

Proverbs 22-08-31a

Good evening, welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. The pews are full. We run out of visitor cards.

We're just going to have to try to take notes on everybody that has assembled with us tonight. Glad you could be with us as well, either in person live or in the future. This is the 31st day of August 2022.

We're in Proverbs chapter one. We are going to complete the chapter this morning and ramp up for chapter two, which we have all memorized together the first nine verses. But we are going to begin tonight in Proverbs chapter one, verse 20.

And we're going to cover verses 20 through 33. Proverbs one, 20 through 33. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study.

And we'll begin. Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to spend this time together to learn and receive the ministry of your Holy Spirit and implanting the word deep into our souls, knowing that it is the only way that we can be truly transformed and renewed and fitted for service now and in the ages to come. We pray that our fellowship tonight will accomplish that goal.

We pray that we can be more Christ-like, that we can think like him and act like him, represent him properly here on this earth in the time that remains to us, knowing that this thinking and this action is what prepares us for the ages to come. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Let's read our passage. Wisdom calls aloud outside. I've read this a few times before, so I may make a few text notes here.

The verb translated calls aloud is not qara, Q-A-R-A, which is the standard Hebrew word that means to cry out or to call. This is a different word and it is sometimes translated to sing or to sing out. There is a voice projection quality that reminds you of the sing song voices of newspaper boys.

You only see this in old movies now, but you know, extra, extra, read all about it. Or those who would take carts of flowers or fruit or whatever and call out in kind of a sing song fashion. It's a message, but it is couched in a way that is designed to attract attention and it is several times translated to sing or to sing out.

So wisdom sings out outside. She raises her voice in the open square. The word raised there is actually natan, N-A-T-H-A-N.

We've covered this many times. It means to give or to dispense, to put a thing out for someone else. There's not really an elevation idea so much as giving out her voice.

This is a public service. This is designed to benefit the hearers. It is a giving.

You can see the idea of grace here. She's giving her voice, her sound, and that of course is kol, Q-O-L, depending on context is translated sound or voice. We've talked about crying out in the chief concourses where some of the other versions read from the top of the walls.

One version reads at the head of the multitudes. All of these are the same idea. It is a public broadcast.

I'm going to continue in the Tanakh. This is the Jewish Publication Society version. They know a little more about Hebrew than most of us, at least in its resurrected modern form.

It strikes your ear fresh when you catch their rendition of it here. They have a text note. Wisdom in Proverbs is personified as a woman.

This will recur as a theme as we will see. She, wisdom, cries aloud in the streets, raises her voice in the squares. At the head of the busy streets she calls.

At the entrance of gates in the city she speaks out. We saw last time. What do you draw from that? Wisdom has been made available by God to everyone.

It isn't cloistered. You don't have to join a secret society. You don't have to know the handshake or have a special key.

You don't have to have the money to go to university. It is not esoteric. It is not up in heaven that you have to send to where God is.

It is not so deep that you have to descend to the lower parts of the earth. It is near. It is available.

Therefore, as we saw in Romans 1, because the truth of God is apparent, it is manifest, it is declared in the heavens, it is available to anyone who has even the slightest interest. So anyone who disregards it is without excuse. Wisdom has canvassed this metaphorical city with her voice.

Everyone has the chance to hear it. No one is excluded. No one is deprived.

And what does she say? Verse 22. How long will you simple ones love simplicity? How long will you scoffers be eager to scoff? How long will you dullards hate knowledge? Fools, dullards. It's a nice synonym.

Verse 23. You are indifferent to my rebuke. I will now speak my mind to you and let you know my thoughts.

Since you refused me when I called and paid no heed when I extended my hand, you spurned all my advice and would not hear my rebuke. I will laugh at your calamity and mock when terror comes upon you. When terror comes like a disaster and calamity arrives like a whirlwind.

When trouble and distress come upon you, then they shall call me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me, but not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose fear of the Lord. They refused my advice and disdained all my rebukes.

They shall eat the fruit of their ways and have their fill of their own counsels. The tranquility of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of dullards will destroy them. But he who listens to me will dwell in safety, untroubled by the terror of misfortune.

Ending on a high note there, sounding pretty dismal till you get to verse 33. Well, this is fraught and quite representative. It is fraught with biblical truth, with God's viewpoint and God's attitude, God's policy, God's program, and it is well represented elsewhere in scripture.

