

What causes a household to flourish? (14:11)

THE TEXT (NASB)

The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.

*The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.
Classic KJV - Proverbs 14:11*

INTRODUCTION



We all want stability.

In this proverb, the wicked live in a house, but the upright have only a tent. Houses are usually safer than tents, but not always.

Bricks and mortar give an appearance of strength and security, but often that's just an appearance, not the reality.

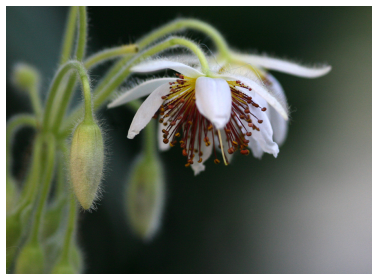


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COMMENTARY

Those who spend all their time and effort in seeking riches, instead of righteousness, often attain riches and build large houses—even palaces—as their dwellings. Yet, if their efforts are shaped by wickedness, they have no real security. The upright may have a humble dwelling, yet it flourishes. Why?

Translation: *House, Flourish*



The Hebrew word for “house,” בית (bă•yit, pronounced “ba-yith”) is used almost 2,000 times in the Old Testament, referring to the common household, home, or family dwelling. The Hebrew word for “tent,” לֶחֶם (lē•hēl, pronounced “oh-hel”), is used almost 350 times, pointing to the shelter of animal hides or goat hair, used by nomads. Animal skin, canvass or nylon tents are clearly less permanent than houses, but the message here is not about construction material.

The Hebrew word for “flourish,” פָּרַח (pā•răḥ, pronounced “pah-rakh”), is used 36 times, also translated as “grows,” “buds” or “blossoms.” So the dwelling of the upright has a fertile, attractive promise, while the residence of the wicked is doomed. The text has a message about invisible forces acting upon people’s households. How secure is my home? How about yours?

House or Home



We shouldn’t look at the shell. Most of us pour out most of our wealth into our personal residences. The Canadian tax system encourages this as an investment, since there’s no capital gains tax on the appreciation of our primary residences. And many Americans over-build or rebuild their houses with second mortgages, since their mortgage interest is tax deductible.



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Yet neither the size nor luxury of a personal residence determines its true stability.

Many of us become “house rich, cash poor,” meaning that too much of our income goes into too much housing, so we have little money left for the other necessities of life—or our families. Ironically, a well-built house does not imply a stable home. This proverb suggests a wiser financial strategy: Spending time and money on being upright. According to Psalm 49:11, the wicked delude themselves into thinking that their houses are forever—indestructible. The very wealthy seek a sense of permanence or even immortality, by naming estates, corporations or foundations after themselves. The overall well-being of a dwelling or those who live in it depends more on the character of its inhabitants, than the materials of its construction.

The wicked seek security or protection in visible stones, bricks, and mortar. The upright also seek security and protection. They surround themselves with the invisible Rock of Ages.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus described two houses with dramatically different fates. After giving a lengthy discourse on honesty, (Matthew 7: 1-29, Luke 6:20-48), Jesus said that His listeners fall into one of two sorts: Those who hear and happily change their lives, and those who hear and do nothing.

The sort who hear and rebuild their lives are like homebuilders, who dig deep to build on bedrock. The sort who hear and do not respond are like homebuilders, who do not want the toil of digging down to a solid foundation. In sunny weather, both houses looked lovely. Perhaps those without any foundations look more elegant, since the money was available for frills. But, when the tempest hits both sorts, those with the bedrock foundations stay standing, while “great is the ruin” of the others.

Personal obedience to Jesus' teachings, even or especially when it's seen by God alone, is the key to our households flourishing or failing.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Perform a self-diagnosis on how you build security for yourself and your family.
- Use righteousness rather than more riches to reinforce your defenses.
- Don't build a castle of rock or money for your family. Protection comes in better ways. Seek blessings from God.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), destruction, flourish, house, insecurity, investments, protection, security, righteous, wicked

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Tax-Driven Ted?



Death and taxes: The only things we can be sure of! Certainly that's the way Tax-Driven Ted sees it. Whereas others pay some or little attention to taxes, he is consumed by tax minimization. Ted is tax obsessed. Why? For many Canadians, if left unmanaged, taxes eliminate over 50% of income. In Canada tax freedom day falls in July.

Tax freedom day is the day of the year when you have paid all your taxes and can now keep the rest of the money you earn. Tax-Driven Ted will spend money just to get a write-off. He fails to seriously evaluate the underlying economics behind the decision and chooses to focus on the tax consequences. He loves to borrow money to invest simply because he can write off the interest costs of amount borrowed. This investment technique is called leveraging and is commonplace.

Ted doesn't believe he should pay any taxes. After all, the government wastes money. It's extremely inefficient. He uses every angle to reduce taxes. He's always looking for loopholes, credits, or write-offs. *His focus is not on customer satisfaction but on tax reduction.*



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He goes on trips and conferences so that he can take the tax write-offs. He loves limited partnerships investments and other tax shelters. For some investors tax considerations are secondary, but for Tax-Driven Ted, they come first.

