

Treasure or Trouble

Proverbs 15:6

The Proverb we are looking at today is found in **Proverbs 15:6**.

“The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings them trouble.”

“In the house of the [uncompromisingly] righteous is great [priceless] treasure, but with the income of the wicked is trouble and vexation.” (The Amplified Bible)

Let me illustrate this verse with two stories. They are no doubt familiar stories. One is fiction. The other is factual, but both perfectly illustrate the principles of this passage and substantiate the claims of the author to seek wisdom for through her, (wisdom) there is peace.

In 1719 an autobiographical fictional novel was published that vividly depicts this principle for us. Author Daniel Defoe journals the tale of a young man who went against the wise counsel of his father. It was his desire to seek his fortunes abroad by venturing off to sea. *“Although commonly referred to as simply Robinson Crusoe, the book’s complete, original title as it appears on the title page of the first edition is The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver’d by Pirates.”* Barb, how would you like to put that on a Library index card? Let me share with you the words of Robinson Crusoe.

“My father, who was [wise], had given me a competent share of learning...and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea.
...he pressed me earnestly, and in the most affectionate manner, not to play the young man, or

to precipitate myself into miseries, which nature, and the station of life I was born in, seemed to have provided against.

The father reminded him of how his older brother scorned parental advice, ran away to be a soldier and was killed. But such words fell on deaf ears. Listen as he continues.

Though [my father] said he would not cease to pray for me, yet he could venture to say to me, that if I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me – I would have leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his counsel, when there might be none to assist in my recovery.”

Those who have read the story know that he did run away to the sea and then was shipwrecked on a deserted island. Nine months went by when he became violently ill with a fever. There were no doctors to advise or prescribe medication. There was no friend to console him in his time of need. The prophetic words of his father came true. There was no one around to care if he lived or died. It was at this lonely time that he remembered two important pieces of information that would save him. Let me continue from his journal.

“It occurred to my thought, that the Brazilians take no physic but their tobacco for almost all distempers; and I had a piece of a roll of tobacco in one of the chests...

I went, directed by Heaven, no doubt; for in this chest I found a cure both for soul and body. I opened the chest, and found what I looked for, namely, the tobacco; and as the few books I had saved lay there too, I took out one of the Bibles...which, to this time, I had not found leisure, or so much as inclination, to look into.

I took up the Bible, and began to read...Having opened the book casually, the first words that occurred to me were these: “Call on Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver; and thou shalt glorify me.”

The words were very apt to my case, and made some impression upon my thoughts.”

Though a fictional character to be sure, still his words ring with stinging point that truly within the house of the wicked there is trouble.

While we may toss fiction aside and claim that the writer takes the liberty to tell a story as he sees fit let's take a page from recent history in the last century where we see the truth of this verse from a non-fictional character. One of the most notorious and famous gangsters in American history was Al Capone. Johnny Torrio, boss of the Chicago underworld realized the potential of Capone and introduced him to organized crime during the era of prohibition. Torrio wanted to monopolize the small-time bootleggers and control their profitable trade. He needed and found an assistant in Capone. Capone was both an organizational genius and a ruthless cutthroat who would use any and all means possible to bring the trade under the control of Torrio. Within 10 years Capone earned the label of "Public Enemy Number One." His methods made him one of the most wicked and wealthiest men of his time.

Money poured in from the illegal sale of alcohol, gambling saloons, dog tracks, dance halls, roadhouses, prostitution and other rackets. His climb to the top came with the bloodshed of 500 callous murders and through the corruption of politicians, judges and policemen. Rival gangs put out enormous sums of money to kill Capone, but he was well guarded with 100 of the toughest gangsters at his command. At the height of his career he raked in \$6.5 million a week.

His vast sums of wealth were not without trouble. The car he traveled in was sprayed with gunfire but he escaped because minutes earlier he had left the vehicle to enter a restaurant. As a result Capone had his car lined with steel. It weighed seven tons and was equipped with bulletproof glass and special locks. A scout car always rode ahead and another with marksmen rode behind. On another occasion a gang of storm troopers assaulted his headquarters and in seconds pumped a thousand rounds of ammo in the building but missed their target.

Capone was eventually caught and punished for his wickedness. In the end his wicked lifestyle caught up with him and the syphilis he contracted early in life destroyed his brain. He died alone in bed, but he had made his bed in hell where he will spend an eternity from which there is no rising up.

"The income of the wicked brings trouble."

Maybe these two illustrations aren't sufficient enough evidence to convince you that the principles of this verse are valid and to be taken seriously.

