

Proverbs 22-08-24a

Good evening. Welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's great to see and hear everyone that has joined us this evening from near and far.

We're in the book of Proverbs. We're picking up tonight in chapter one, verse 20, Wisdom calls aloud outside. We've had an extensive introduction.

We know the purpose of the book. We know the theme. We know the importance and the wide and varied benefits of wisdom that have been stated.

Now wisdom herself is going to speak. As we look at this together, let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study, and we'll begin. Father, thank you for granting us another day, another opportunity to see the effect of your love and your grace and your mercy toward us.

We are conscious of our undeserving nature and our shortfalls. And yet you, because of the Lord Jesus Christ, have taken us to yourself. You have elevated us.

You have granted us of your spirit and your word. You have woven us into the fabric of your plan and purpose and granted to us eternal life. We thank you for that.

We thank you for the nourishment for our souls that we find in your word. And we pray that as we look at this portion together, that your Holy Spirit will impress it on each of our hearts, help us to understand it and see its pertinence in our own lives. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. We read our passage, Proverbs chapter one, verse 20 and following. Wisdom calls aloud outside.

She raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses I like the text note you have there from the top of the walls. I think that is probably legitimate.

She cries out from the tops of the walls at the openings of the gates in the city. She speaks her words. How long you simple ones will you love simplicity for scorners to light in their scorning and fools hate knowledge.

Turn and my rebuke. Surely I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you because I have called in.

You refused. I've stretched out my hand and no one regarded because you disdained all my counsel and would have none of my rebuke. I also will laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you, then they

will call upon me and I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke.

Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way and be filled to the full with their own fancies for the turning away of the simple will slay them and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But whoever listens to me will dwell safely and will be secure without fear of evil." Quite a strong message. In particular, I think one of the more difficult portions of it is the idea in the center here that verse 26, I will laugh at your calamity and I will mock when your terror comes.

We think this seems very insensitive, very callous perhaps, but we will see as we look at the uses of this word, what it entails and why this particular feature is expressed. But let's begin at the beginning. Wisdom calls aloud outside.

She raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out from the tops of the walls at the openings of the gates in the city. She speaks her words.

What does this tell us? Christianity, specifically Biblical faith, Old Testament and new in general, is not a mystery religion. One of the valid criticisms of various expressions of Christian faith, both historical and relatively recent, is that it created something of an us and them mentality. We have the secret knowledge, we've got the Gnostic insider's view, and the rest of y'all are kind of ignorant, unlearned.

Your pastor doesn't know enough Greek. You haven't studied any Old Testament from the Hebrew. You don't have our vocabulary.

You don't have our doctrinal structure or what have you. And whether intentionally or unintentionally, there has been, even within the experience of some of us, the creation of an us and them sort of attitude that partakes of pride and of delight in knowing something you think someone else doesn't know. That is the farthest thing from what Scripture teaches.

Wisdom is available. Wisdom is not in a secret place inviting a certain select few to the inner chamber to hear it. It is not, as some organizations will have, where you wear special outfits and go into chambers and utter the privy incantations and so on that are found in books that are possessed by only a few.

It's just complete nonsense. God, like the Lord Jesus, talking about a lamp stand, is not putting knowledge of himself under a basket. It is on a lamp stand.

It has been lifted on high. What may be known of God is manifest in the very highest things you can see. The sky itself, to every normal person that doesn't suffer from blindness or doesn't live in London, can see the sky.

You can see the greater light by day, the lesser light by night. You can see the stars. Known of God is manifest in creation, manifest, made evident.

There is a witness to God. The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows forth his handiwork.

Day unto day, night unto night reveals knowledge, that there is a plan and purpose, that there is order and power behind everything we experience on this earth and around us. What we observe in the universe speaks of God. It is not hidden.

It is not secret. It's not designed to be a mystery. This is pictured here as wisdom calling aloud outside.

These are public areas of proclamation. To get better projection, she raises her voice in the open squares. She's not creeping down an alley, whispering into windows.

It is available to everyone. What does it say in Romans 1? That because what may be known of God is manifest, they are without excuse. Those who suppress the truth out of unrighteous motives have no excuse.

You can't say, well, there wasn't good preaching in my area. I didn't really hear the gospel. There were no good examples.