It is not unique or exceptional to find these truths expressed here, but because they are repeated, because they are emphasized over and over again, it is important that we not lose sight of them and that we be able to explain this harsh response to the unhappiness of others. Initially, I think anybody, well, almost anybody, would find it insensitive to see someone coming on hard times for whatever reason and laugh at them. We find this a difficult concept, and rightly so.

It is a biblical principle that we do not build our happiness on the unhappiness of others. We don't take delight in some sort of vengeful attitude toward those who get their comeuppance. It's a sad thing to see someone shipwreck themselves for whatever reason, and yet there is this attitude, and we're going to see that it is expressed elsewhere in scripture.

So let's begin. We've already seen these first few verses, and so I'm going to pick up in verse 24. They call the central idea of wisdom, as she cries out, the point of the message, the sharp, sticky part right at the beginning, what people are either responding to or reacting against is this idea, turn at my rebuke.

How long will you love simplicity, which is the antithesis and the opposite of knowledge? Knowledge is the noun da'at, D-A-A-T. If you want to be real technical, you can put a little apostrophe between the two A's. There's a little stop, a little catch there, da'at, and it comes from the verb yada, Y-A-D-A, which is to know.

This is the equivalent of ginosko and its word group in Greek, and it's perfectly fine to translate it, know and knowledge. But knowledge of what? You can know a particular skill. You can know how to knit.

You can know how to do some sort of a skill. This, of course, is divine knowledge. This is knowledge that partakes of God's truth, God's eternal ways, and the revelation of those ways and of himself to us.

So this is not just any old knowledge. They like to quote Jesus over the porticos of libraries, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. It's not just any old truth.

We've reviewed this concept many times and fairly recently that general truth does not have transforming power. General truth will not fulfill these promises, even when it is philosophical, even when it is observational of the way the world works, the way society works, the way people are. It does not have transforming power.

I have emphasized this in recent months, and I'm going to emphasize it again because Christianity is full now of people who are proclaiming truth. And some of it is actually true. It is true that Jesus preached, love your enemies.

It is true that there are oppressed people and there have been oppressed people. It is true that there have been abuses and twisting and distortion of Christian faith in churches that has harmed and hurt people. People have failed in the name of Christianity.

People have waved Christian flags and waved crosses and done a lot of things in the name of Christ that are reprehensible, that are regrettable, that you wish you could reach out and just erase that. And many times there are these bumper sticker truths that get tossed around. They do not transform.

They cannot change the heart. You can point out everything that you ought to be, you know, the serenity prayer, give me the wisdom to accept the things I, whatever the heck it is. All of these aphorismal truths, there is only one thing that changes us.

If we want to turn at God's rebuke, there has to be an attitude of humility because God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. That is stated explicitly many times, both Old Testament and New. Humility.

I am not self-sufficient. I am not out to please myself. So the key, the point, the main theme of this proclamation of which much is made here is what? You don't know what you must know.

You don't know what you need to know. You do not know what you have to know for your life to have any value, any point, or any future. If you are not just, do you ever get philosophical when you're driving down the road and you see an animal that got squashed? Out here, you can't go three miles without seeing a possum or an armadillo, occasionally a raccoon, once in a while a squirrel.

The squirrels don't typically get hit. They fall out of trees and hit the pavement and it doesn't end. But you see all of these little animals and you think, you know, if you trace the ancestry of that possum, all, I mean, this is the son of a son of a son of a son of a son, just going back ad infinitum, all of this, this branch of descendancy came down to this possum.

This possum showed up, looked around, started doing possum things, and then in an instant got squashed. And he's very soon going to organically return to the elements and the dust from which he was made. He's going to be recycled by God's very wonderful recycling system.

Animals eat some of it. Bacteria eat some of it. But you look at it, you think, you know, how are humans any different? We strut and fret our hour on the stage, like Shakespeare said, you know, poor players, sound and fury signifying nothing.

You're here and you're gone. I get this same feeling as looking at roadkill when I look at photographs from the last half of the 19th century. Thousands, hundreds of thousands of people, faces in a crowd, faces in the earliest films, the earliest video.

They're long gone. You see a guy, they've got this one where there's a car or a train car or something going down the middle of, I think it's New York City, San Francisco. And they're just business.

Everybody's coming and going and dodging carriage wheels. And it's really fascinating to watch. And it lasts for many minutes.

Every single one of those people, every last one of them is dead and gone. And you would have to work like a demon to figure out who even one of them is. And yet they were the world as we are now enmeshed.

