

## 98-08-23a

Let's begin our worship this morning with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the privilege of gathering together to be nourished up in the truth of your word, to gain the benefit of the exercise of the gifts that you have bestowed through your spirit on each one of us. We thank you for the encouragement and the peace in our souls that we enjoy as we fellowship together in Christ.

We pray this morning as we study your word that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, that these things will not only make sense to us at an intellectual level, but also as the content of your word brings its divine power into our souls, that these things will transform us and enable us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 1. Psalm 1. When I was a little boy, I used to like it when the pastor or the Sunday school teacher would say, turn to the Psalms, because one of my first teachers had said, Psalms are the easiest thing to find. Just crack your Bible open in the middle and nine times out of ten it will fall open in the Psalms. And when we used to have what the Baptists called sword drills to find passages in the scripture, if it was anywhere near the Psalms, I knew just crack open the Bible in the middle and start from there.

But Psalm 1, of course, serves as an introduction to the collection of Psalms. Actually, Psalm 1 and 2 together anticipate many of the themes that the Psalms return to over and over again. But Psalm 1 expresses a very important concept that we have encountered in Genesis.

And this is the idea of guidance from God with regard to our associations. How do we determine with whom to spend our time? How do we discern between an opportunity to be of benefit to someone and to speak the truth to them in love and have them perhaps respond and grow, at least indirectly, as a result of our contact with them? How do we discern between that and an unhealthy association that is going to lead only to greater problems where there is no benefit, there is no reason to continue? It's often difficult to decide. And in a lot of modern traditional church Christianity, people are encouraged, well, get out into your neighborhood and strike up a friendship, talk over the fence to your neighbor and cultivate relationships with people who haven't necessarily expressed any interest or they haven't made the first move or whatever, but cultivate these relationships.

And then this will be something God can use for evangelism or for spiritual growth, whatever. Of course, the underlying assumption there is that you are in a position to be of benefit to that person and not the other way around. It's sort of condescending in that it assumes that you're the only person that has anything to offer in the neighborhood

and that by going out you're going to go spread sunshine into these lives.

And in many cases that may be true. You may be in a neighborhood of people who aren't believers or who don't go to church. But is this a legitimate approach to take? Are we to go out and generate opportunities to cultivate relationships and to create the occasions in which we can then attempt to speak the truth, whether it be the gospel of salvation or the narrow road of the Christian life that leads to blessing and to pleasing God? Well, oddly enough, clear back in the Table of Nations and in the Tower of Babel story, we have answers to these questions.

And this is the subject of Psalm 1, which is our scripture reading this morning. And we have here a distinction that is drawn in the types of people that surround us. There are some with whom we can have a productive and fruitful association.

There are others with whom we cannot. So we'll watch closely as we read to try to detect the characteristics of these categories of people. Psalm 1 begins, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.

He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. As you have in a great deal of the Psalms, and also particularly in Proverbs, you see this sharp distinction made between the righteous and the ungodly. We want to spend just a little bit of time here in Psalm 1, because this illuminates for us much of what we're seeing in Genesis chapter 10.

This Psalm begins in verse 1 by saying, Blessed is the man. The word here, *asherah*, is distinct. It's one of the Hebrew words for blessing.

It's distinct from *barak*. *Barak* is a word that also means blessing, but *barak* means to bless more in the priestly sense. This was the blessing that came in the religious realm of life.

*Asherah* or *ashrim*, these blessings are more in the sense of circumstances. How is your life going to go? This encompasses the spiritual, but also the temporal, the daily life type of thing. The man here is just *haish*.

It is the individual, the person. It is the generic term in Hebrew that can refer to a man or a woman. You can basically translate this the individual in this case.

You have other words for man, such as gibbur, which means the mighty man, or ha'adam, which is man in more the human race sense. But here, blessed or oh how blessed is, this is kind of an interesting construction in Hebrew, because the way the word is formed is unusual, and it brings attention and emphasis on this first word. It is the first word of the Psalms.