Let's consider then what Scripture has to say.

From this passage let's note

A house of righteousness has great treasure

A house of wickedness has great trouble

I. A HOUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS GREAT TREASURE

Treasure in the home of the righteous

Treasure in the heart of the righteous

Treasure in heaven for the righteous

A. Treasure in the Home of the Righteous

In the Hebrew culture a house referred both to the structure in which they lived as well as to the people who lived in it. Children were included in that blessing on the righteous as well.

That God blesses the home of the righteous is clearly evident in the Old Testament. Abraham was blessed provisionally and monetarily as was Job for their faithful obedience to the Lord. Because Job feared God and was blameless God abundantly blessed him with a large family and with great wealth.

To Abraham God said that He would bless him for his obedience and make him a great nation, through which all the nations of the world would be blessed.

To Israel God said He would bless them and bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey, possessing homes and cities and crops they did not build or plant if they were obedient to keep His commandments.

On and on we see God's promise of blessings. But think for a moment about Abraham or David. They were both stalwarts of godly living. Their faith and obedience far surpasses that of many of God's followers, yet both had to wait years for

God's blessings and in David's case endure countless struggles through attacks on his life.

There are those who would take our verse and claim that obedience to God will bring God's abundant blessing on health and wealth – a prosperity gospel. But the faith of Abraham and Job and David and countless others through history doesn't equate to a prosperity gospel theology.

Unfortunately there are those who continue to perpetuate the notion that financial blessing is the will of God as a reward for obedience. They teach that godly living and strong faith coupled with monetary donations to Christian ministries will increase your wealth that God will abundantly bless.

Everyone knows what a vending machine is. A couple of weeks ago I read a story about a teenager who wanted something from the vending machine and instead of inserting his money, he inserted his arm up in through the slot where the item falls and got stuck. The fire department had to be called to free his arm. You have all seen what a vending machine looks like and have probably made a purchase or two. The glass front openly displays all the brightly packaged items from gum to candy bars to chips and even to a few healthy granola bars. You scan the racks for the item you want, insert your money and punch in the numbers and automatically the spiral metal arm begins to rotate moving your purchase past the shelf on which it rested and thud, it falls into the drawer below. Put your money in and out comes what you want.

One author describes the prosperity doctrine in terms of a vending machine. Listen to what he says: "For the prosperity gospel, God could be seen as The Vending Machine God: put in faith and out pops blessings – money, homes, cars, beautiful spouses, clever kids, good neighbors, big churches, and plush vacations. For the prosperity gospel, humans are The Happiness Machine: receive the blessings, rely on the promises, act on the commandments and you can put on a happy face – a big one. Every day, from the moment you get up to the closing of your eyes, happiness is the aim of

life. In the prosperity gospel, God is there for us; we are here for God to bless."

Do you buy that, especially when the contrary seems to be so evident? The only ones prospering are the ones proclaiming that gospel. I think that when God does prosper a person it is to bless others

So what then is our verse implying that "the home of the righteous contains great treasure?"

These treasures are not only in the home of the righteous, they are also in the heart.

B. Treasure in the Heart of the Righteous

Let's note an important point that it is in the home of the righteous where these treasures exist. These treasures are available only to the righteous. Righteousness does not come from the things we do. It's clear from **Isaiah 64:6** that our own righteousness is seen by God as filthy rags. They don't amount to anything of value. You couldn't even sell them in a garage sale. They're worthless.

There is only one source for their righteousness. The root of the word basically means conformity to an ethical standard. But whose standard? The absolute standard that has been given to us to live by is God Himself who is perfect and His desire is that we obey His commands. Because of sin we are incapable of meeting that standard of righteousness. Only through the blood of Christ shed for us by which we believe, repent, accept and appropriate what He did for us on the cross can we then be seen in God's eyes as righteous. The righteousness of Christ becomes ours. There is nothing that we can do except believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. This treasure is then secure in our heart.

Romans 1:17-18 "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

Romans 3:22-25 “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood.”

Romans 10:9-10 “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified (made right(eous)), and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Many other verses speak about the righteousness that has been imputed to the believer because of Christ, but you get the point. There is only one way to become righteous. Our desire then should be as a person who is seen by God as righteous is to strive to obey God’s standard, to do what’s right. Peter says we are to be Holy because God is holy. John says that since we have the hope of Christ’s appearing we will keep ourselves pure.

Notice what happens when there is righteousness in the home.

According to **Psalm 37:21**, he gives freely to others without regard for personal gain.

