

Proverbs 22-08-17a

Welcome to Wednesday night at Grace and Truth Bible Church. Our study continues in the book of Proverbs. We are picking up in verse eight, and we will move through briskly a good chunk of chapter one tonight.

Proverbs chapter one, beginning at verse eight. Let's ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, and we'll begin. Father, it is such a privilege to spend this time together, to look into the truth of your word, and enjoy the nourishment for our souls, the encouragement, the perspective, the enablement and power that comes as your word is used by the Holy Spirit to transform us by the renewing of our minds, to shine light on our path, to give us peace, to give us wisdom, and all of the benefits that we have seen in the first seven verses of this chapter.

We pray that as we look at the remainder together, that the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, help us to understand it and see its pertinence and application in our own lives. We ask it in Jesus name, amen. We have been taking skipping hop steps in Proverbs every other Wednesday for about a month now, and hopefully we'll start to gain some left foot, right foot momentum.

I am not going to review the first seven verses because we have covered them once and reviewed them once, and hopefully you will remember. I will only say this, the purpose of the book stated in verse two is to know wisdom. Everything else in those next verses is an amplification of knowing wisdom.

Here's your first pop quiz question. I know it's early. I know we just got started, but I've already got a quiz question for you.

What do you know about wisdom from a New Testament perspective? We not being Old Testament sons of David and necessarily the direct recipients of this word, this word was delivered to Old Testament saints in an Old Testament day. Solomon received a lot of this from his father, David. And so we're in the observe, interpret and apply category.

See, I'm stalling. I'm giving you a moment to think here. What do you know about wisdom from a New Testament perspective? Okay.

Time's up. Keep your finger here and turn to first Corinthians chapter one, a book we have covered not terribly long ago, Acts, Romans, first Corinthians chapter one. And we are looking for verse 30, verse 29, verse 28 gives us some context, the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen and the things which are not to bring to nothing, the things which are.

God has chosen the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise. And in some ways that's us. We don't look mighty.

We don't look influential. We're not a great political party. We're not a Christian fundamentalist movement.

We're individuals. And yet God has chosen us to bring to nothing. The things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.

You remember that from Haggai then in verse 30, but of him, you are in Christ Jesus who became for us what wisdom, where does our wisdom primarily originate? Where is the power of our wisdom? It isn't in how well we can grasp the concepts and the truths contained in Proverbs, although they are important, they are inspired, they are the word of God and in the hands of the Holy spirit, these truths have great power, but we are a body of Christ, Jesus Christ is our wisdom, it is in him that we possess the Holy spirit that turns these truths contained in the text of scripture into power, transformation, accomplishment, fruit, fruit of the spirit, treasure in heaven, righteousness, laying hold of righteousness by faith, all of that comes through Jesus Christ. So even as we look at these wonderful wise sayings, it's important to keep in that Jesus Christ is our wisdom. He has been made to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Not just how to succeed in this world, not just how to negotiate circumstances and situations, make right decisions, but to represent God on this earth as body of Christ, the way Jesus did in his incarnate body, when he was here, Jesus said, if you have seen me, you have seen the father, John 1 18, a much abused verse in the modern day, we'll be talking about that before long, just because Jesus says, if you've seen me, you've seen the father or no one has seen the father at any time, it is the son who has revealed him, that's John 1 18. If you've seen me, you've seen the father is John 14, seven and eight. After Jesus says, I'm the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father, but by me, Philip says, show us the father and it sufficeth us, show us the father, that'll be enough.

Jesus said, have you been with me so long and you don't realize that if you've seen me, you've seen the father, but these are aspects, you can't absorb the fullness of God from one perspective or one glance at any rate, wisdom, the purpose of the book of Proverbs verse two, to know wisdom, to receive instruction and so on. Well, we are down to verse eight now, having been transitioned from the description of the many facets, the manifold benefits of wisdom, practical, experiential, and so on. In verse seven, the fear of the Lord is the beginning, or the JPS has a note that says the best part, the head of a thing, the tip of a thing, the apex or pinnacle of a thing can be its beginning or it can be its summation, what is raised to the forefront, the salient aspect of something.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Fools don't just ignore it. They're not just apathetic.