You've got 150 Psalms here. This is the very first word. A lot of times the first word or the last word of something is significant.

People have often pointed out that the last word in the Old Testament is, the last phrase there is, else I will smite you with a curse. The last word in the Old Testament is a curse. The last word in the New Testament when you go to Revelation 22 is blessing.

So you have the Old Testament ending in a curse. You have the New Testament ending in blessing. The last word in Genesis is talking about Joseph, and it says in a coffin in Egypt.

That is significant. You end up in a coffin in Egypt in the last word of Genesis. So first word, last word is often significant.

Here the first word in the Psalms, the song book or the hymn book of Israel, is blessing. It is a very emphatic form of the word, asherah or asherim here. You could translate this freely in English as, Oh, how blessed it is.

What a tremendous blessing comes to the individual who. So then you would expect, well, blessing is going to come on someone who is doing some good things or who is doing some right things or who is living the life of faith. But the description of this very blessed person begins with what they do not do.

Here are the things that they have left behind, have separated from. It reminds us of the principle we have seen many times in Scripture, most notably in the passage in 2 Samuel 7, in that area where David wants to build the temple. He says, Here I am living in a palace of cedar, and yet God is still dwelling in a tent, the tabernacle made of skins.

David says, This isn't right. I'm dwelling in this wonderful palace, and God's out here in this somewhat shopworn by this time. It's 400 years old.

They've got the tabernacle out here made of skins and tent poles and pegs and things. He says, That's not right. I want to build a temple for God.

God speaks to David through the prophet Nathan and says, Do you really want to build a house for my name? That's going to be the job for your son. You have a commission for me, which is to finish the commission that I gave to Israel when I brought them out of the land of Egypt and brought them to this land of promise, and that is drive out the enemies. You have got to clear the land out and purge it of the Canaanites, purge it of

the evil, the pagan worship, the phallic cult, the child sacrifice, the abominable practices and the abominable paganism of the inhabitants of the land.

You've got to drive that out and purify the land. That's your job. You're a man of war.

You're a man of blood. I've given you military victory after military victory because that's your commission. You purge the land of evil.

Then your son will build a house for my name and my presence. But the enemies have to be driven out before the presence of God can dwell. Well, we know in this age that there is not an earthly tabernacle or an earthly temple as a dwelling place for the presence of God.

Where is the dwelling place of God today? Several times we are told, you are the temple of God. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, if you have my words and keep them, you're the one that loves me.

And I and my Father will come and make our dwelling place with you. So the dwelling place of God in this age is the soul of the believer who is trusting, the soul of the believer who is oriented to the plan and purpose of God. Well, if we are going to be that dwelling place for the presence of God, the same holds true.

There are certain things we need to purge out of our thinking and out of our lives so that God can take up residence. And this is why Jesus conditions in John when He's talking there in chapter 15 and He says, if you have my words and if you keep them, the man who does these things, he it is who loves me. And I and my Father will come and make our home.

Because the presence of the Word of God, if you have other passages that talk about the washing of water by the Word, we are cleansed and we are purified by the Word of God as we not just hearing it flow over us, but in meditating on it, which is what we have here in Psalm 1. But it begins here. We know that in verse 2, His delight is in the law of the Lord and He meditates in that. But what did He do first? He has separated from something.

He has gotten Himself away from certain things that are inhibiting or prohibiting things that are interfering with the cleansing and the fellowship that are available in God. So blessed is the man who does not do the following things. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

The word here for walk in Hebrew is halak, H-A-L-A-K. It's the standard word that means to walk or to go. And it was used both literally and figuratively just as the Greek term for walking, pateo or peripateo.

Pateo, you have that associated with the foot and peri means around. So to walk around,

to walk about was used literally and figuratively. And we have the same thing in English when we say, well, especially in Christian circles, they talk about, well, what is your walk? Are you walking with the Lord? Even in secular terms, people say, well, if you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk.