They're all gone. So did it mean anything that they were here? They strutted and fretted, they agonized, they enjoyed, they sorrowed, they rejoiced, they grieved. To what end, to what purpose? Was it just enough to be in the now and then vanish? You know, the grass withers, the flower fades.

We have been given the privilege, the grace from God to outlast this life, to outlast this brief excursion in consciousness and mortality, to be lifted up and out and made permanent. It's amazing. The more you think about it, the more incredible it is.

And the quality of that salvation, the nature of that deliverance is dependent entirely on how much we pay attention to what God says. That's what wisdom is crying out from the walls in the city square. Life is hard and then you die.

Do you want deliverance? Do you want to transcend and go beyond the limitations of this mortal life? How long will you love simplicity? How long will you blind yourself to the

ephemeral, transient, vaporous nature, as Solomon points out in his Ecclesiastes? Vanity, vanity, it comes and it goes. You accumulate stuff, you die, it all gets dispersed. How long will you be enamored and distracted and caught up in this movie, not realizing that reality is on the line? Reality is available.

Eternity is available. God the creator, relationship with Him, opportunity to serve and live in His presence is available. How long will you take the simple approach? Any old possum can get halfway across the road and get smashed.

That's what most of us do, even believers. We get caught up in the details of the story. Have you ever been so involved in especially reading a book? I think books are much better at this than movies for me.

A world is created and you're traveling along with the protagonist and when he's in danger and under stress, your body starts to react and you can't put the book down. Oh my goodness, what's going to happen? And you get so wrapped up in the story that at that moment it is more real to you than, wow, you know, it's 3.30 in the morning. I should have put this down about two hours ago and gone to sleep.

I have to get up to go to work at 6.30. But all of that flees because you're in that moment. You're caught up in that narrative. Narrative has the power to compel and persuade us.

This is why politics has been and is today as never before characterized by narrative. Not fact, not reality, not inevitability, not lessons from history, not lessons from the word of God, but story. And story compels.

Well, this entire life is a narrative. This is going to be like a video game when you hit the red X in the upper right-hand corner and it just vanishes away and there's nothing left of it. That's what God's going to do.

Peter talks about it. It's going to vanish. It's going to roll up like a scroll.

It will be gone. But fantasy stories invent a narrative where transient characters come alive and come out of the holodeck or out of the realm of the computerized and into the real world. I'm fascinated by those because that's basically us.

We are in the holographic heavens and earth that God created specifically to put us in situations to find out how we will choose because we have been granted choice. So you can't choose unless you're offered options. So wisdom cries out and offers the option.

You can continue to love simplicity. You can live the roadkill life, or you can turn at my rebuke. The rebuke is, hey, wake up.

There is more to life than what you think. There is more to life than what you imagine.

There is more to your sentient creation than can be explained.

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio. Turn at my rebuke. And at that point, surely, assuredly, I will pour out my spirit on you.

This is a mind bending statement. Don't you think? Wisdom is speaking the words of God. Wisdom is an abstraction.

This woman is a metaphor. Who's really talking here saying, I will pour out my spirit in the Old Testament day before Pentecost. If you turn at my rebuke, God, the creator who lives in reality, will take his eternal spirit, his transcendent spirit, his spirit that knows everything God knows and has all God's power.

And he will pour that spirit out on the person who pays attention to the invitation. Some of these verbs to call out and so on are often translated invite. I don't have time to do all the word studies.

It was really, it's really a lot of fun to just wander around in lexicons and do word studies and read other passages where the same word is used. But in many cases, this raising the voice is calling out an invitation. And hence Jesus' parables about invitation to grand gatherings.

Do you respond to the invitation or do you say, I got something else that's more important to me? You remember that parable. I got business to attend to. I can't be bothered.

This is an invitation to God's celebration. It's eternal. It's transcendent.

It never ends. It has opportunities undreamt of. Well, you know, I kind of love my simplicity and how tragic.

Isn't it easier to see people making tragic mistakes out there instead of looking in the mirror and saying, well, here's a guy making some tragic mistakes. It's easy. And this is why Jesus spoke in parables.

If you catch the point of the parable, you can see there, but for the grace of God may go. So wisdom cries out and stretches out her hand. This is in verse 24, because I called and you refused.