They despise it. There is a lot of despising going on in the world today, isn't there? On many sides, including on the part of believers who should not be spending their time being despicable or finding others despicable, despicable. We are not here to despise.

We are here to reflect the glory of God, to be lights shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. If you look just as crooked and perverse as everyone else, if you spend your time in bitter denunciation, in carping and criticizing and finding fault and pointing out flaws and shortcomings, weaknesses, things that may rightfully be despised, it is not our job to point out the despicable. It is our job to reflect glory, to reflect righteousness, to reflect God's goodness and God's wisdom.

We are here to be a positive influence, not a caustic, negative presence. Jesus called out evil in his day. But what percentage would you say are the woe songs to the Pharisees compared to Jesus' teaching in, say, the Sermon on the Mount? Three full chapters in Matthew.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, enter by the narrow gate, exhortations to be reconciled to someone who has ought against you and so on.

Jesus spent a relatively small amount of time in criticism and he did not criticize those who came to him seeking. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin.

Jesus didn't say, I'm glad you're here. Let me tell you everything that's wrong with Pharisees, the Sanhedrin, the government in general, the scribes and hypocrites in particular. Now that you're here and I've got you as a captive audience, let me wag my finger.

Jesus had someone who came to him seeking. And that's why we have verse 16 of John 3. Jesus spoke that to Nicodemus. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

This is good news. And that's what we're here for. Good news.

Fools despise wisdom. Fools despise instruction. And you remember instruction is learning through discipline, learning through structure.

It is not punishment. It is not retribution. It is not slapping somebody who did something wrong.

Instruction is learning through discipline. There is structure. There are consequences for disobedience.

And this is done in a constructive way. Well, we begin now at verse 8. That's our

background. That's our review.

That's our context. My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother. How many parents in this home? Two.

What are their gender assignments? One is a man father. The other is a woman mother. This is the ideal.

You don't always get this. Men were killed in battle and you had widows who had to raise the children. Ladies could die from disease or in childbirth, and the man might have to raise the family.

There is nothing wrong with a single parent home. If that is the assignment, I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. But this is the ideal.

And as Jesus said, you know, the law of Moses permits divorce. But in the beginning, you have male and female. That's the ideal.

Not everybody gets the ideal. And there's no intrinsic problem with living outside the ideal. It doesn't change the fact that the design is such, and then there are exceptions to the design.

Do not forsake the law of your mother. Notice who assures that learning is done in a structured and disciplined environment. Whose job is that in the ideal? Mother or father? Remember the word instruction, learning under discipline.

Discipline in the home is the responsibility of the father, ideally. My son, hear the instruction, the disciplined learning and structured environment provided for, created by, and the guy held accountable before God for how this happens in the family where children are concerned, is the father. And do not forsake the law of your mother.

These are the rules. She's the one that is there while the father's out. Sweating for bread.

The younger children are under the rule, the law, the implementation of that structure, the delegated authority to the mother, and if you transgress, if you violate that law, those rules, wait till your father gets home. If I had a nickel for every time those words were spoken back in the 1950s and 60s, I would be a wealthy man. Why? Remember the flow here.

We're at a turning point in this first section. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Instruction and the law of the mother are synonymous with this wisdom and instruction of verse seven.

Fools despise it. We're going to find a proverb not far in the future. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.

What is it that fools think? I don't like wisdom and I don't like instruction. So how do you cure that in a child? Remember the rest of that proverb? Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him. Sadly, when fools grow up and populate the world, you can't go chasing after them with a stick.

But while they are in the structured, disciplined environment of the home, loving discipline, careful, non-emotional implementation of consequences for bad behavior will drive foolishness out of the heart of the child. It is a biblical responsibility for parents to, in love, with self-control, with every part of the fruit of the spirit functioning, to guide children into wisdom and instruction and away from despising those things. Do not forsake the law of your mother.

