

## Proverbs Week #101 (11:4-6)

---

*“Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the treacherous will be caught by their own greed.” Proverbs 11:4-6*

God gives us relationships in order for us to joyously experience His love. In some ways these relationships try us and build character. We do not always understand our lives in terms like “days of wrath” and smooth ways or describe our challenges by saying things like, “Man! Today I really am struggling with trying to escape from the consequences of my greedy choices in life!” Proverbs sometimes have a way of speaking that seem too high and lofty but in reality they are very much down to Earth if we have ears to hear them.

**To Learn:** *“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Proverbs 14:12*

Last week and this week we are warned to guard against the ways of the treacherous. This week our verses add an additional factor of learning to understand the negative consequences of greed. God commands us not to covet. Isn't that the commandment that seems to really just hit us where it hurts. Some have suggested that this commandment is at the heart of all man's inability to escape his sinful state. Without God's help and provision we will never be able to overcome our desire to covet.

**To Discern:** We need to know the difference between doing and thinking what is simply pleasing in our own sight compared with that which is pleasing in God's sight. In order to please God, I need to learn His ways of making people righteous. This is practical in that it is not just about other people, but I need to know what is pleasing to the Lord. This requires me to have daily conversation with God in prayer and to acknowledge Him daily in all that I do.

**To Receive:** Do you see the bookends that today's selected verses have? “Riches” and “Greed” are the first and last words of this section. I don't want to make too much of this but I want to use it to drive home the theme of this verse. In the Hebrew the first words are לֹא-יִצְעִיל (will not profit) and the last is יִלְכְּדוּ (catches them—as in captivity or slavery). All the words between these bookends should help us to receive the wisdom God intends us to learn. I want to shift your thinking a bit from how I normally teach this section. It is labeled “to receive” and my normal focus is on how we receive the wisdom found in Proverbs and apply it to our lives. Rather than thinking about how you are receiving this teaching, I want you to consider how you think, feel, and act when you receive things like gifts, wages, or compliments? Getting gifts is fun! I like gifts probably as much as anyone, but is it possible to get even good things and misuse them? Is it possible for me to receive a gift with greed and not thankfulness?

Sometimes I think of the dialogue from Fiddler on the Roof, “Perchik: Money is the world's curse. Tevye: May the Lord smite me with it. And may I never recover.” It is not money that is the world's curse but the love of money that is the root of evil. If I fail to thank God and learn to be content with what He gives me, I will be in danger of neglecting to use the very gifts that God has entrusted to me. In this way I would be acting foolishly. I should expect to reap what I sow and in the end find that the kind of life I'm living is very hard. Yeshua teaches us that we can not serve two masters. We will always love one and despise the other (Luke 16:13). We are to love God and our neighbor and not to be captivated with greed.

**To Impart:** Adults, parents, and children remember that your actions speak louder than words. At the same time, our ability to demonstrate true love to others depends on both loving words and actions. As we live together we may not always get along with each other. We are instructed to “bear one another's burdens” (Galatians 6:1). Part of bearing one another's burdens is our ability to “put up with” each other. We shouldn't expect others to take the initiative to display love. We didn't take the initiative in relation to God. He acted while we were still sinners to reach out to us. If we are waiting for others to be “worthy” of love before we demonstrate our love, we have not learned the kind of love that God expects us to receive and impart.

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, the Messiah died for us.” Romans 5:8*