The church people I came in contact with were all hypocrites, and it led me astray. Sorry, no. God has sent forth his spirit who convicts the world.

Anybody who needs a lot of persuasion that there is sin has a very odd definition of sin. We all know that there is moral shortcoming. There are moral outrages perpetrated that we are to put a on the Old Testament scripture.

We are all as an unclean thing. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away.

We know ourselves. We know the corruption that is within. We are aware.

Sin. Righteousness. The very fact that we recognize sin means we know that there is an alternative.

There is righteousness. There is an interesting speculative argument when you are trying to prove to someone that there is a God and so on, a source of righteousness. If we had all evolved, how would we arrive at the notion of an ideal or of righteousness? Because you never see it around you.

Why would we complain about things not being as they should be? What makes us think that there is such a thing as should be? People should be generous, and should be fair, and should be selfless, and should be looking out for the needs of others. The very fact

that we have that notion in our souls, that things are not as they should be, that should be is righteousness. Sin.

Righteousness. And there is going to come a day of reckoning, a day of accountability, judgment. Sin.

Righteousness. Judgment. Jesus speaks of this in the Gospel of John, that this is the ministry of God's Spirit.

When He comes, He convicts the world of these things. So, when wisdom calls aloud outside and raises her voice in the open squares, cries out from the walls and at the openings of the gates in the city, notice these are open gates. There is no one that is barred from the city and can't come in, or wisdom gives an invitation that cannot be susceptible to response.

These are open gates, open squares. Wisdom calls out in places where anyone can respond and come to her. It is not the Calvinist idea that, well, I'm preaching the Gospel, but you have not been given the grace to respond.

So, you can hear it, but you can't do anything about it. This is found nowhere in the Bible. When God speaks, when God's wisdom calls out, there is the imminent ability to respond.

Everyone is able. This is why Romans 1 says, they are without excuse. So, she speaks her words, and here are the words in verse 22.

So, what we glean from verse 20 and 21 is the proclamation from wisdom, the proclamation of God's truth creates responsibility. Isn't it interesting, the idea of response is in responsibility. Just put a hyphen there, and the message communicates responsibility.

We are able to respond, and we are accountable for the response. And as you remember from what we just read further down, that accountability is coming, and consequences are inevitable. So, here are the words in verse 22.

How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. There is an idea that there are people who just really can't help being short of good moral sense. They just really can't help making bad choices.

It's hereditary. It's environmental. They came from a bad home.

They went to a poor school. They were somehow disadvantaged by any number of ways. There are two responses to that.

One is observational, and the other is scriptural. Observationally, for every person you

point to and say, well, you really couldn't expect them to do anything but go wrong because look at their background, look at their home life, look at their origins, look at their shaping influences, and so on. You can find at least one, if not more, others who come from the same background, had the same pitfalls, and have overcome them by choice.

You can look at something as an excuse to be weak, and to be inactive, and to be self-gratifying, and to expect others to act on your behalf, or you can look at it as a challenge to be overcome, as a way to overcome those setbacks. And once again, it is an illustration of choice. God has given us the gift.

This is a part of being made in His image, and after His likeness, is that we have self-determination. Now, to choose a thing is not necessarily to be able to do a thing. We have freedom of choice.

We do not always have freedom of action. Paul talks about this in Romans, what I will to do. I find a law within me.

I want to do it, but I can't. Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, who gives us that victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. While we may wish to be good, choose to be good, it is like choosing to be thin, or choosing to be muscled, or choosing to be fast, or skilled, or well-off.

You can make a choice that you cannot fulfill, but when it comes to moral choice, when it comes to spiritual decisions, God, along with granting the opportunity to make that decision, gives us the power to implement, and He accomplishes salvation as a result of the choice. We can't save ourselves, but we can choose to be saved, and then God does the heavy lifting. So that is the idea here.

How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? You think, who would love? And this is harsher in Hebrew than it is in English. Simple in Hebrew means stupid. Stupid in the original sense of the word.

If you've read some well-written literature from many decades ago, a century or two ago, when it talks about stupid, it doesn't really reflect on intellectual capacity. Stupid means incapable, stupid with weariness, stupid with fatigue, and incapable of grasping and acting because of a debilitation. So just to freshen the vocabulary a little bit, how long, you debilitated ones, will you love debilitation? How long, you handicapped ones, will you love being handicapped? In other words, I am offering you ability, I am offering you facility, you are being offered by wisdom capability, and a way out, and a way up, deliverance.