This is something that you are in. You can't forsake a thing unless you have it, right? I will never leave thee nor forsake thee is only something God can say if he is present. So you're in it.

Don't forsake it. It is an environment that's been created by your parents. Don't jump out.

Don't slit the back of the tent and sneak away. Why? Verse nine. This, this is such a fascinating verse.

I despaired that I would be able to get out of this verse in two sessions tonight in verse nine. What do you see here? They will be a graceful ornament on your head and chains about your neck. Oh my goodness.

What is they? They are instruction and the instruction of your father and the law of your mother. Right? These will be a graceful ornament on your head. This word ornament is rare.

Uh, it only occurs a couple of times and they're in Proverbs. Um, turn forward to chapter three, verse 22. This is, uh, the word ornament, by the way, basically means reading.

It is something that is, uh, is collected or bundled or added together. Um, and so my son let them in verse 21, three 21, let them not depart from your eyes, keep sound wisdom and discretion. They will be life to your soul and grace to your neck.

We've got a chain around the neck in chapter one, verse nine, and we have grace, the same word. This is Ken from Kanan, C H E N Ken or Kanan, the word for grace, uh, to your neck, uh, flip the page to chapter four, verse nine, starting in verse seven. Wisdom is the principal thing, get wisdom.

And in all you're getting, get understanding, exalt her, and she will promote you, she will bring you honor. When you embrace her, she will place on your head and ornament, same word, a wreath of grace, this is the very same phrase. This is a wreath of grace, a

crown of glory.

She will deliver to you. So we have this parallel statement. This wreath of grace is a crown of glory.

Wreath of grace, crown of glory. Now, what is grace, Ken or Kanan in Hebrew? This is favor. Uh, there are, I think 69 occurrences of this word in the old Testament.

If I have found favor in your sight, if I have found grace in your sight, every time you see that phrase, this is the word. To find Kanan in someone's sight, to find grace. And this means favor you, if you are positively disposed toward me, if you are inclined to smile upon me and grant my request, allow me something, grant me something, because I have found grace in your sight.

So think about this. We're back now in verse nine of Proverbs one, this instruction from the father and this law of the mother, heeding. You used to call this minding, mind your mother.

What does mind mean? Keep in mind what she said. I used to think mind meant obey, but what it really means is think. Think about what your parents ask of you, what they have allowed and what they have prohibited.

Mind, be mindful. They will be a graceful wreath on your head. What do you know about the head? Why would you want a, literally in Hebrew, this is a grace wreath.

It's a grace wreath. Think about baseball teams. Think about football teams.

Think about almost any team that wears a hat or a helmet. What's the easiest way to tell who's on what side? Watch any old Western, especially black and white Westerns. Can't tell the good guys from the bad guys, unless you look at their hats.

You got your white hats and you got your black hats, right? Headgear. How do you know who's the king? How do you know who's the queen? How do you know who's a prince? They're wearing something on their head. This is identification.

So let's think about this a little bit. What do you know about identification on the head? What if it's not a hat? What else could it be? How else could you indicate on somebody's head, whether they're in line for one thing or another? Do you remember our study of Ezekiel in chapter 9, verse 4, where God is about to send judgment on his people, but before he does so, he sends out the ink horn angel, keep your finger here and turn to Ezekiel chapter 9. It is one of the most fascinating episodes and a great comfort. Ezekiel chapter 9 came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month.

What kind of number is that? If you're going to write that with slashes, what would it be?

Six, six, five. One short of six, six, six. Interesting.

No, just before six, six, six, you've got six, six, five, six years, six month, fifth day. As I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there. I looked and there was a likeness like the appearance of fire from the appearance of his waist and downward fire from his waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the color of amber fire.

Fire and bright amber. This symbolically invokes the concept of God's righteous judgment. It is judgment and it is a purifying fire.

He stretched out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my hair. And the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem. I want to see the video of this.

