



LESSON 10: "The Froward vs. The Righteous" **Date:** _____

KEY VERSE: Proverbs 3:32 – "For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous."

INTRODUCTION

Instruction is often best retained when comparisons are offered. For instance, those who need to work more quickly are reminded that, "They are moving at a snail's pace" (Just what is a snail's pace?). Those who will not receive instruction are said to be, "As stubborn as a mule." A person of good character is complemented when he is told that he is, "As good as gold."

Question: Can anyone in your class think of such comparisons that their parents used, or that they have used to challenge their own children.

Answer: Possibilities may include comparing someone's eyesight to that of a hawk, someone's wisdom to that of an owl, someone's meandering gate to that of a river or someone's shiftiness to that of a snake.

The Proverbs often teach by comparison. Typically, comparisons are made evident through the use of the phrase, "But the." The phrase, "But the," is found 81 times in Proverbs in order to highlight comparisons in...

- Daily Practice: *Proverbs 14:23 – In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.*
- Human Responsibility and Divine Providence: *Proverbs 16:9 – A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*
- Personal Philosophies: *Proverbs 11:28 – He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.*

More than anything else, the book of Proverbs is filled with character comparisons.

- The righteous are compared with the wicked: *Proverbs 10:30 – The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.*
- The diligent are compared with the slothful: *Proverbs 12:24 – The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.*
- The fool is compared to the wise: *Proverbs 14:3 – In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.*
- The simple are compared with the prudent: *Proverbs 14:15 – The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.*

One of the most striking comparisons in the book of Proverbs is between the froward and the righteous. This comparison is seen at least five times:

- *Proverbs 3:32 – For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous.*
- *Proverbs 8:8 – All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.*
- *Proverbs 10:31 – The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.*
- *Proverbs 11:20 – They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.*
- *Proverbs 21:8 – The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.*

Not only are there five direct comparisons between the froward and the righteous in Proverbs, the character of the forward is exposed twenty-one times and the character of the righteous is examined in at least eighty verses. God wants us to be very familiar with the difference between frowardness and righteousness. Unfortunately, many New Testament Christians have never taken the time to learn the wisdom of comparing these two characters in order to walk wisely before God. *Proverbs 3:32* says, "The froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous."

Theme: We ought to avoid forwardness while seeking righteousness.

Transition: Let's take the time to compare the froward person and the righteous person in the book of Proverbs.

THE FROWARD

"Froward" is probably a new word to many of us. In order to understand what the author of the book of Proverbs had in mind when describing this character, we need to realize that there are four Hebrew words behind the word translated "froward" in our King James Bibles. Let's take a moment to become familiar with these four words in order to understand what exactly is meant by the word "froward."

- The Hebrew word, *Tahpukah*, speaks of perversity or crookedness and is found nine times in the book of Proverbs (Proverbs 2:12, 14; 6:14; 8:13; 10:31, 32; 16:28, 30; 21:8). When *Tahpukah* is translated "froward," it speaks of crookedness.
- The Hebrew word, *Looz*, speaks of turning aside or becoming perverse. This word is used six times in the book of Proverbs (Proverbs 2:15; 3:21, 32; 4:21, 24; 14:2). This word carries the idea of departing from that which is right.
- The Hebrew word, *Ikeshooth*, speaks of fraudulent, deceitful behavior and is used five times in Proverbs (4:24; 6:12; 11:20; 17:20; 22:5).
- The Hebrew word, *Pawthal*, means to be braided like a rope or twisted up as if wrestled by a foe. This word is only found in Proverbs 8:8.

The words translated "froward" speak of crookedness, perversity, deceit and perversion. Thus, a froward person is a crooked or deceitful person. Having turned aside from the path of the Godly the froward person is on a crooked path, for Proverbs 22:5 says, "Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward."