This is what the word salvation means. How long, you incapable, will you enjoy your incapability? Do people enjoy claiming victimhood? Do they enjoy and rely on things that

allow them to be catered to, and to be ministered to by others, and to be at ease waiting for someone else to do the things that need doing, and to meet needs, and so on? There is an element in every human soul, because we are all fallen, that argues for laziness, argues that, well, if I can get paid without working, why would I work to get paid? If I can eat without having to cook the meal, why would I cook a meal? I will just love the expectation that somebody else, some other factor or force, is going to meet my needs without me having to put myself out. So this appeals, and it is something we have to overcome.

All of us have this at work within us. We overcome it to varying degrees. With the Spirit of God and the Word of God in our souls, we can move significantly away from this idea, but the taint is in all of us, because we are all children of Adam.

So how long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? The question is pertinent. You love simplicity, that's a fact. It doesn't say, why do you love simplicity, does it? It doesn't say, how do you love simplicity? I just don't understand.

It's a given that the simple love simplicity doesn't ask why or how, it says, how long? You need to make a choice to stop doing what you are doing, to recognize it for what it is, and grab the life ring that is being thrown. Seize and lay hold of the deliverance that is being offered. How long will you love it? Scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.

It is always easier to tear something apart than it is to build it. Those of us who take things apart and then try to put them back together have this experience almost daily. Take a carburetor apart.

Take something electrical apart that has a lot of wires and connectors, like a car door. Take anything apart. If you really want a challenge, take two or three things apart, all in the same space, and then try putting them back together.

If you didn't take pictures, if you didn't take notes, if you didn't label things and put them in ziplocs or so on, it is always easier to tear something apart than it is to put it together. It is easier to criticize and carp about a problem than it is to derive and implement a solution. You can look around the country and say, problem, problem, problem.

Well, what's your solution? There is the old secular saying that if you're not a part of the solution, you are part of the problem. But sometimes solutions are offered that are not practical, that actually create more problems than they solve. Think thalidomide, if you're old enough to know what that is and what it did.

I knew some kids, I went to school with kids who suffered from their mothers having been administered thalidomide. It's not pretty. Sometimes our best intentions fall grievously short because we're human, we're fallible, we're shortsighted.

Sometimes we're driven by greed. Solutions will be offered that benefit someone and don't actually selflessly provide meaningful change. So how long will you love simplicity? Scorners delight in their scorning.

It is fun to criticize. It is easy to mock. Anybody can find fault.

I would not be surprised when we go to glory. This is somewhat facetious, but there are people who might come up there and say, you know, why didn't they make this Golden Street a little wider? You know, this Pearl Gate kind of hurts my eyes. Couldn't they have toned this down a little bit so I could get in without being blinded? You know, this mansion, the bathrooms are in all the wrong places.

It's too far from here to the River of the Tree of Life. I know somebody that's a lot closer. They've got riverfront property.

They just walk down their backyard bank and go pluck fruit from the Tree of Life. I've got to walk clear across the city. They didn't even let me in the city.

I've got to ask fruit. I've got to wait for a wagon to come creaking down the road that's got leaves from the Tree of Life for my healing. Can you imagine? Carping and criticizing.

It doesn't matter who you are. The Lord Jesus Christ was perfect. Perfect.

All caps. Perfect. Never uttered a wrong word.

Never made a wrong move. Never had a bad motive. Selfless.

Sacrificial. As no other man has ever been. How criticized was he? They killed him because they couldn't stand him.

Scorners love to scorn. Mockers love to mock. The Pharisees, the scribes, Jesus is hanging on the cross, dying for the sins of the world, and they're mocking him.

Well, you who's going to raise the temple in three days, deliver yourself. If you're who you say you are, come down from the cross. Impress us.

And there is a gratifying, prideful satisfaction in looking at others. I say this carefully and with great sorrow, but the community of Christians, of which we are a part, is infected, grievously so, with that guy-itis. Look at those and what they're doing wrong.

Our social fabric, our political fabric, is infected malignantly and terminally with so much bitterness and hatred and invective. Scorners love to scorn. Pick any political point of view.

