

- **Php 2:14** Do all things without complaining and disputing, **15** that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **16** holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. **17** Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Application: Ga 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

D. Fervent Perseverance: The Word of God requires "Passion" and "Priority"

Pr 4:13 Take firm (grasp) hold of instruction (convince, rebuke, exhort, chastening), do not let go (release); Keep her (preserve), for she *is* your life.

- Verb progression: Take firm → Do not let go → Keep
- All these point to a passion and priority that you will keep learning, growing, and submitting to God and His word, especially when God is correcting and chastening you, through providential trials.
- To abandon God and His words of wisdom, is to abandon life and invite death. There are both temporal and eternal implications.
- New Testament Equivalent to this Truth:
 - **2 Pe 1:5** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, **6** to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, **7** to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. **8** For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; **11** for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- Bridge Illustration
 - **Mt 7:24** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: **25** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it

did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. **26** "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: **27** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

- **Mt 7:21** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22** Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' **23** And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

REVIEW:

- A. Foundational Principle: The Word of God must be "heard" and "received"
- B. Faithful Pattern: The Word of God must be "taught" and "lived"
- C. Fortified Passageway: The Word of God will give you "Freedom" and "Liberty"
- D. Fervent Perseverance: The Word of God requires "Passion" and "Priority"
- E. Faithless Path: The Word of God is rejected for "wickedness" and "violence"

Proverbs 4:14-17

[PATH]

14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
And do not walk in the way of evil.

15 **Avoid** it,
do not travel on it;
Turn away from it
and **pass on**.

Question: Isn't Identifying the Wicked Way Obvious, Solomon?

PATH: The path of the wicked can be obvious at times, and other times it is not so obvious.

Question: How is this possible?

Illustration: Iceberg – You can't see what is hidden!

Meaning/Definitions: (Both are figurative. Two sides of the same coin)

- **Path (Orach):** Condition → Being/Become/Nature/Who you are habitually
- **Way (Derek):** Direction → Destination → Actions

Answer: Because very rarely does one sin significantly at the outstart. It is gradual, small compromises. It starts in the home in what is modeled, approved, and disallowed; what is overlooked, rewarded, and punished. Very few truly start out initially on the path of absolute evil, rather it is a result of a multitude of decisions.

Illustration: Just like the one setting out to drive Route 66, there are multiple stops, turns, destinations, on ramps and off ramps. Your starting point will look nothing like your destination.

Consider Scripture:

Pr 5:22 His own iniquities entrap the wicked *man*, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. **23** He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Important: Everyone is born with a sin nature, so everyone is on the "broad road that leads to destruction" and by the God's grace, the Gospel, and your witness and prayers, one may find the "narrow gate."

- **Mt 7:13** "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. **14** Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
- **Eph 2:1** And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, **2** in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, **3** among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. **4** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6** and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, **7** that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, **9** not of works, lest anyone should boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Consider Scripture:

- Do not be deceived, "Bad Company Corrupt Good morals." (1 Cor. 15:33)

- **Note:** Let's remember the path and the way is very-rarely-solitary...your companions matter!

Quote: Man makes his own choice, but he cannot choose his own consequences.⁵

The Six Pleas of God/Solomon to Stay of the Wicked Path (Chiastic Structure)

A. Do not Enter (Qal, Jussive) (1) – Don't cross the threshold/Don't start!

- Functionally this is a command but not an imperative

B. Do not walk (Piel, Jussive) (2) – Don't Do it!

- Functionally this is a command as well, Piel makes it more intense, and Piel emphasizes the state of being. So, Solomon is saying, don't do evil. The parallel of these two verses shows the inseparable connection between "doing evil and being evil."
- *The Duck Test:* it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.

C. Avoid It (Command) (3) – Go another way for this way is too dangerous!

C'. Do not travel on it (Qal, Jussive) (4) – Do not cross over, pass through, pass by.

- In other words, don't get near the path, or even temporarily be on the path. This alludes to the idea of compromise! "The end do not justify the means!"

B'. Turn away from it (Command) (5) – Change direction, immediately! You heading in the wrong direction!

A'. Pass on (Command) (6) – Get beyond and away from its grasp!

⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, "161 אָרָה," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 71.

REVIEW: Let's Get Practical / 6 Steps to Avoid Sin

1. Refuse to let sin enter your mind
2. Do not dwell on sinful thoughts
3. Reject the sinful path
4. Retain your integrity
5. Run from sin
6. Return and Remain on the righteous path

Implication: Sin is all too near! Solomon uses figurative language of paths and ways, but literally sin is at your door!