And it has the idea of lifestyle or of your practices and your habits, the trend in your life. And that's true here. So we know that this is not a literal place where you are traveling by foot, but this has the idea of lifestyle, pattern of life or behavior.

So what kind of refraining is this person doing in their lifestyle? He walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. This makes sense just on the surface of it. The word here for counsel is atzat.

That's the construct form, at least in Hebrew. Atzat. And this is the advice, the guidance, the recommendations that someone gives.

And notice it doesn't say he doesn't walk according to ungodly advice. Somebody says, oh, do the immoral thing. Do the deceitful thing.

It doesn't say that this is the man who does not walk according to ungodly counsel. It says he doesn't walk in the counsel that comes from the source of the ungodly. The counsel may be fine.

It doesn't say what kind of counsel it is. It doesn't talk about the nature of the counsel. You don't say, well, here's a person that's really wise, so I'll analyze what they're saying, and if it's good advice, I'll take it.

It doesn't say analyze the advice and figure out if it's good or bad. This man who's blessed doesn't walk according to the counsel that comes from the ungodly. It's the source of the counsel that is under consideration here.

And ungodly, here, is a very interesting word in Hebrew. It is the rashaim, the ungodly ones. This is a category of people.

And rasha, if you trace it back to its roots, it literally means something that's loose. It has a cognate. Arabic is really close to Hebrew.

You can find out a lot about the sense of a word by looking at Arabic and some of the other ancient cognate languages. And in Arabic, they use the same word for a basket that isn't woven tight. If you've ever dealt with baskets, or ever made any especially, but even if you buy them, I was traveling back from way down in the Rio Grande Valley this past week, and there was a man in front of me in line at the airport who had been over to Mexico.

He had this great big basket. It was obviously, everybody could just look at him and tell

off. So he went over to Mexico.

It was just a five-minute drive over the border from down there in Mission, Texas. So he was standing there, and he was sort of sheepish, and he said yes. A couple of his friends were teasing him about, well, how much did they ask for it, and how much did you actually pay? They were asking \$18, and he paid \$12.

They said, well, it's only worth \$6, and you should have realized that they mark everything up three times, and so forth. But then they were looking at the basket. It was kind of an odd-looking thing.

It was quite large, and it looked almost like a picnic hamper, and nobody could figure out if it was supposed to be a purse or a picnic basket or exactly what. The lid didn't remove easily. But one of the things I noticed about the basket as I was standing behind these guys as they were jesting with one another is that the basket was really a nice basket.

I mean, it was very tightly woven. It had a nice, intricate pattern of weaving, and it was a well-made basket. You don't always get the highest quality.

It kind of depends on who made it and where it comes from. But this was a tightly woven basket, and if it's tightly woven, it's going to last longer. If you have something that's loosely woven, it tends to shift and work loose and fall apart.

That's what this word means. It literally means loose, loosely woven, which goes to our idea of integrity. Integrity is something that's integral.

We talk about structural integrity. It means it holds together. It doesn't fall apart under stress or under pressure.

And when you talk about the ungodly, this doesn't say anything about God or the lack of God. It's talking about the looseness or lack of structure in someone's thinking. Arabs also use this word for someone's limbs.

You know, there are afflictions where people can't control their movement. They can't control their arms and legs very well. And especially in underdeveloped countries, you can go to the marketplace and you'll see these pathetic people who are, because of polio or scoliosis or whatever they might have had, move in a very twisted and seemingly uncontrolled fashion as they try to move.

And the Arabs use this word for that type of movement, the uncontrolled nature of the limbs. They don't work right. They don't follow the pattern that a normal arm or a leg would follow.

It means, in the moral sense, to be someone you would characterize as having moral or ethical turpitude. Your morals and your ethics don't guide your actions very well. It's a

matter of convenience.

Well, I follow my ethics when they're convenient. I follow my morals when they're convenient. But it's loose.

It's uncontrolled. It doesn't hang together and form an integrity in thinking. So, if you have people who have sort of a floating ethic and a convenient morality, and now they are not only guiding their life this way, but they're advising you.

