

Proverbs 1:16-19

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-1/proverbs-116-19/>

The Book of Proverbs is committed to explaining the reality of how life works. Solomon does this by discussing the ineffectiveness and danger of foolishness.

This passage is a continuation of the warning to the youth concerning *sinner*s and their enticements. Verse 16 is a quotation of Isaiah 59:7 and seems to be an interpretation of the previous verses, which also sets up the verses that follow.

For the sinners' feet run to evil. In their attempts to acquire wealth and status through the destruction of the innocent, the sinners only rush into evil. Rather than progress toward success through honest means, *their feet run to evil.* Rather than fearing the Lord and adhering to wisdom (Proverbs 1:7-9), *sinner*s want to control, to determine, to gain by extraction from others. In their haste, they rush *into evil.* In this case they seek to control the lives and livelihoods of other people. *They hasten to shed blood* because they believe it to be the path to riches and success. Rather than work to produce, they desire to extract from others. Their path to wealth, power, and respect comes through violence and robbery. And occurs in opposition to the ways of God. All of this makes their efforts both ineffective and *evil.*

One of the fundamental agendas of The Book of Proverbs is to teach young people reality—how life works. Reality is that the attempts by the *evil* to entrap others is actually entrapping themselves. Sin creates its own destruction. Such evil is all done in foolishness and *in vain.* It will not achieve the desired results.

The reality is this—*they lie in wait for their own blood.* They (the sinners) are setting *bait* for an unaware *bird*—themselves. It is like if someone at the office is waiting around a corner to prank a coworker by jumping out and surprising them, but do not realize that while they are waiting, the very same coworker is sneaking up behind them to do the same. They will be caught in their own snare. They think they are laying a trap to catch the innocent and take what is theirs; instead they are waiting for their own destruction. They *wait for their own blood* and have set an *ambush for their own lives.*

If a hunter were to *spread the baited net in the sight of any bird,* the hunt would be *useless.* The *bird* will not fall for a trap if it sees the hunter setting it. But in the case of the *sinner*s, they are setting a trap thinking it is for others, but it is actually for themselves. In seeking the path of *violence,* they lay an *ambush for their own lives.* *Everyone who gains by violence* will experience *violence.*

The *violence* they apply to others will boomerang back to them. The *baited net,* lying in *wait for their own blood,* and *ambushing their own lives—these are the ways of everyone who gains by violence.* This foolish lifestyle will *take away the life of the possessors of violence.*

Those who attempt to *gain by violence* are living in a false reality. They think they will succeed in trapping others but they will only succeed in losing their own life. *Gain by violence* or any evil means is a poison to its *possessor*. As opposed to the life-bringing and character-building of wisdom, *violence takes away life* and leads to destruction.

Biblical Text

¹⁶ For their feet run to evil

And they hasten to shed blood.

¹⁷ Indeed, it is useless to spread the baited net

In the sight of any bird;

¹⁸ But they lie in wait for their own blood;

They ambush their own lives.

¹⁹ So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence;

It takes away the life of its possessors.