

13/02/25



The passage for study is here:

Verse 27 An ungodly man digs up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

The NET version is: A wicked scoundrel digs up evil, and his slander is like a scorching fire.

There can be at least two meanings to this verse 27.

But first, it is worth thinking about if this verse has a literal understanding in any way. One example comes to mind in Genesis 26:15: *For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.*

The Philistines were jealous and angry that the Hebrew Abraham who had so many cattle and trained servants, and they saw him as a threat. Also they – who were ungodly dug around to block up and ruin the hard work that the servants of Abraham had carried out, so that there could be no water available, and this the threat of these Hebrews would soon pass.

This has a modern counterpart, where the Truth is everywhere spoken against, as the pure water of the word is so sweet and fresh, that once people know the truth, they are set free, and no longer do they want to drink from the poisoned well, or the broken cistern of the ungodly, so the ungodly will do anything to deceive, and corrupt the true teaching

Elsewhere in the scripture, digging in a bad way has a spiritual lesson – as seen in

- *Job 6:27: Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend.*
- *Psalms 7:15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.*
- *Psalms 119:85 The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.*

There are other passages similar to this, but these show the effort the ungodly will go to dig and go to a lot of effort to dig a hole for others to fall into. They create a trap, hoping that the unwary, or the trusting person will fall into that trap. This can be by crooks and thieves in everyday life, or by those who introduce false teachings in a sly way in order lead others astray.

Returning to the verse for the study, it can be understood in at least two ways.

- 1) It can be understood as meaning that the ungodly man makes a huge effort to find evil. The wickedness he stumbles upon in his nasty little life isn't enough that the evil he casually finds isn't enough to satisfy his desire. He digs up evil, finding the effort to discover even more evil in his mind, or devoting hours of research in wicked pursuits.

This sentiment is perhaps explained in other words in this passage: *Isaiah 5:18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:*

Some examples of this in the Bible are characters such as Haman, of whom we read recently in the readings who invented all sorts of ways of crushing his enemies the Jews. Also perhaps Nabal of whom we read 1 Samuel 25: 17 *Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all*

*his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.*

- 2) That huge effort is made by someone in an effort to blacken the character of someone else. An example of this is when a politician or a public person has their past examined to see if they have weaknesses, so that they can be blackmailed, or how opposing politicians can try their hardest to rubbish their opponent by making up stories.

Further thought seems to steer a preference for meaning number 2. The reason being that this idea connects better to the second half of the verse... *in his lips there is as a burning fire*. That is the digging up of evil is associated with speech, or words. Words and speech that is not true it seems.

There are various examples of this occurring in the Bible.

2 Samuel 20:1: *And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.* This man had dark reasons of revenge against David, as he was a follower of the house of Saul. He took every opportunity to bad mouth David in public.

Another example is Doeg the Edomite, who was not squeamish in the least when it came to digging up the dirt, informing Saul of the helpfulness of the priests to David, and was willing to kill every one of them. David wrote of him: Psalms 52:2-4 *Thy tongue devises mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Thou love all devouring words, O you deceitful tongue.*

He describes others as well, - perhaps all those who kept telling Saul where he was hiding, or perhaps he was referring to his nephew

Jonadab, who encouraged his son Amnon to rape his daughter Tamar, or perhaps those who encouraged Absalom to rebel against the king... the diggers of dirt were a plenty. *Psalms 57:4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.*

Of course we are familiar with what James has to say: James 3:6: *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*

For this reason, Jesus lays down the necessary process of dealing with unrepentant past sins, so that it is not digging up the dirt so to speak about someone else, but ensuring that corruption does not enter the congregation. Spreading lies about people is of course unacceptable, and a wickedness. But spreading bad truths about people is also a sin. However, ungodliness still has to be addressed, and to ensure that the sinner has every opportunity of correcting his mistakes, and his dignity maintained, and that love is shown, Jesus explains how first it should be between him and thee alone. If there is no acknowledgement of that sin, then others should be invited in, so that by the mouth of two or three is the matter established. If the person still refuses to accept their sinfulness and is unrepentant, then the matter should be put before the ecclesia.

Turning away from digging up evil, the effort of digging the well of pure water should instead be the focus. Getting to the bottom of the meaning of a verse is like digging. Like looking for buried treasure. It means effort should be made. Psalm 40:6, 7 we read: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me...*

The words mine ears have you opened can be translated *as mine ears you have digged*... Great concentration, attention, effort into discovering the truth. This effort is described in Proverbs 2:4 If you seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures...

Brother Terry