

Proverbs of Solomon – Proverbs 24:19-23a

You who **know me**, realize that I am a **citizen** of the earthly country of **Canada**. Even though I have lived here about 60 years, I have no plans on moving my membership to the United States. It's not because I love this country any less than I do Canada. It's because I have a heavenly citizenship which makes all earthly citizenships redundant. It also affords me opportunities to criticize this country from a position which is different from yours. Unlike many American Christians, I am first and foremost a Christian – before being a North American.

But you who know me also know that I am **socially** and **politically conservative**. And by "**conservative**" I mean that my outlook on life is **Biblically based**. So I am **pro-capital punishment**, and I am **anti-abortion** and am **against** the **legalization of sin** – prostitution, drugs, alcohol, etc. I don't believe that global warming is entirely man-caused, and I don't believe that man can reverse it. I believe in the importance of law, but we don't need those laws to micro-manage our lives. I don't believe that governments can create or enforce Biblical morality. I trust the King of kings before I trust the President of presidents.

And with that we come to the next few verses of **Proverbs**. "**Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out. My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both? These things also belong to the wise.**"

We begin with a common warning, verse 19.

"**Fret not thyself because of evil men.**" I hope that we all understand this word "**fret**" – at least to some degree. Commonly speaking, it means "**don't get upset,**" "**don't worry,**" "**don't loose any sleep**" over evil men. The Hebrew word is translated "**fret**" **four times**. It is rendered "**angry,**" "**wroth,**" "**displeased,**" "**incensed**" and "**grieved**" nearly **30 times**. But it's most common translation is "**kindled**" – as in **to set on fire**. "**Don't be set on fire by the deeds of evil men.**" Is there ever a reason to be angry at the decisions of government? Yes, there is. Is it hard to stay cool? Sometimes it is. But we have the command of God – "**Fret not thyself because of evil men.**" Are we going to obey the Lord or not? **Fret not.**" Are we Christians or are we merely angry Americans? **Fret not thyself because of evil men.**"

The second common warning in this verse is "**Neither be thou envious at the wicked.**" Solomon may have learned this principle from his father David. The Psalmist said, "**Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed**" – **Psalm 37**. Solomon himself says, "**Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.**" "**Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.**" "**Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.**"

In these and other verses we hear common reasons NOT to FRET over the wicked.

For example, **their candle** may be **put out** quickly and easily. The **candle** in the Bible is sometimes used to **illustrate life**, and sometimes to **the effect** of our lives. "**The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD**" – **Proverbs 20**. The Christian is supposed to be a witness and testimony in the world – a light in a dark place. "**No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. Ye are the light of the world.**"

Compared to a bonfire, campfire or gas grill, a candle is a fragile thing. Many times, I have seen people put out the light of a candle with nothing more than their finger and thumb. A bucket of water is not necessary to put out a candle, but it will do it. The Lord not only has fingers and buckets, He has floods and even tsunamis. It is nothing to God to put out the life of any wicked and powerful man. Therefore – "**Fret not thyself because of evil men.**" And "**there shall be NO reward to the wicked man.**" Technically the wicked man **WILL** have his reward – **judgment**, but that is not Solomon's meaning. The outwardly wicked are outwardly wicked because they are inwardly wicked. And "**know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?**" No reward for the evil man. The wicked man may be blessed by Satan, but not by Jehovah.

Another common exhortation in these verses is "My son, fear thou the LORD."

Every child of Adam should fear his Creator. He who spoke the world into existence as the power to unspeak it, if that is His will. He who created us still has authority over every one of us – and before Him we shall all stand to give an account of ourselves.

But as we see so often in God's Word, to "**fear the Lord**" means something different for the child of God. Our fear should not be one of terror, but of awe and respect. Notice that the exhortation is to fear "**Jehovah**" – not "**Elohim**" or

the *“Almighty God.”* This is a fear of the covenant-making God – the God of life – the *“I am that I am.”* While this is only a matter of names and semantics, Christians are to love, respect and worship – the God who loved us and chose to save us. So our fear should not be of God’s sword, but of His frown – His displeasure – His disappointment. *“Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth.”* *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”* Moses put it best – *“Now Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to **FEAR** the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to **LOVE** him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul.”*

Coupled to Solomon’s exhortation to fear God is *“and fear the king.”*

It is obvious that our relationship to the king is different to that of our relationship to God. And the fear of each should be different. Why should we fear the king? **Romans 13:4** – *“For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”* If the Christian breaks the law, he should not only fear the chastisement of God, but he should also fear the king who is *“a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”* While the fear of God is coupled to love, our fear of the king may not include any kind of natural affection.

But what if that king is evil? If that king is evil, I go back to where we began – *“Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.”* Somebody says, *“Preacher are you so blind as to miss that our king could turn his power and wrath against us?”* Sure, I can see that. I can also see that I could be one of his first targets. Not only am I an immigrant, but I am on record as opposed to the liberal agenda of modern society. The next king might be angry with me – and with you – for putting up with me.

There are hundreds of countries and millions of people around the world who fear the current United States king – literally fear him. But there are millions of conservative Americans who are relatively pleased with him. And some of those same Americans are already in fear of whatever king or queen might succeed him. To them I say, *“Fret not thyself because of evil men; for there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.”* And with that I move forward to **verse 22** – *“For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?”*

The Christian’s confidence in the midst of the turmoil of national and world politics must be in Jehovah – not in whoever is king or whoever might be the next king. Solomon says, *“meddle not with them that are given to **CHANGE.**”* Not only do kings come and go, but they also vacillate between opinions depending on how the political winds are blowing.

“MEDDLER NOT with them that are given to change.” If we are more interested in meddling with an evil political system than in promoting the Kingdom of God, we are not the Christians God intended us to be. If we are more concerned with removing bad politicians and keeping even more evil people out of public office than we are in building and edifying the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not listening to the Word of God. If we are more interested in defending a secular piece of paper like the Constitution of the United States than we are in defending the eternal Word of God, we are rather poor citizens of Heaven.

Solomon reminds us, *“their **CALAMITY** shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?”* – both the king and the human changling. You know what the word *“calamity”* means. It means *“sudden destruction.”* Sudden destruction is not the bailiwick of the Christian. That is God’s department. If all those conservative Christians of the last century had channelled their time and attention – their monies and energies – into serving the Lord through one of God’s churches, we wouldn’t be in the evil social condition we are today. If they were as interested in men’s souls as they were their politics, they would have given the Holy Spirit an avenue towards glory in this world.

There is nothing we do about our grandfather’s generation; we can only live in the present. Solomon says, *“meddle not”* with evil and wicked men; even with the king and any potential queen. Paul and Christ would say *“amen”* to Solomon, adding *“evangelize them”* – give them the gospel. The best way to protect the nation in which we live is to live to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ – serving him above all others.