I stretched out my hand and no one regarded stretching out the hand. What does this put you in mind of? Can you think of biblical examples of somebody stretching out their hand? The Lord Jesus pulls Peter out of the drink with his hand. You remember the king that decided he was going to stretch forth his hand against God's prophet and God's revelation.

And it got shriveled. You remember the man with the shriveled hand that Jesus said, stretch forth your hand and it was made whole. Stretching forth a hand is biblically significant.

Wisdom is stretching forth her hand. Why? This is a hand of assistance. This is going to do something for us.

We cannot do for ourselves. We stretch forth our hand. It's just going to wither.

Man by man's efforts cannot redeem himself, cannot transform himself, cannot improve himself. I've tried it. You've tried it.

Without the power of God, we do not change. We cannot change. This is the old lift yourself by your own bootstraps idea.

Can't be done. Wisdom is stretching forth her hand in grace. Didn't have to.

There are two aspects of this part of Proverbs that are both ignored in much of what passes for modern Christianity. One is the active grace of God. It is God's action and it is God's power that makes change.

Not our actions, not our charity, not our enemy love, not our self-love, not our self-forgiveness. You've got to love yourself. You know, you have to forgive yourself before you.

Nonsense. My forgiveness is worth every penny I paid for it. God's forgiveness is worth everything Christ paid for it.

Which do you want? You want your own self-forgiveness or do you want God's forgiveness? You were bought with a price. Not gold and silver, precious stones, but the precious blood of Christ. That's what we are worth to God.

That's what God's forgiveness is worth. Wisdom stretches forth her hand telling us these truths. Connection to God is the only way to escape the banality and the ephemerality and the insubstantiality of this life.

It's the only way. And wisdom is crying out, singing, shouting, pleading, turn at my reproof, wake up. Don't you see the opportunity and what is on the line? I said, there are two things that come from God.

One is this transformational divine power. He's the creator. Nobody can fix a thing like the factory that built it, right? They got all the specifications.

They've got all the engineering drawings. They got all the parts. They got all the personnel.

They've got all the knowledge and the experience and the complaint department coming back and saying, you know, this thing keeps cracking. Let's make a better one. Manufacturer is by far the best expert on a thing.

If God is going to fix us, we will be fixed indeed. So, in verse 24, because I have called and you refused, not because I called, but you were not able, because I called, but you were not elect, because I called, but, but, but, but none of those things. You refused.

The Bible preaches, teaches, emphasizes personal responsibility for choice. Don't be pointing your finger at somebody else. Don't be shaking your fist at God.

Why hast thou made me thus, says the clay to the potter? Sorry, no. Who chose that clay? I know a potter, and I know how carefully he chooses his clay, depending on what he's going to make. The clay wouldn't be on the wheel if it was not capable of being made into what the potter wants.

But where that picture fails, when the clay spoils in his hand, you know, clay can't think, but this human clay can think, and we choose. Why does calamity come upon the simple? Why does disaster overtake the fool? It's right here in verse 24, because I called and you refused. And you look at this word for refusing.

This is disregard. This is dismissive. It is, I want no part of that.

And because I stretched out my hand and no one regarded, that goes right back to verse 22. Scorners love simplicity and delight in their scorning. No one regarded.

Verse 25, because you disdained all my counsel. That's verse 22b. Scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.

Now, what kind of knowledge? There's all kinds of knowledge that people love. People love knowing how to work the features of their phone. This is not knowledge in any old abstract category.

Fools hate God's knowledge, hate the da'at, hate the knowing of God's truth, of transcendent truth. And not only do they hate that knowledge in terms of not acquiring it themselves, but as you have experienced, I'm sure every one of us, fools hate knowledge anywhere it resides. If you have the knowledge of God, if you have learned from the word of God, if you have humbled yourself under the mighty hand of God and responded to the rebuke and the call of wisdom, if you have taken it on board, if you are seeking to live your life by its light, if you have spoken it in love to others, fools hate that knowledge.

They don't want it themselves, and they don't like it in you. Why was there such vituperation on the part of the scribes, the elders, the chief priests, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin in general toward the Lord Jesus? They weren't just dismissive and

uninterested. They actively hated him.

They had to make him disappear. Why? Dullards, and this is not intellectually dull, this is spiritually dull. The hearts of these people have become sclerosis infested.

They are hard. They are scarred. Their conscience has been seared, and they are spiritually dull.

People can be smart, smart, smart. In fact, smart is generally a bad thing. Most of the world's worst atheists are really, really intellectually smart, and the whole thing Paul talks about, what knowledge does to us, that's knowledge of the game.