I want to see Ezekiel with the fiery angel, grabbing him by the hair of the head, picking him up bodily by the hair, didn't lift it by the arms, didn't invite him into a chariot, picked him up by the hair and elevated him and transported him to Jerusalem, to the door of the North gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes the jealousy remind you of anything such as when you see the abomination of desolation set up on a wing of the temple, the wing of abomination, the beast, the false prophet of revelation, 666 where you find that in a revelation 13, 16, chapter 13 is all about the first and second beasts and the second beast makes everybody worship the first beast and so on. So similar thing back here in Ezekiel, the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes the jealousy and behold the glory of the Lord God. This is Ezekiel 8, 4, the glory of the God of Israel was there like the vision I saw in the plane.

Now skip down to chapter nine. He called out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, let those who have charge over the city draw near each with a deadly weapon in his hand. What city is Ezekiel in? We just read it.

He's in Jerusalem. What's going on. There is judgment about to take place.

That's why it's a fiery angel. It transports him there to see what happens. So called out in my hearing, let those who have charge over the city draw near each with a deadly weapon in his hand.

Suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces North. That's the North gate where Ezekiel was dropped. He's watching this happen.

He's got a ringside seat, uh, each with his battle ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's ink horn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar coming in from the North.

Where does God dwell sides of the North? The Lord Jesus, the visible glory of God is

going to return from the East, but God, the father of the God of Israel dwells in the North and he details these judgment angels from the North, the voice issues from the North. The call is fulfilled from the North. So the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub where it had been at the threshold of the temple.

He called to the man clothed with linen who had the writer's ink horn at his side. Nine, four, the Lord said to him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem and put a mark where? On the forehead, on the head up where it can be seen of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it to the others. He said, in my hearing, go after him through the city and kill, do not let your eyes spare, nor have any pity, utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women, but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark and begin at my sanctuary.

So they began with the elders who were before the temple right there at the root of the problem. So Ezekiel chapter nine, verse four, ink horn angel, the identifying mark is on the head, specifically on the forehead. I don't have to tell you when you get to revelation, you can skip Ezekiel, still keep your finger in Proverbs.

We go to revelation and started chapter seven, revelation chapter seven. This wreath of grace on your head is something you want to have. It's not just a decoration.

It's not to impress. It isn't like a fancy peacock feather hat or something. It's not a cowboy hat with a nice leather decoration and a arrow through it or something.

This is important. Chapter seven, revelation chapter seven. After these things, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea or on any tree.

This is judgment withholding that which is necessary for life and prosperity on the earth. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea saying, do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. The seal of God on their foreheads.

This is the grace of God. This is the deliverance of God. This is God making an exception of those who are faithful.

Then you have the sealing of these 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe. Flip forward a page to chapter nine, verse four. The scorpions who fly were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth or any green thing or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads, they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them five months, their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

But not those who have the seal of God in their foreheads. Flip forward a few more pages

to Revelation chapter 13, verse 16. The second beast in verse 15 is granted power to give breath to the image of the first beast that the image of the beast should speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

So fascinating that there is a beast and then there is an image of the beast and then there is a second beast and the image of the beast can kill people who don't worship the actual beast. Look at verse 16. He causes all both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name.

On the hand or on the forehead. Now turn over to Revelation chapter 22, verse 4. As soon as I say Revelation 22, where are we? What's the environment in Revelation 22? It's the last chapter of the book. It's the last chapter of the Bible.

What is it describing? The new heavens, new earth and new Jerusalem specifically. So when you get to 22, verse 4, after talking about the river, the water of life and the tree of life bearing fruit, 12 fruits and so on, no more curse. The throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it and his servants shall serve him.

They shall see his face and his name shall be where? On their foreheads. Do you want a comfortable place for the name of God to be written on your forehead? The way to do that, the way to prepare is to cultivate and to strive to earn and to have this wreath of grace on our heads. God is going to look at the head and find out if we have the mark of the beast, as it were, or the seal of the inkhorn angel, those who sigh and cry.