According to **Proverbs 14:34** where there is righteousness in homes a nation is praised.

According to **Isaiah 1:21** righteousness dwells in the city where God is followed.

In **Jeremiah 22:1-4** we see that the righteous deliver the weak and keep innocent blood from being shed in the city.

In **Hosea 10:12**, through their conduct the righteous sow righteousness.

Even though we experience trials of many kinds, when the righteous obey God, they are kept from the same troubles that the wicked experience.

Proverbs 12:13 “The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips, but the just shall come out of trouble.”

The righteous will be saved from the day of God’s wrath.

So when we think in terms of what Solomon is writing here in our passage it isn’t necessarily about possessions or monetary gain, it isn’t about temporal commodities although we both know that God does bless some with the monetary means in order to assist in the needs of others or to fund projects that will advance His kingdom.

Solomon is speaking about something that isn’t tangible; it can’t be listed on a page of assets or claimed as deductions. The treasures he is speaking about are internal and eternal. They are the things that if a person is truly righteous can’t be taken away. Like Job, in an instant everything we own can be wiped out. If you aren’t righteous, what then are you left with? Nothing. But the righteous have possessions that are first of all internal. They are things like love, joy, peace, patience, contentment and so on. Those are the treasures of the home that is righteous. They are rare treasures. Other treasures that we possess are eternal. One such treasure is our own salvation. That is a priceless treasure. You can’t fix any monetary number on it and cash it in. Eternal life and the reward of heaven is the greatest treasure that we can possess and the home where that is believed and practiced is a home with rare treasure.

A treasure is something that is highly esteemed, something that has great worth or value. When an individual had gems or jewelry or other treasure, it was customary to hide them in plain earthen jars. The vessels had little value or beauty so that they wouldn’t attract attention to themselves or to the valuables that were inside.

We are plain vessels, vessels that in and of themselves have little value, but for the believer we contain a precious treasure, we have been given the light of the gospel to shine through us.

II Corinthians 4:7 “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

There is treasure in the home for the righteous.

There is treasure in the heart for the righteous.

There is treasure in heaven for the righteous.

C. Treasure in Heaven for the Righteous

Jesus was very clear about His plans. He said that He was going away for a while to prepare a place for us and that He would return one day. The place was for us and His return was for us. **How many of you would agree that it would be pointless to prepare some place for us to live if He wasn't going to come back for us?** Because He wanted us to be in this place He made special for us He has to come back sometime for us. **How many are looking forward to that place?** You ought to consider it to be a special privilege – that He wants you there with Him. It's a place described with streets of gold and a flowing river with trees that bear fruit year round. There will be in this place no more sorrow or tears or pain or illness or death. As special a place as it is, Jesus said there was only one way to get to this place where such treasure exists and that is only through Him. **(John 14:1-6)**

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians who were upset about some disturbing news they had heard. They needed to be reassured that those who died before Jesus returned would also join them in heaven. So Paul wrote that when Christ came back the dead believer would rise first and then the living believer would follow and join with Christ in the air so that together they would be with Him forever. It is the destiny of the righteous. But you can't get to this treasured place in heaven unless first of all you have this treasure in your heart, evidenced in the home.

Not only will the treasures of heaven be ours to enjoy, **I Thessalonians 2:19-20** speaks of one other treasure that is there. **“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”**

That you who believe in Christ will be there is also a treasure.

There is treasure in the home of the righteous.

There is treasure in the heart of the righteous.

There is treasure in heaven for the righteous.

A house of righteousness has great treasure.

A house of wickedness has great trouble.

II. A HOUSE OF WICKEDNESS HAS GREAT TROUBLE

“The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings them trouble.”

Proverbs 3:33 “The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the righteous.”

A. Trouble in the Home of the Wicked

The word trouble means to be stirred up, agitate or to be disturbed or to cause difficulty. The word as used in our passage denotes the social dimension of an individual's actions. We may think that our wrong actions only affect us, but that's not the case. The ripple effect is tremendous.

“This word always has a negative concept. A person's negative action has a harmful influence not only on himself, but also on others. He can trouble another person or an entire nation and it brings harm or God's judgment.”

In **Genesis 34** we have the sad account of the rape of Jacob's daughter Dinah by Shechem. Her brother's Levi and Simeon conspired and got the male Shechemites to agree to getting circumcised.

When they were in severe pain from the ritual, Levi and Simeon went in and slaughtered them all. Jacob responded with these words **“You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perezites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.”**

In **Joshua 7** we see an incident where the wicked actions of one individual affected both his family and the nation. The Israelites were instructed to go in and conquer Jericho. All living were to be killed and the articles of gold and silver, were to be dedicated to the Lord’s house.