I know where the secret weapons stash is in my first-person shooter video game, and I can go in there and get the big machine gun, and I can really prevail in the game. Gamers respect each other for their gamesmanship, and how high a score they can attain, and how many levels they can achieve. People that live in the real world, and have jobs, and have to pay mortgages, and car payments, and buy food, and get the real work done, what is our attitude toward somebody who is an adult of working age and perfectly good health, who sits around playing video games all day? You have immersed yourself in a world that is to no profit, and yet you're in a community where you all brag and are impressed by each other, and have your clique, and have those who have a reputation, and oh, he's a god of this game.

He's the ace and the hero of that game. People who live in the real world think you're wasting your life. Do you not realize that the clock only goes in one direction, and you're wasting the prime of your life, and the opportunities, and the effort, and whatever education you might have had, whatever investment your parents made in you, in raising you, and getting you to adulthood, and you're probably living in their basement? And we look at that with disdain.

How do you think the angels who live in God's real world, how do you think God Himself, the Father, Son, and Spirit look at us when we are gamers, caught up in the inanities, and the distractions, and the fruitless, hopeless, dead works that Hebrews chapter 6, verse 1 says we need to change our mind about? Turn you at my rebuke. Not laying again the foundation, Hebrews 6, 2, of change of mind away from dead works, and faith toward God, taking on board what wisdom has to say. Because you did not do that, I called and you refused, verse 24.

I stretched out my hand, no one regarded. I'm trying to pull you out of that lounge chair in your mom's basement, and give you a job at a good salary, with great benefits, and an opportunity for genuine gratification at a job well done, and a contribution to a worthy effort. I'm reaching out to give you a life of substance and meaning with an eternal future attached.

You're not interested. No one regarded. You disdained my counsel and would have none of my rebuke.

It is a rebuke. We need a cold slap in the face sometimes. Hey, wake up.

But you wouldn't. Now, verse 26. This is why when we get to verse 26, it doesn't sound quite so harsh now, does it? I also will laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your terror comes. You laughed at God and His wisdom. You laughed at presentations indicating that there is a greater, more substantial reality than the fool's errand that you have made out of your life.

You've mocked it. You've derided it. You've disdained it.

You've scorned it. You've made fun of it. And anybody who participates in it, you hate knowledge, God's knowledge, in anyone else.

You mock, deride, scorn, disdain, and insult people who have latched onto that knowledge. You hate it. And you get together with others and just talk about, oh, these people who live with their invisible friend, they're weak, they're afraid of hellfire, and they're motivated by abject fear, they're craven, they don't know how to get along in the world, they're this, they're that, they're the other.

And whole communities of people, whole schools of thought take people who are responding to wisdom's call and make a complete object of fun out of them, to say the least. In many cases, they will oppress and persecute them, make their job go away, make their presence online go away, get them canceled, get them piled on in so many ways that are hurtful and costly, that take away their means of making a living and enjoy it. So when the time comes that that wisdom is needed and it's not there, calamity comes like a whirlwind, disaster comes on these mocking, scorning, arrogant, self-centered jerks, wisdom is going to laugh.

And it isn't so much that I'm going to enjoy your pain and sorrow, there is symmetry here. Because as you go on, when your terror comes like a storm, in verse 27, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish comes upon you, then verse 28, they will call on me. I called on them back in verse 20 and verse 21.

Wisdom was calling out, pleading for change, offering rebuke and correction and instruction. They mocked and derided it. So now when you call out, wisdom is going to remind you of your attitude.

When she called to you, how did you respond? Now you're calling to her, what do you expect? She's going to respond in kind. It's harsh, but this is a wake-up call. And sometimes a wake-up call needs to be harsh.

Much more to say here, but the importance of choosing. You see it in verse 24, I called and you refused. I stretched out my hand and no one regarded.

Just brushed right on by, like wisdom and her gracious hand of deliverance isn't even there. Who are you? What are you doing? No sense of need. It's fatal.

When we lose our sense of need for God and his power, his grace, his son, his spirit, his word. When we think we've got it covered from other sources and in other ways, we need to see the picture of God's laugh and God's scorn. This plays better in a Middle Eastern environment where people are used to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life.

We've gotten soft and squishy and we think, well, that's just harsh. When we come back from the break, we will see what the Bible has to say about this laughing and mocking. It's very interesting.