The wise doctor takes time to carefully consider the symptoms presented by a patient. The doctor knows that a patient presenting jaundice is likely dealing with a disorder of the liver. The doctor assumes that a patient's fever indicates an infection to be present. Even so, the wise believer must recognize the characteristics of

forwardness in order to diagnose and depart from this person. Let's take a careful look at the one called froward.

1. *The froward plan evil things (Prov. 16:29-30).*

Proverbs 16:29-30 says, "A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass." While we often assume that people fall quickly and even unknowingly into evil, God is keenly aware that the froward man spends time pondering evil devices, "He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things." Apart from God's intervention, the plans of men tend only to perversion (Jeremiah 17:9). Hitler's plan to destroy the Jewish people was developed in secret, collaborated upon with many, and executed with surgical precision. Even so, there are many (both believers and unbelievers) who spend enormous amounts of time planning to do evil. They are "froward."

2. *The froward speak perverse words (Prov. 4:24).*

Proverbs 4:24 implores, "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee." Crooked, evil, twisted, deceitful speech will ever mark the conversation of the froward. The mouth will always reveal the reality of the heart, for Luke 6:45 explains, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." This seems to be the number one characteristic of the froward because the author of Proverbs returns to the perverse speech of the froward often.

- *Proverbs 6:12 – A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.*
- *Proverbs 8:8 – All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.*
- *Proverbs 8:13 – The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*
- *Proverbs 10:31-32 – The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.*

Contrary to popular opinion, women do not speak more than men! A recent study, announced by ABC News, indicates that men and women both share about 16,000 words every day.¹ Words have the power to lead a soul to the Savior or turn a soul to sin. The froward weave their crooked and perverse words together to do evil.

3. ***The froward destroy relationships (Prov. 16:28).***

Proverbs 16:28 says, “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” While it is not universally true, in that Proverbs are general truisms, Proverbs 16:7 says, “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Because the fruit of the Spirit is “peace” (Gal. 5:22), it should not surprise us to discover that the froward person is a destroyer of peace and tears apart relationships. All of us are subject to the heartbreak of relational struggles but the life of the froward is filled with broken relationships. While the righteous will experience broken relationships with family members and friends who do not appreciate their allegiance to the Lord (Matt. 10:34-38), the froward bring friction into relationships within the household of faith.

4. ***The froward experience God’s judgment (Prov. 10:31).***

Proverbs 10:31 says, “The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.” Because forwardness is an abomination to God (Proverbs 3:32), we should not be surprised to discover that the end of the froward is sorrow. Proverbs 17:20 says, “He that hath a froward heart findeth no good.” God will plant thorns and snares in their way (Proverbs 22:5).

Believers of struggle with the question, “Why do the wicked prosper” (Jer. 12:1)? It is well to remember, that God promises that the account will be settled some day. Those who trap wolves in Alaska are known to freeze blood on a knife blade and place the blood-pop-sickle into the frozen ground. Hungrily licking the blood off of the razor-sharp knife, the wolf

unknowingly slices its own tongue and eventually bleeds to death. Even so, there are many deceiving, crooked, perverted people living in the temporary prosperity of the froward. They lap hungrily at the pleasures of sin and fail to realize that God’s judgment is sure (Num. 32:23).

Transition: Having given careful consideration to the character of the froward, let’s take time to consider the proverbial antithesis.

THE RIGHTEOUS

The righteous are spoken of more than any other character in the book of Proverbs. As opposed to the froward, the righteous are described by two important Hebrew words.

- The Hebrew word, *Yawshawr*. This word literally means to travel in a straight line which is free from any obstacle. It is a word that is used twenty-five times in Proverbs. For instance, Proverbs 21:29 says, “A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.”
- The Hebrew word, *Tsad-deek*, which speaks of living in compliance to a moral standard or living under the law. Proverbs 29:2 uses this word this way, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

Proverbs pictures the righteous walking straight lines and living in compliance with the law. Before we look more carefully at the character of the righteous man in the book of Proverbs, it is important for us to consider how a person becomes righteous. After all, every man is “born in sin” (Ps. 51:1) and “estranged” from God (Ps. 58:3). There is no righteousness in man apart from God (Is. 64:6).