They're giving you advice on how to function. That's what this first phrase is talking about. The man who does not walk according to the counsel that comes from these loosely woven people is going to be blessed.

It doesn't say, sort out their advice, and if it's good, take it, and if it's evil, don't take it. It says, disregard that advice. You may wind up following a course of action that someone like this has recommended, but you're not following it because they recommended it.

You're following it probably in spite of the fact that they recommended it. You're following it for an entirely different set of reasons and with a different goal in mind. So we want to be cautious about, and we think in the individual realm, but this is also in the social realm.

We have a lot of people who get on television and say, this is the way you should raise your children. This is the way you should make your investments. This is the way you should guide your habits of eating or of clothing or of operating in this life.

Well, where is this advice coming from? Who are the people saying you're going to injure your child's self-esteem and psyche if you discipline them? Use the carrot and stick approach for child training. Bait the positive side with a reward, but don't furrow your brow and don't say anything negative if they do something wrong because that's not going to do any good. Instead, just make it more attractive to do the right thing and make it less attractive to do the wrong thing.

But don't chide and don't rebuke and don't instruct or correct. You look at the source of this kind of advice. I mean, you can see the advice itself is flawed, but you look at the source of it and these are people who fall under this category.

So, blessing will come to the man who does not walk. And the walk is the lifestyle. If you pattern your life, if you base your decisions and your policies in life on the counsel coming from this kind of source, it doesn't necessarily matter if that counsel is good or bad.

The fact that you're placing people who are loosely woven in a position of authority or of esteem where you're going to follow their guidance is a bad thing. We have to separate away from that in order to be blessed. So, the man is blessed who does not walk in that

sort of counsel.

The second thing he does not do is it says he does not sit in the seat of the scornful. Now, what on earth, what kind of a chair does a scornful person sit in? What is this talking about? You don't sit in their seat. Well, actually the second one here, I've skipped the last phrase of verse 1, the middle phrase there, who does not stand in the path of sinners.

Does this mean you don't stand there and try to stop the sinner as he goes down his sinful path? To stand here, and actually the verb comes last if you read this in the Hebrew order. It says, Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly and in the path of sinners does not stand. And the word for path here is a word all of you know if you've ever been to any movies recently.

They had a movie that, well, I said recently, I guess it's been 10 or 15 years ago now, but they had a movie called 10 with that little short English guy that plays the piano. And he got all, yeah, Dudley Moore, and he got all infatuated with some girl that he saw on the beach. Well, you remember that actress? Her husband died recently.

Her name is Bo Derrick. She was married to John Derrick. Well, she's got a very good Jewish name there because Derrick is the word we have here.

The way of the sinner is Derrick, D-E-R-E-K. It corresponds to the way that you find in the New Testament in Greek, and it means the road that you travel. You have the wide, broad way that leads to destruction.

You have the narrow way that leads to life and few there be that find it. So the path, this is the highway that these sinners travel. Now, what does it mean to stand in it? The word for stand here is *amad*.

And it says that in this way, in the Derrick of sinners, you do not *amad*, which means to take a stand, to decide that that's where you're going to stand, or to stand still. If you find yourself in that place, you stand there and you don't move away. If you find yourself in this avenue of sinners, you don't just stand still.

You don't just take up your stand and remain. Some people think, well, I'm not walking down the road of the sinners. I'm just standing here.

Well, you can't even do that. You don't take up your stand. You don't remain.

This word is used for the idea of tarrying, to tarry or to delay, to persist or to stand with, to maintain an association with these. And you say, people make a distinction. Well, I'm not walking with them.

I'm not going down that path, but I'm just not removing myself from them. I'm just

standing there instead of walking down that path. Well, this passage says you don't stand there either.

Who are these sinners? What is the nature of this description here? What's the difference in the sinners and the ungodly? The ungodly word there, the rashaim, were loose, uncontrolled, lack of integrity, not guided or in accordance with a standard. Here the word is the tamaim. These are sinners in the sense of those who are guilty of committing a crime.