Beware of Temptation and Opening the Door to Sin

- **Jas 1:14** But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. **15** Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
- **Ge 4:6** So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin lies at the door**. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."
- **Ro 7:14** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. **15** For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. **16** If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. **17** But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **18** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. **19** For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. **20** Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **21** I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. **22** For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. **23** But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. **24** O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Illustration: Twilight Zone – To Serve Man

PEOPLE: The sinners traveling on the wicked path are in bondage to an insatiable appetite and unquenchable thirst to satisfy their flesh.

Proverbs 4:16-17

[PEOPLE]

16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil;
And their sleep is taken away unless they make *someone* fall.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
And drink the wine of violence.

Illustration: Which one is not like the other?

1. (Left)

2. (Right)

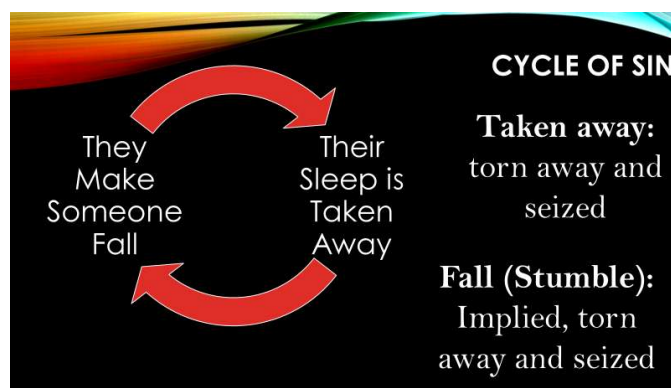
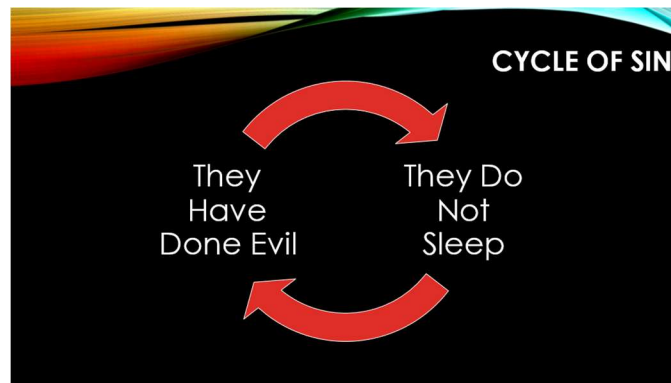
Quote: "No rest for the wicked" (1425 Bible translation, 1574 John Calvin Sermon)

- **Is 48:22, Is 57:21** "*There is no peace,*" says the LORD, "for the wicked."

Implication: When the rest of the world is sleeping, the wicked are awake, planning, plotting and ready to pounce!

- **Ps 36:4** He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way *that is* not good; He does not abhor evil.
- **Mic 2:1** Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand.
- **Is 57:20** But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
- **Ge 19:2-11** Lot, the Angels, and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah

Contrast with the Believer: **Pr 3:24** When you lie down, you will not be afraid; Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.



Implication: This is a picture of the bondage of sin...to live is sin. Their contentment is tied to their evil exploits!

Illustration:

- Honey, what's for dinner?
 - "eat the bread" & "drink the wine"
- You are what you eat!
 - "Wickedness" & "Violence"
- **Insight & Perspective of David: Ps 140:** To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. **1** Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men, **2** Who plan evil things in *their* hearts; They continually gather together *for* war. **3** They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps *is* under their lips. Selah **4** Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; Preserve me from violent men, Who have purposed to make my steps stumble. **5** The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords; They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set traps for me. Selah

Note: David shared his life experience with Solomon. No doubt it left an impression.

G. Final Purpose: The Word of God reveals "Redemption" and "Retribution"

Proverbs 4:18-19

[PARTING]

18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun,
That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

19 The way of the wicked is like darkness;
They do not know what makes them stumble.

Comparison

- Path (Orach) (Nature) of the Just:
 - **"shining sun"**: The first light of a new day, initial light beginning
 - Progression "Shines ever brighter": increasing illumination
 - **Mk 4:26** And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, **27** and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. **28** For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. **29** But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."
 - **Perfect Day (Redemption)**: Glory, ushered into the presence of God, no night!
 - **Ps 36:9** For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.
 - **Re 22:5** There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.
- Way (Derek) (Actions) of the Wicked:
 - **"like darkness"**: Complete, utter darkness, like the 3 days of darkness in the ninth plague (Exodus 10:22). Covenantal Judgment - **Dt 28:29** And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save *you*.

- **Perpetual "They do not know":** state of ignorance, remain in ignorance. Darkness remains.
- "Makes them Stumble/Stagger" (Retribution): judgment by God for unrepentant rebellion.
 - **Ps 9:3** When my enemies turn back, They **shall fall** and perish at Your presence.
 - **Re 22:15** But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Conclusion: Time and truth march hand in hand.

- **1 Ti 5:24** Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding *them* to judgment, but those of some *men* follow later. **25** Likewise, the good works *of some* are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.