Sinners become righteous by faith (Rom. 9:30; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 11:7). When a sinner trusts in the substitutionary work of Jesus, who became sin for us in order that we might become righteous through Him (II Cor. 5:21), a new life begins (John 3:3; II Cor. 5:17). The Spirit of God comes to abide within the believer (I Cor. 6:19) providing power to live a life of righteousness (Phil. 4:13). The righteous one portrayed in the book of Proverbs is, in truth, a portrayal of what a Christian should look like.

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=3348076>

1. **The righteous know the secret of God (Prov. 3:32).**

Proverbs 3:32 says, “For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.”

Question: What is the “secret” that God shares with the righteous?

Answer: The Hebrew word, *Cowd*, which is here translated “secret” is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament.

Consider how the word is used in these contexts:

- *Psalm 25:14 – The secret (Cowd) of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*
- *Proverbs 15:22 – Without counsel (Cowd) purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*
- *Jeremiah 23:18 – For who hath stood in the counsel (Cowd) of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? Who hath marked his word, and heard it?*
- *Amos 3:7 – Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret (Cowd) unto his servants the prophets.*

Having looked at the word in its context, it appears to mean the “counsel” or “revelation” of God. In other words, Proverbs 3:32 says, “The froward person is an abomination to the Lord: but His counsel or revelation is given to the righteous!” How wonderfully true! God has provided His people with revelation sufficient for life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3).

2. **The righteous speak honestly (Prov. 13:5; 10:32).**

Proverbs 13:5 says, “A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.” Proverbs 10:32 makes it plain that “the lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.”

One of the chief characteristics of the righteous as contrasted with the froward, the righteous are people of truth. They have heard the command, “Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay” (James 5:12). As the Spirit of God takes control, the old man is

put away and “every man speaks truth with His neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). Where there is no honesty, there is no holiness. Where there is no holiness, there is no real salvation.

3. **The righteous stand securely (Prov. 10:30).**

Proverbs 10:30 encourages the believer with these words, “The righteous shall never be removed.” While the froward stand to experience the awful judgment of God, the righteous will shine forever (Dan. 12:3).

- *Proverbs 11:28 – The righteous shall flourish as a branch.*
- *Proverbs 12:3 – A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.*
- *Proverbs 12:7 – The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.*

The author of the book of Proverbs labors repeatedly to assure the righteous that they are building on the rock. While the froward may build tall and wide, they build on sand and will not stand in the Day of Judgment. When faced by the trials of life, the righteous are able to stand. When adversity surrounds and all things appear hopeless, the righteous are able to stand.

Illustration: During initial construction on the Golden Gate Bridge, no safety devices were used and 23 men fell to their deaths. For the final part of the project, however, a large net was used as a safety precaution. At least 10 men fell into it and were saved from certain death. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that 25% more work was accomplished after the net was installed. Why? Because the men had the assurance of their safety, and they were free to wholeheartedly serve the project.

God promises that the righteous will stand so that they may confidently serve Him!

4. *The righteous walk in straight paths (Prov. 2:20).*

Proverbs 2:20 tells us that the Proverbs have been provided in order, “That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.” Generations have walked the pathway of the righteous and though the path is narrow, it is discernible. Deuteronomy 17:20 challenges the righteous not to turn to the right hand or to the left but keep a straight path. Such a path is predictable because it conforms to the principles laid out in God’s word. On the path of righteousness, God promises to keep our steps from slipping (Ps. 91:12).

God’s word is filled with wonderful promises for the righteous. The book of Proverbs 12:7 says, “The house of the righteous shall stand.”

CONCLUSION

We live in a generation in which the Lord’s sheep tend to like to wear wolves clothing. It is often difficult to discern any difference between professing believers and unbelievers. Those who avoid frowardness while seeking righteousness will stand out as remarkably different and will obtain favor with God!