Pick any social point of view. If we are not rehabilitated, if we are not enabled and empowered by God and His Spirit to love as Christ loved, to be patient as Christ was

patient, to have the fruit of the Spirit, which is joy and peace and long-suffering and gentleness. Try reading social media for more than five minutes and see if you can still attain to all of those fruits of the Spirit.

Gentleness, goodness, patience, self-control. This is why I don't have a posting account on any social media. I don't trust myself to not let fly.

And this is not good. Loving to scorn, loving to poke our finger in someone else's eye when we need to have three fingers pointing back into our own eyes and saying, there but the grace of God, go I. And if I don't avail myself of the grace of God, if I do not listen to the call of wisdom, which is publicly available, turn you at my reproof, verse 23. Turn at my rebuke.

Look at the benefit. If you will listen, if you will stop, you know, scorn is never, to my knowledge, really directed at self. You can be disappointed.

You can be grieved. You can be angry with yourself. You can be a lot of things.

But we don't typically scorn ourselves. Scorn is pretty much always directed outward. I scorn that thing.

I scorn that person. I scorn that action. I scorn that policy.

And scorn is disdain. It is bitter denunciation. It is sort of a prideful, how could you be so screwed up as you are? Individuals, groups, what have you.

Turn at my rebuke. I will pour out my spirit on you. Think about this now.

If I was writing the Bible and I could just make up any promise I want, if I'm scorning things and finding fault with all this other stuff and wisdom is crying out, and she says, if you'll listen to me, I'll handle all that stuff you're scorning. I'll go out there and fix that problem. I'll grab those people by the stack and swivel and straighten them right up.

I'll deal consequences to these heinous ingrates and malfunctioning ne'er-do-wells. You listen to me and I'll put the world right. What is it that wisdom does? If you will turn at my rebuke, I will pour out my spirit on you.

We won't need to fix the world because you will be delivered from the world. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. The world is going to be fixed in God's good time, in God's good way.

There is going to be a rod of iron swinging. There are going to be sons of David on the throne out of Jerusalem. The millennial kingdom is going to be near perfect.

You want to see good justice? You want to see proper government? You want to see fairness? You want to see justice? Do you want to see the poor and the widows and the

orphans and the disadvantaged cared for? The millennial kingdom is going to illustrate how it is done. Not until then will any efforts in that direction succeed. I am not saying that we should not endeavor to do everything we can for widows and orphans, disadvantaged.

We are in the middle of looking at the criterion of the sheep and goats judgment. Did you or did you not feed me when I was hungry, clothe me when I was naked, visit me when I was sick or in prison, and so on. However, there are three things to note about this.

We are looking at the personal nature of what wisdom, God's wisdom, is designed to do. It is not designed to rehabilitate the world as an environment. It is designed to rehabilitate me and you as individuals.

I cannot get God to rehabilitate you and you cannot get God to rehabilitate me. Each of us individually has to hear the rebuke, has to turn at that rebuke, and enjoy the benefit of God's Spirit being poured out on us. You cannot fix other people.

There is no scorn. There is no criticism. There is no constructive, I will just love you into changing your mind.

There is no power on this earth, and I say that intentionally and specifically, there is no power on this earth that can fix what is broken here. You can't do it. I can't do it.

If we collectivize and band together to try to do it, this is assembling the uranium into a smaller and smaller package, and we are just simply going to go nuclear and create more destruction than we ever thought we could fix. Turn to John chapter 4. We are looking for verse 35. Remember the geography of John? Chapter 1 is in the beginning and the theological introduction, and then you have the baptism and the first disciples recruited right there on the banks of the Jordan.

Chapter 2 is the wedding feast of Cana. Chapter 3 is the interview with Nicodemus, and then chapter 4, this is where you get to the woman at the well, and toward the end of that, the disciples are marveling that he is talking with this woman, and has he got something to eat? In verse 34 he says, My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. Do you not say, There are still four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, they are already white for harvest.

And he who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit unto with a view toward eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. He who sows and he who reaps rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, One sows and another reaps.

I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. Remember our Sunday morning study, I know you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sowed, gathering where you have not scattered. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored.

Others have labored and you have entered into their labors. You are benefiting from what someone else has sowed, you are reaping. These servants, think about the parables that we have just seen in Matthew, just for a moment.

