

Proverbs 6:12-15

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-6/proverbs-612-15/>

Solomon illustrates the characteristics of a wicked person and the result.

Twelve verses into Chapter 6, it feels as though Solomon is on a bit of a roll. He has been warning against the dangers of wickedness—either from unwisely guaranteeing the obligation of another or living a life of laziness. Perhaps Solomon has seen these things all too often. The tone certainly has that feel of righteous indignation, a sort of heavy lament that people so often choose self-harm over the path that leads to their own flourishing.

Building on the previous section, he has worked to a bit of a crescendo here, but takes a turn to a new topic: *a worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a perverse mouth* (vs 12). It seems that someone inclined to laziness is simultaneously prone to an active and destructive tongue.

The word for *worthless* has a root that literally means “unprofitable.” Much of Proverbs is about how wisdom is the best source of gain for each of us, the path to our best self-interest. A person who ignores wisdom is not profitable, either for themselves or others. Solomon uses the terms *worthless person* and *wicked man* together here to emphasize that evil is not profitable. Iniquity brings no true value, only that which is *worthless*.

The mark of a *worthless person* and *a wicked man* is that he is *one who walks with a perverse mouth*. The word for *perverse* is the Hebrew word “iqqeshuwth”; it is only found twice in all of Scripture (here and in Proverbs 4:24). It can mean “crooked” or “devious” and both times it is used as an adjective to refer to *the mouth*.

So the marker of an *unprofitable person* is a crooked *mouth*. There is an insinuation here and in the following verses that the inner workings (of evil) are displayed outwardly (through a *perverse mouth*). A *perverse* (or crooked) *mouth* likely means a person who says one thing but means another—his words and actions do not match. They are intended to manipulate, control, or exploit.

The *wicked man* is not in alignment with others (like the ant), but crooked, in the way he communicates. Unlike the ant, the wicked is not looking to fulfill his role in order to contribute to the broader effort. Rather he uses his deceptive words to exploit and extract from the labors of others.

This *perverse* identifier continues in verse 13 with three more examples: *who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers* (vs 13). The literal translations of some of these words help reveal what Solomon is saying.

The word for *winks* means “pinch” or “squint,” so the wicked man is causing himself to see poorly, to perceive perversely. His eyes are not fully open to observe reality, through no other

obtrusion than himself. He also could be winking at his allies to signal that he is deceiving someone else, in order to extract from their labors, and transfer it to his own.

The word for *signals* means “speaks,” which is attached in this verse with *feet*.

And the word for *points* means “teaches,” attached to *finger*. Perhaps these pictures of giving *signals* and information with hands and feet furthers the notion of the wicked man’s crooked posture. He is not straightforward, gives signals such as *winks*, and movements of feet and hands in order to clue allies and deceive victims.

So this *wicked man* is all out of sorts. He is not using his body as it was intended, an allusion to Solomon’s previous warnings about not stewarding one’s life well. He is *crooked*, not in alignment, misusing the opportunity and resources God has given him. And he is not working as a member of a team, serving with others toward a common purpose, in a self-governing manner, loving his neighbors, as God has directed (Leviticus 19:18). Rather he is a self-serving exploiter.

It is not a great surprise that this out-of-sorts man *with perversity in his heart continually devises evil and spreads strife* (vs 14). His whole person is out of whack—not seeing, communicating, or teaching according to design. *Perversity in his heart* is the cause. That he *Continually devises evil* is the effect.

He also *spreads strife*—literally “sends out evil.” He is contagious. What he is communicating does not align with reality and is muddled even within himself—truly crooked. This affects how he thinks and what he does. And he bears witness to this way of life.

Therefore, meaning “because of these perverse ways,” *his calamity will come suddenly* (vs 15). Imagine the strain of something crooked pulling against its proper alignment. At a certain point, it breaks. Even if you know it is coming, it is startling. And if you don’t know it is coming, it is especially startling.

That is what happens to this *wicked man*. He bends and bends and bends until his *calamity* (literally “destruction”) comes suddenly. This would indicate that wicked men can persist in their wickedness for some time. Perhaps we wonder why God’s justice is lagging. But God judges in due time (2 Peter 3:9-10).

There will inevitably come a point of no return for the wicked. He will eventually shatter. *Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing* (vs 15). While bending, there is always hope we will realize what we are doing and the force bringing us back toward alignment will correct us. But once we shatter, pressing beyond the breaking point, there is no putting the pieces together. God is patient, and willing that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). But at some point, judgement comes; and when it does, it is sudden and real.

The inference is for Solomon’s audience to avoid the bend, and certainly to avoid the break.

Biblical Text

¹² A worthless person, a wicked man,

Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth,

¹³ Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet,

Who points with his fingers;

¹⁴ Who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil,

Who spreads strife.

¹⁵ Therefore his calamity will come suddenly;

Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.