He learned their ways. Bridges comments on young people:

“Tinder is not apter to take fire, wax the impression of the seal, paper the ink, than youth to receive the impression of wickedness.”

B. The Consequences

1. Poverty—resulting from lethargy, and likely also the expense of the excess.

2. Rags (From the verb “tear”)—“Drowsiness” leads to rags—it comes from being sated with drink and food; one’s senses are not sharp!

- Noah shows us that even believers are not immune (Gen. 9:20-21; I Cor. 11:21)
- Christ’s enemies wrongly called Him a glutton and drunkard (Mt. 11:19). But He is the One who delivers us from such.
- See Rom. 13:13-14—Not wild parties and drinking and immorality, but “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts of it.”

VI. THIEVES (29:24)

A. The Partner of a thief “hates his own soul” (life).

There is really no difference between the thief and his partner—he is just as much involved in the **guilt** and **punishment** (See 1:10-15).

- He may be less experienced in sin.
- He may be just beginning his course of stealing.
- Yet his first step is the way of death (1:18-19)
- He really hates himself if he lives this way. The same is true of *adulterers* (6:32), *rejecters of wisdom* (8:36), and those who *neglect discipline* (15:32).

B. Thievery leads to further sin: When he hears “cursing”—that is an oath in court to tell the truth in a case—“he bewrayeth it not” (he refuses to tell the facts—the truth).

- Otherwise, he lies in order to cover up his sin.
- Lev. 5:1 shows that one who does such receives **God’s curse**.
- **Sin always requires more sin!**

VII. SELFISH PEOPLE (23:6-8)

- Don't seek reluctant favors, you will only merit secret dislike!
 - It is not very "relishing"—in fact it is very **sickening**—to have one's grudging host doing mental arithmetic with each dish.
- A. "An Evil eye"—i.e. a selfish person or even a deceitful man
- Cf. 22:9 where "a good eye" is a generous person.
 - Mt. 20:15 where an evil eye dislikes generosity
 - See II Sam. 11:13 where David feeds Uriah only to trick him.
 - II Sam. 13:28 where Absalom feeds Amnon only to kill him.
- B. Don't eat his bread, or desire what he has to offer—his delicacies, good foods.
- C. What he thinks (calculates) in his soul (*nephesh*) that is what he really is. That is, he is estimating for himself the value of every bite in your mouth. This is what is important to him. **What he says: "Eat and drink", is different from what he thinks in his heart.** For his heart is not with you.
- D. We will vomit in disgust what we have received from him (each morsel).
- E. All of your compliments ("sweet words") you will lose (waste). Supposedly he was your host and was generous—it is all a charade.
- God's gospel invitation is different (Is. 55:1).**

VIII. SHORT-TEMPERED PEOPLE (22:24-25)

Sin can be "contagious—even though at first it may seem repulsive to us in some of its forms—such as passionate anger. Bridges notes: "Common association with a furious man is like living in a house that is on fire." *It is easier to learn anger than meekness.* There are **two commands**:

- A. "Do not make friendship"—companionship.
- B. "Do not go with"—accompany

There are also **two descriptions** of the kind of person:

- A. "An angry man"—literally "a lord or master of anger"—that which characterizes the person.
- B. "A furious man"—or hot-tempered, a hot head of the highest degree; the word is used of burning anger, rage.

There are also **two results** noted:

- A. "Lest you learn his ways."
- The Hebrew word "learn" has the idea of learning, becoming confidential with one; from it the noun is derived that means "companion, confidant."
 - "Ways" has reference to conduct, manner of life.
- B. "[Lest you] get (take) a snare to your soul."
- A snare is a trap which injures and destroys the person—soul.
 - Sin itself is a snare; by adopting the ways of angry men our consequences are ruinous.

IX. GOSSIPS (20:19)

Since a talebearer “reveals secrets,” **never entrust anything** to him that you desire to be kept secret. He is a dangerous companion; your secrets may be next. Therefore:

- A. Don’t meddle with (associate with) such a one.
- B. “Him that flatters with his lips” is literally “one who is simple [or open-minded] with his lips.” Many give it the idea “one who opens his lips wide” and lets anything out!
 - Flattery does not seem to be the idea here—more like babbling.
 - Bridges comments: “We would not wish him to look over our wall, much less to enter into our houses.”
 - His visits merely furnish him with additional ammunition.
 - This person cannot keep his mouth shut.
 - “He is one who is open as to his lips.”

We have seen a great deal of warnings in Proverbs about companions to be avoided; how about good companions? **We actually find only one reference!**

GOOD COMPANIONS—Wise People (13:20): “He that walks with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

- A. Walk with them
 - Be under their instruction.
 - Follow their example.
- B. Become wise through them.
 - We will form good habits, principles, resolutions, etc.
 - This shows us the importance of **church fellowship, godly family life, and good friends.**
 - Stick with the godly—as Elisha did with Elijah: “I will not leave thee.”