

Proverbs 4: 18-19 The Godly Path: Two Contrasts

God is so concerned that divine truth should penetrate the hearts of people that He has devised a great variety of methods: He has given divine laws, histories, songs, prophecies and proverbs! It is to the Book of Proverbs that we turn for the theme of this series.

Proverbs 4:26: “Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.”

- **Grammatical Usage:** “**ponder**” or in Hebrew, “pal·lêś” meaning, “consider; weigh”; “**the path**” or “ma·gal” meaning, “course”; “**journey**” or “dā·rā·kē·kā” meaning, “ways; conduct”.
- **Literal Interpretation:** Carefully walk a straight course, and all your ways will be secure.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. These words of the wise Solomon make a vivid contrast between the path of the righteous and the way of the wicked. From God’s standpoint there are only two classes of people in the world: the “**righteous**” and the “**wicked**”. The “**righteous**” are those who are right with God, and the “**wicked**” are those who are wrong before God; the saved and the lost; believers and unbelievers; children of God and children of wrath.

1. The “**righteous**” are in the MINORITY; the “**wicked**” are in the MAJORITY. Our key verses speak of the “**path**” of the righteous and the “**way**” of the wicked. Is there any difference between a little winding path and a broad highway along which masses of modern traffic speeds? All the difference in the world! The Lord Jesus spoke of the “**broad way**” and the “**narrow way**” (**Matthew 7:13-14**), and He said there would be many on the broad way and few on the narrow way. So, we see that the righteous are in the minority, and this has always been so. In Noah’s day, after his 120 years of warning the wicked, only eight souls were saved (**1 Peter 3:20**); in the case of wicked Sodom, only a small minority escaped God’s judgment (**Genesis 19:23-25**); and this was so in the days of the psalmist and the prophets (**Matthew 20:16; Luke 13:23-24**). Christians are in the minority today, and the tragedy is that the crowd on the broad way think that to be among the majority must be the right way. It is easy to be beguiled by numbers, and it is dangerous to go with the crowd (**Proverbs 14:12**).

2. The “**righteous**” are in the LIGHT; the “**wicked**” are in DARKNESS. “**The path of the righteous is as the shining light**” is the experience of every born-again Christian, but how solemn is the condition of those who do not know the Lord! “**The way of the wicked is like deep darkness**” (**2 Corinthians 4:4**). Satan is keeping multitudes in spiritual darkness, and the first thing that happens when we pass from “**the way of the wicked**” to “**the path of the righteous**” is that the light of the gospel of Christ shines into our hearts (**1 Peter 2:9**).

3. The “path of the righteous” gets BRIGHTER; “the way of the wicked” gets DARKER. The path of the righteous is “**like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter...**”; and in contrast, “**the way of the wicked is like deep darkness: they do not know what makes them stumble.**” The non-Christian stumbles through life hoping for the best, but he has no

real anchorage and no everlasting hope. Does God want us to stumble through life? No! He wants us to know the experience of “**shining ever brighter till the full light of day.**” He waits to lead every stumbling soul, and if they will put their hands into His He will guide them, as He does every one of His children (**Psalm 37:23**). This wonderful Guide waits to lead you through all the intricate pathways of life until at last you enter into His presence.

4. The “**righteous**” have a GLORIOUS PROSPECT; the “**wicked**” have a TERRIBLE PROSPECT.

The righteous are travelling on to the full light of day (**John 14:2-3**). One translation of our key verse reads: “**The wicked shall be silent in darkness**”, and that surely speaks of judgment (**Matthew 8:12**).

Contrary to the claims of atheists and agnostics through the centuries, man cannot live without God. Man can have a mortal existence without acknowledging God, but not without the fact of God.

- As the Creator, God originated human life. We owe our being to the God in whose image we are made (**Genesis 1:27**). Our existence depends on God, whether we acknowledge His existence or not.
- Man is a unique creation. God has set a sense of eternity in our hearts (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**), and that sense of timeless destiny can only find its fulfillment in God Himself.
- As the Sustainer, God continuously confers life (**Psalm 104:10-32**). He is life (**John 14:6**), and all creation is held together by the power of Christ (**Colossians 1:17**). Even those who reject God receive their sustenance from Him (**Matthew 5:45**).
- As the Savior, God gives eternal life to those who believe. In Christ is life, which is the light of men (**John 1:4**); life in its fullest sense (**John 10:10**). For man to “truly live” he must know Christ (**John 17:3**).
- Without God, man has physical life only. God warned Adam and Eve that on the day they rejected Him they would “**surely die**” (**Genesis 2:17**) both physically and spiritually including losing the life they had known: communion with God, the freedom to enjoy Him, the innocence and purity of their soul: it was all gone.
- Without God, man is unfulfilled, even in his mortal life. Man is not at peace with his fellow man because he is not at peace with himself. Solomon discovered that knowledge, in and of itself, is futile (**Ecclesiastes 1:12-18**). He found that pleasure and wealth are futile (**2:1-11**), materialism is folly (**2:12-23**), and riches are fleeting (**chapter 6**).
- There are many unsaved people who live disciplined, sober, happy and fulfilled lives. The Bible acknowledges the benefits of fidelity, honesty, self-control, etc. But without God man has only this world. See Jesus' exchange with the rich (but very moral) young man in **Matthew 19:16-23**.
- Without God, man's destiny is hell (**2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**)

Psalm 1 is a striking commentary upon **Proverbs 4:18-19** which emphasizes the same truth. Particularly notice the closing verse of the psalm: “**the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.**”

➤ **Conclusion:** Which “way” are you travelling?