Joshua 7:1 “The Israelites acted unfaithfully”

Only a few thousand men were sent up to Ai to attack it but they were defeated because of one man’s sin.

Joshua 7:24-27

Trouble comes to the home where wickedness is prevalent. As a home, as a church, and as a nation is God’s blessing absent because there is sin in the camp. The wickedness of one affects many more.

Proverbs 15:27 “A greedy man brings trouble to his family...”

Proverbs 11:29 “He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind...”

I’m reading a book by Chuck Bentley, CEO of Crown Financial. It’s title *The Root of Riches*. He begins the book by describing his own journey to financial ruin. Raised in a Christian home he was driven by the desire to become a millionaire. He justified his desire by claiming to have a balance between a spiritual walk and a drive for success and wealth. Back in the day when .coms were the big ticket to fast wealth he had built a company that would help him reach his goal in a short time. On the day that his company was to go public and give him the wealth he sought, the .com frenzy went belly up. He lost everything. In the synopsis of his

story he recounts the great impact his decisions had on his family, not only economically but spiritually and emotionally as well. He recognized that he had brought trouble to his family.

There is trouble in the home of the wicked.

There is also trouble in the heart of the wicked.

B. Trouble in the Heart of the Wicked

Because of his vast wealth, Solomon pursued every avenue of pleasure available to him only to conclude at the end of it all that such a pursuit was meaningless. It brought no inner or lasting peace or satisfaction. It was all a chasing after the wind. It was a futile attempt at temporary satisfaction.

Luke 12:13-21 – rich man who had all of life’s goods but lost his soul.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke about treasure. It boils down to this: where a man’s treasure is there is his heart. He concluded by stating that we should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (the place where true and eternal treasure lies) and not seek after the things that are temporary and only bring meager satisfaction. (**Matthew 6:19-33**)

There is trouble in the home of the wicked.

There is trouble in the heart of the wicked.

There is trouble in heaven for the wicked.

C. Trouble in Heaven for the Wicked

Proverbs 10:16 “The wages of the righteous bring them life, but the income of the wicked brings them punishment.”

We can take that to have a literal meaning. In Proverbs 1 you may recall the warning Solomon gave his son to avoid those who want to pursue after monetary gain in a wicked manner. It will only end in getting caught. What seems right brings death.

In a figurative sense there are also eternal consequences for wickedness as well.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death...”

The curse of sin that we are all under has will result in physical death for each of us. But more significantly the curse of sin will also bring spiritual death. And the last I knew from **Romans 3:23 “we have all sinned...”** Since we are all sinners we are all under this curse. Eternal punishment will come to the wicked. There is no place in heaven for the wicked. In Revelation 20:15 we are reminded that those whose names were not found in the book of life were thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Their end is eternal separation from God. There is no get out of jail free card. There is no do over. Once you die that's it. Your destiny is forever cast in stone. That is evident in the story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus in **Matthew 16:19-26**. In it He described how there was a great chasm between heaven and hell and it was impossible for any to cross over.

To avoid the plight of the wicked, a person ***must in this life*** respond to the free and saving grace of God by trusting in His Son as Savior. Otherwise it's very clear – **“the income of the wicked brings them trouble”** in this life and in the life to come. John makes it simply clear: **“And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.”** (I John 5:11-13)

The choice belongs to you: in your home, in your heart and in heaven you can have treasure or trouble.

When in trouble nothing could be simpler than the verse quoted by Robinson Crusoe – **“call on Me in**

the day of trouble, and I will deliver...” Anyone can call. Young or old can call.

Rich or poor can call.

Male or female can call.

Healthy or ill can call.

Anyone can call when in trouble. There is no greater time of trouble than to know of your soul destined to be eternally separated from God, especially when you had the chance to call and ignored it. Nothing else is needed other than a repentant heart. **As the story of Robinson Crusoe continues we read that he called. “Before I lay down, I did what I never had done in all my life – I kneeled down, and prayed to God to fulfill the promise to me.”**

God can do the same for you. Wickedness doesn't have to continue in your home or heart. Maybe for the first time you will call on the name of the Lord to be saved and fill your house with righteousness.

Maybe you have already made that decision but you know there is sin you have allowed to continue and today you will call out to the Lord to restore you, to renew you so that once again yours will be a home where righteousness prevails.

Treasure or trouble – which do you want today?