They are easily identified as those who violate the standard. Earlier you had the idea of their nature. The emphasis was on their nature.

What is typical of them? What is their way? Now, by observation, you know that they have done a wrong. They are a sinner because they have visibly committed an offense. They are an offender.

It is obvious to the casual observer that they feel free to violate the divine standard. And so this is guilt and sin as a condition, as an observable condition. This, by the way, is a word that is used over in Psalm 51.7. Remember, it's kind of a difficult passage, but David says, In sin my mother conceived me, and in guilt she bore me.

Well, this is the word. It means I come from a long line of people who are not just positionally guilty in Adam, but who have demonstrated by their actions that they are sinners. They are guilty of offenses.

That Psalm 51 is a passage to which we will return one of these days. There are some fascinating things there that are parallel to what we have in Genesis. But here, we've seen two things now.

We do not make a habit of life out of following the counsel of those who are obviously without integrity. We do not persist or stand alongside those who are obvious offenders. Then we come to the third category here.

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful. And once again, the verb comes last. It says, Nor in the seat of the scorers does he sit.

Well, this seat is an interesting word. What does it mean to sit in the seat of a scorner? Somebody was sitting in the folding chair. They got up and now you sit there.

This, in Hebrew, has the idea of assembly. To assemble with. To associate with someone.

This is used, for example, over in Job chapter 29, where Job is talking about in the days before his affliction. This is Job chapter 29, verse 2. Look at verse 7. When I went out to the gate by the city, when I took my seat in the open square. This is our word there in verse 7. The young men saw me and hid.

The aged arose and stood. The princes refrained from talking and put their hand on their mouth. The voice of nobles was hushed.

Their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth. When their ear heard it blessed me. When their eye saw it approved me.

Because I delivered the poor who cried out, the fatherless and the one who had no helper. The blessing of the perishing man came upon me. And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

In other words, when he was out in the midst of the people, when he sat in the seat out there in the assembly, people respected his wisdom. They followed his counsel because he was an upright man. He was out in association with the people.

He was kind of like the investment firm there. When he talked, people listened, regardless of their station in life. It's also often used in the Old Testament, this word, which is moshav.

It's used for dwelling place, dwelling in association with other people, to take up dwelling, to take up association, to be in the assembly of or in the company of other people. So we've seen three different aspects of these negative type peoples. We don't walk in their counsel.

We don't stand in their way, their practices, the road they travel to get to their destination. Nor do we assemble with the scoffers. And this word for scoffers or scorers is the leitzim, L-E-T-S-I-M.

This word also, the Y and the U or W in Hebrew, are sometimes interchangeable or stand in for one another. In addition to leitz, you can have lutz. I was thinking about this because some of my family live in Lutz, Florida.

That's the name of the town they live in. It struck me when I saw this in Hebrew. In this scripture, it says you're not supposed to be in the lutz.

But I'm sure that's purely coincidental. The leitzim are the scorers. And literally this means ones who turn aside or disregard.

They sort of consider themselves above something. They disregard it. They scoff at it.

They mock it. They consider it unimportant. They belittle it.

To belittle, to not assign proper respect or importance to something. And we know that this is the case because this word is even used of God. Proverbs has a lot to say about the scoffer and the scorner, and indeed a lot to say about this subject in general.

Turn over with me to Proverbs chapter 1. We may go back and forth a little bit here in

Proverbs. It has so much to say about these things. But look at Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 20.

Wisdom calls aloud. She raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses at the openings of the gates of the city.

Remember, this is the place of assembly. This was the television and the radio. This was the social idea marketplace in the ancient world.

She speaks her words. How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. People are sort of proud of themselves for their wit and their humor and their ability to deflate and poke holes in things that really are of value.

The scorer, if you turn over a few pages to chapter 9 of Proverbs, is described in great detail here. Once again, in chapter 9, Wisdom is speaking and giving a call. In verse 5 of Proverbs 9, Wisdom says, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mixed.

Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding. He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you.

Now, we often think, well, we're supposed to go out into the world and speak truth and confront evil and confront error and confront those who mock and deride and crush them with the weight of the truth and with the righteousness of our God and of our Bible and so forth. I'll tell you what this reminds me of. If there is one place where you can find this late-scene principle in abundance, it is on late-night television on a program called Politically Incorrect.

I would say they could give a number of titles to that show. Morally Incorrect. Ethically Incorrect.

Spiritually Incorrect. And in reality, it belies its name because it is very politically correct for our day and time. But they delight on that program in stacking.

It's a program where there are four people, and it's hosted by a comedian significantly. He will pick a topic for them to talk about, and then they'll have sort of a discussion. It's like sitting in someone's living room and hearing different people exchange ideas about some topic of the day.

They've been on a one-note song for the last several months, which are the difficulties the president has created for himself. And the host of this show is completely in sympathy with the president and can't understand why everyone is so upset. And so night after night after night, they have people on here who seek to deride and scoff at

and mock those who recognize that there is a problem that goes beyond an episode that took place in the White House.

That there are issues of integrity. There are issues of he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much. And the flip side of that coin is if you do not honor your promises, if you do not honor your oath, if you do not honor the commitment that you have made in the presence of witnesses to individuals in your periphery, how can you be expected to honor your oath of office and your commitment that you have made in public to a group of people? This is a reflection of nature, of thought life, of pattern of life.

There are people who take delight. And what they will do is they will put in three people who all agree with the host and then they have one token opposer. And they are carefully chosen for their inability to defend their position.

And you can agree with these people and yet you wish, you know, you'd rather have enemies than some friends of the right position because they pick a weak advocate who they can slaughter. And then it sounds like, well, see, we're right. Look at the four of us and how badly we mocked and scoffed and poked holes in the weak and feeble demonstrations of righteousness that this person tried to make.

A few weeks ago, it was one of the saddest. I inflict this on myself. It reminds me of G. Gordon Liddy.

You know, if you read his book, he used to talk about when he was young, he would light a lighter and hold his hand over it and then just see how long he could keep his hand there. Well, it's kind of that way when you watch these programs. You just see how long you can take it before you have to turn it off in disgust.

But you want to be aware of the thinking of, I mean, you just look at the popularity polls in this country to see what people think is acceptable and what people think is okay. And obviously, the results of popular elections indicate that this is sort of what people want. So you want to be aware.

So I watch this program. This is my feeble defense of why I even watch it. But a couple of weeks ago, the token right person was a girl from a - I can't remember the exact name of the organization.

It was the Society for the Institute of Lifting Up the Truth or something. And the only reason I remember that much is I thought, well, if you make an acronym out of that, it's SILT. But this girl was right in decrying immorality in high places, immorality among those who were supposed to be setting an example and so forth.

But she had no ability to express the foundation for those beliefs. And so these people scoffed and mocked and absolutely cut her to shreds. And in looking at the tattered

remnants of this girl with kind of a high, irritating voice and inability to defend what was essentially a very right position, made everyone think, well, my goodness, what a weak and indefensible position it is to think that you can't have compromise and accept wrong in what we consider to be a small area and just look to the important things.

This is what we're talking about here in verse 7 of Proverbs 9. If you try to correct a scoffer, you're going to get shame for yourself. There are certain people who will not accept correction, who are not interested in rightness. They like, they enjoy the position that they hold.

They like to scoff and to seek to defend their wrong view of life and their lack of integrity. The Bible says, do not correct a scoffer. Christians fail in this all the time.

People try to go up and, well, I'll debate, I'll argue, I'll defend the faith. The faith doesn't need defending. It's got Almighty God behind it.

People who reject the faith and who reject the truth do so because they're anti-God. And we as human beings are not, with our puny arguments and our logic and our weight of righteousness on our side, are not going to knock the scoffing out of a scoffer. God is going to do that Himself, if anybody can.