The parable of the talents, the parable of the pounds over in Luke. The Lord who is leaving entrusts his servants with something and expects them to do something with it. Because it is given to them, they are now accountable for what they do with it, right? Wisdom in our passage is crying out everywhere.

You cannot help but hear her message. If you're outdoors, you're going to hear this message and you are now accountable for what you do with it. Interestingly, I should probably have mentioned this in the Matthew study instead of now, but it struck me while I was working on Proverbs.

What did the master not challenge his servants over when he came back? They invested what he gave them and it multiplied. He didn't ask them, how much charity did you invest in? How much of this did you give away? Did you take my goods and just give them away, spread them to the masses? Isn't it interesting that in these parables, there's no example of corporate charity. By the way too, the disciples, the servants of the master who are entrusted with the talents or the pounds, didn't band together and say, let's pool our resources.

Let's form an investment committee. Let's get together and make an organization and we can really make this thing go. It is an individual responsibility and it is an individual judgment.

When we return to our study on Sunday, to the sheep and goats, that is a corporate judgment. Something to think about between now and then. What is the difference in individual accountability and corporate? The king is going to sit on the throne of his glory and he's going to gather the nations before him, not a sea of individuals.

These are the nations. The sheep represent nations. The goats represent nations.

Nations are going to be judged nationally. It is not an individual judgment. Nations will be preserved.

Nations will be destroyed. Very interesting detail in that sheep and goats judgment. This is individual, like the minas, like the talents.

So when wisdom cries out, you have a choice. Are you going to continue to love stupidity, simplicity, insensitivity, if you will? Stupid means dull and insensitive. I'm just stupid with fatigue.

I'm stupid when it comes to math because I just have no interest in it. I don't do anything with it. Turn at my rebuke.

Surely I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you. The problem here that is being addressed by wisdom is not, if you will listen to my message, we can fix the city.

We can make the streets better. We can hang better gates. We can have a program of charity.

We can get rid of this corrupt government and get a righteous set of judges and oversight in this city. Wisdom doesn't come to fix the city. What does wisdom come to fix? Me.

Wisdom cries out and addresses me. Wisdom says, Sam, fill in your name here. Turn at my reproof.

I will pour out my spirit, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of grace, the spirit of supplication on you to fix the problem. I have to be fixed. There is so much derision and carping and scorn about the problems of the world and who we think may or may not be responsible for them on all sides.

There is no side that is not guilty of scorn, derision, ad hominem, low, cheap shot, shoddy, shallow, unchristian behavior when it comes to almost anything in the public view. Humility. God resists the proud.

God resists the scornful. God gives grace to whom? The humble. What is humility? I need fixing.

I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you. However, verse 24, and that's what we're going to pick up after the break.

This is our opportunity in verse 23, turn at my rebuke and of a surety, certainly, absolutely. God's promise is if you turn at this reproof, if you stop worrying about everybody else and say, you know, there are areas of my life where I'm just being stupid. I am not yielding.

I am not being sensitive. I'm not listening to God's call, God's word. I need fixing.

I can't be worrying about stuff I can't fix anyway. I can't be trying to change stuff I can't change anyway. You know, the one thing that I absolutely have control over in terms of change, I can make the choice to let God change me.

Wisdom doesn't say, turn at my reproof and then fix yourself. Turn at my rebuke. I will fix you.

I will give you a spirit and the word. What's our constant reminder? How does the power of God come into the life of a believer? Two tubes of epoxy. It is the spirit of God and the word of God.

Nothing else can change us. There is no power on this earth that can fix me except the spirit and the word. And they're mentioned right here.

This is an Old Testament passage, isn't it something? You think, oh, well, the spirit was not yet given. Sorry. If you turn at the rebuke of wisdom, the spirit is poured out.

It just wasn't ubiquitous. I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you, the spirit and the word.

This is the power of God in my heart, in my life. Nothing else will work. Not resolve, not mentoring, not discipleship, not pledges, not intentions, not promises, not fear, not even consequences.

Many people suffer consequences, and they regret it. They suffer with it. It doesn't give you the power to change.

Aphorisms, refrigerator magnets, and bumper stickers do not give us power to change. It's the word of God and the spirit of God. Nothing else.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to pick up at verse 24.