Notice what Ezekiel chapter 9 does not say. The inkhorn angel is not told, go and find those who sigh and cry over the abominations in Jerusalem and who have banded together and formed a committee and an organization and have gotten donations and have organized themselves to go forth and try to right the wrongs of these abominations and have been pleading and cajoling and having meetings and mentoring and doing all kinds of social action to ameliorate these abominations. That is not the criteria.

What is the action that the people who disagree and are shocked and dismayed at those abominations, what is their action? They sigh and cry. They grieve over it. And people would say, well, you know, you're a do nothing.

You're regretting it and you're sighing and crying over it and you're doing nothing. Evidently, this is all God expects of His servants. God does not expect social justice warriors to go out and try to correct these abominations.

Why? Why not? Why would we not be commissioned? Can you think of any verse in Scripture that encourages the people of God, Old Testament or New, to go out into the highways and byways of unbelief, atheism, rejection of God and try to correct it? To love

them into the kingdom. Is there any indication whatsoever that that is our calling? Come out from among them and be you separate. Why? Why wouldn't God do that? We can make a case and think it sounds like a good idea.

Why wouldn't we not go out and, as the old song says, rescue the perishing? Why does God not emphasize that? Why is that not a part of the kingdom of the Son of His love that we go try to just love on people and persuade them by love to come and accept the Lord God? Why doesn't God give us that commission? Hear me. It does not work. The decision to reject God, the decision to choose abomination, the decision to be self-centered and selfish and to set yourself up as God, you will be the arbiter of what is righteous.

You will decide what is right and what is wrong. And if God disagrees, well, that's God's problem, not mine. And people who believe there is a God or who care about His word and His standards, those people have a problem, not me.

God's own power, God's own spirit, and God's own word cannot penetrate that adamant head. If God can't do it, I promise you, you and I cannot do it by love, by persuasion, by argumentation, by demonstration, by evidence, by pointing to history, you cannot convert, you cannot divert the intentionality of someone who has rejected God. God does not detail us.

He does not commission us to go waste our time changing that which cannot be changed because God has granted individuals sovereign free will over their own soul. They are captain of their ship. They're master of their fate in the sense that they are free to choose.

And we cannot do anything other than shine the light of the glory of God. And those who choose to receive a love of truth, love of truth is on offer. It's out there.

People choose whether or not to receive it. Those who do not like to receive the love of the truth, there is no help on God's earth. You can pray that God will renew the opportunity, that He will shine His glory, and that if by any means possible, they can be persuaded, they can be confronted, they can be drawn up short to reconsider their decision.

But there is not a single thing you and I can do. We can sigh. We can cry over abominations.

We can't fix them. We can't slow them down. We cannot throw ourselves in the path.

They will simply run us over. It is a harsh and sad truth. But Christians are called exactly nowhere in the New Testament.

Israelites are called exactly nowhere in Old Testament scripture to go out and try to right

the wrongs in society. Jesus never visited a slave market and called out those who were selling slaves in Jerusalem. And the place was filthy with them.

The only time He interfered with the active prosecution of evil is when He went to the temple and threw out the money changers. He did it once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end. Why? Did He think He was going to stop people from greed, avarice, bilking pilgrims, and all the rest of it? What was His rationale for doing that? My house shall be called a house of prayer according to scripture, but you have made it a den of thieves.

It's His house. The temple isn't my house. It's the Lord's house.

And Jesus called out the hollow religiosity and hypocrisy that masqueraded as righteousness and was actually evil. But He only did it twice. He didn't detail a disciple.

He didn't go there every day and stop people bringing animals in and money changers charging exorbitant rates. He did it in three and a half years. He did it once at the beginning and once at the end.

And it was about the sanctity and the holiness of God's house, which was supposed to be a house of prayer. But the contrast here, this ornament of grace on the head, this wreath of grace, isn't just a decoration. It is an identification.

We should be visibly different. You can't get this wreath of grace from anyone but God. With God's wisdom, with God's law, as inculcated by parents in the home, it is an identifying mark.

Well, we're not even through verse nine. We have two more things to observe here before we move to verse 10. After the break.