It's not our place to go try to correct and rebuke the scoffers. If you correct a scoffer, you're going to get shame for yourself. And if you want to see this happen, just tune in Politically Correct.

And out of 3 or 4 nights that you watch it, 2 or 3 times you will see this principle fulfilled. Because the people who are right and who are out there, their position is right, but they're wrong in trying to stand there and argue with scoffers. Do not correct a scoffer.

He will hate you. Rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Find people who are interested in the truth and who are responsive to the truth and dispense your pearls there.

Do not cast your pearls before swine. Jesus said the very same thing, because they will turn and tear you to pieces. Blessed is the man who does not walk according to the counsel of those who are morally and ethically loose.

Blessed is the man who does not take up a stand, who does not tarry, delay, persist in standing in the path of those who are obviously offenders. Blessed is the man who does not assemble with, associate with, spend time with those who are disregards, who have turned aside from the truth of God. Proverbs has an incredible amount to say about the scorners.

We've seen it here in Proverbs. Look at chapter 9, verse 12. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself.

If you scoff, you will bear it alone. Proverbs 14.9 talks about the scoffer. This whole chapter is a contrast between the wise and the foolish.

You can see it in verse 1. The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands. You can see this all the time. You can look at two women who have a household.

They both have a reasonably nice house with reasonably nice furniture, nice curtains, nice situation, nice opportunities, and so forth. One of them appreciates it and builds on that. The other one, all she can do is find fault.

I heard a Jewish rabbi tell a story over the weekend here. He was talking about something completely different, but he repeated a story that came from another source about a man who was married to a wife. She was perfect.

She was absolutely physically beautiful. She had a tremendous character, wonderful personality. She was perfect in every way that you can imagine, with one exception.

She had a birthmark on her cheek. A purple birthmark on her cheek. The man met her, fell in love with her, married her, and was blissfully happy.

But he kept noticing this birthmark on her cheek. He said, you know, she is just perfect in every way, but that darn birthmark. He started to get preoccupied with the birthmark.

He thought, it's such a shame that she's perfect in every other way, but this flaw, this purple mark. He became sort of obsessed with the mark. He finally went to her one day and he said, I love you.

I appreciate you. You're wonderful and you're so beautiful. But what would you think about going and getting an operation and getting this birthmark removed? She said, well, I don't understand.

We've been happy and so forth. He said, well, we've just got to get rid of this mark. She agreed.

So she went and had the operation and they removed the mark. But right at the end of the operation, something went terribly wrong and she died on the operating table. And he lost his wonderful, beautiful wife trying to get rid of this birthmark.

And, of course, the guy went on to make some completely unrelated point. But you have this idea here in verse one. The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

Do you look at the positive things and build on those? Or do you find the flaw and destroy what you have because of the flaw? The Bible says, focus on the things that are good. Whatsoever things are pure and noble and lovely and honorable and of good

report, think on these things and you will have peace. But you can find one flaw and tear your entire house apart.

That's what the fool, that's what the scoffer does. He who walks in verse two here of Proverbs 14, he who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is perverse in his ways despises him. You work all the way down to verse nine.

You have this contrast going back and forth. Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor. Fools mock at sin.

That's exactly what's been happening in our national discourse over the last many months. People say you're making a mountain out of a molehill. You're obsessing on something that is so minor and so inconsequential, something that's private, something that's nobody's business.

And this is a foolish attitude. It does matter. It does make a difference.

And when you hold public office, when you exercise authority on a grand scale that can mean life and death for thousands of people, your private life is an issue. This has been recognized in the military and in the Secret Service and in government service for centuries. You cannot allow yourself to be subverted, to be turned, to be influenced or manipulated because of something in your private life.

This is why homosexuals are not kept in the military or in government service. This is why people who have problems in their personal life are weeded out and are gotten away from positions of high sensitivity and high pressure because if someone gets you in a position of blackmail, they can influence your authority. And this happens.

If you've got a weakness, if you've got a weakness,