

Proverbs 22-09-21b

We're ready now to pick up our study in the book of Proverbs, and we're looking at the beautiful structure of Proverbs chapter 2 Not just to see the structure in its own right but the structure tells us something it organizes the material and gives us the the flow of thought and the emphasis of the message so we had the conditional opening section verse 1 Verse 4 you can include verse 3, but these verses that begin with the letter Aleph if if if Then we have verse 5 and verse 9 that also begin with Aleph and give us the then if in Hebrew is I'm I am or I YM and Then is OZ O Z and both of them start with Aleph that initial sort of guttural catch That's impossible for me to reproduce certainly So then you will understand the fear of the Lord and we saw in the first session that this first result this first purpose this first outworking of fulfilling those conditions is to Understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God and why those things are valuable the source of wisdom Traveling up the river of life to its source to the wellspring that's The goal not just knowledge for its own sake not just truth because it's true but Wisdom because it reflects God himself truth because the Lord Jesus is the truth and This is personal it is individual It is within us. We treasure this within us we Come to understand the fear of the Lord in our own heart I think sometimes it's easy to have an experience of Christian faith that We look around and and wonder secretly the Are there people that have a real personal sense of the presence of God that I don't have Are they do they have an awareness and a sense of? the actual God himself that impinges on their senses and They've got some kind of a Handle on the reality of God and of the Lord Jesus that maybe I don't have I don't want to admit that well it's just kind of External it's like reading about a figure of history it's like understanding Queen Victoria or understanding Julius Caesar or understanding Moses or Hezekiah or some of these great people of the past, but I don't I don't have a sense I don't have a feeling like I have in Relationships with people that are in my periphery my my family my spouse my kids my parents That to me is relationship and when people say Christianity is a relationship I just find my faith that as wonderful as it is and as as Committed as I am to it. I just don't have that personal side.

I don't know that We can compare Relationship with God to interpersonal relationships with our loved ones on this earth Because they do exist on a different plane We have tangible physical contact we have audibility visibility There in in this physical world the people that we know can be right there if you've been on very close terms with someone and then you're Separated across the years and you send each other cards at Christmas or whatever your your relationship begins to Be anchored in the past and in a time of intense shared experience Rather than in the present other times relationships that began in the past Continue into the present Because there is fresh Contact there's fresh experience. There's fresh common shared interest and Activity and so on but these are relationships in the earthly realm it is illegitimate to Expect to have that same sense when it comes to relationship with God This is the declaration from God Himself. This is

the word from God to us That says if we fulfill these conditions if we seek as We would for silver if we search as for hid treasure we will understand the fear of the Lord and we will find the knowledge of God and This is actually Deeper it is actually more in the spiritual realm Than the relationships that depend so much on contact and shared experience and So on in this life It is qualitatively different the two great commands that Jesus Says summarize the law and the prophets love the Lord your God that vertical love Has its own quality its own characteristic its own nature that is separate and distinct from loving your neighbor and Loving those who are near God is not our neighbor We do not have the kind of contact and interaction with him that we have with each other his character is entirely different there is a Initially a great gulf fixed between us and God.

It's an unbridgeable gap This is why the scripture can say no man has seen God at any time To see him is to die in the experience because he is so holy above and beyond and apart from us How well can a pet know its owner It can come to Expect and anticipate Habitual behavior it it can Crave being petted being fed being given a treat being taken on a walk. I'm assuming it's a dog I've seen a few people try to take cats for a walk it. I don't think that's really Practical birds parakeets and budgies and such you don't you know take them for a walk, but let's say it's a dog And you say oh Dog is man's best friend Well, I know what they're getting at we've all of us who are dog owners Greatly appreciate dogs, but ask yourself the question the best dog You've ever known the best dog you ever had how much of your? Person of yourself your thoughts your aspirations your hopes your dreams your priorities your goals Did the dog understand? It is a very simplistic cause and effect Relationship you can get philosophical I Get philosophical on strange things like looking at airplane windows.

I get philosophical looking at dogs at the shelter Because every dog we've ever gotten at the shelter that that has come into our periphery We have ended up saying this is a great dog that look at what a good fit This dog is and I wonder how many other dogs there would also have been a great fit perhaps all of them There aren't just insane crazy dogs or you know stunted growth yappers that will never be quiet and you can't Can't abide that this is me talking But You think about the Lord God in heaven and the inability that we have to appreciate What's going on inside his mind and in his heart and the outworking of his purposes? Think of it in those terms, but what if he could grant to us a Part of his nature What if we could be in him and he could be in us what if we could recover the Begin the process of recovering the image of God that was lost at the fall by the way this is a quick aside if you Dip your toe in the water of progressive Christianity and deconstruct reconstruct and all the rest of it There's a lot of emphasis in those quarters on Everybody is a divine image bearer every single human being is a divine image bearer. No, we're not We're not Adam was created in the image of God sin broke that image Ask yourself this question. This is not hard.

I don't understand how people can can throw this Like a paper airplane and get it to fly that that we're all divine image bearers What is the nature of man are we perfect or

corrupt What does Paul say I know that in me dwelleth Righteousness and justice and love and eternal life and on missions and omnipotence and omnipresence truth What does Paul say in Romans, I know that in me dwelleth no good thing He is speaking he is in he's personifying impersonating What he was before his salvation and he says I know that in me dwelleth. No good thing I know what I ought to do, but I don't do it. I Find a law in my members With my mind I serve the law of God When my flesh I serve the law of sin that is not the image of God God is light and in him is no darkness at All he's not corrupt and fallen the Lord Jesus who took on our flesh is not corrupt and fallen We do not have the image of God.

We begin to recover the image of God at salvation but unregenerate atheistic Pagan God-hating people Have no image of God whatsoever It is not the image of God Adam was created in the image of God. He did not retain the image of God upon being Disobedient being judged being driven from the garden One of the characteristics of God is eternal life now Lest he reach forth his hand and take of the tree of life and live forever God drove him out. He cannot have eternal life anymore That's part of the image of God.

You want to say well, I've got a partial image of God That's like saying I've got a partial car I've got a partial computer. I've got a case and a hard drive. I don't have a motherboard.

I don't have a power supply I don't have a keyboard, but I've got some parts if you don't have everything You don't have a computer if you don't have everything you don't have a car. There are certain minimal things that constitute an entity and missing perfection missing eternal life missing truth missing love joy peace Missing patience missing all of these things That are sourced in God that we recover by the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why all of those Attributes the fruit of the Spirit comes from the Spirit if we had the image of God they could come from us But they don't They don't they don't come from us because we do not have the image of God and I will Stand on that from the Word of God Imago Dei and all men created, you know, we're all brothers nonsense We are all as an unclean thing.

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags We fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. That is not the image of God God has to recreate What does Paul say if any man be in Christ, what is he? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation Why do we have to be recreated if we've got the image of God? Oh, we needs a little dusting off a little shining up a little fixing of a crack here and a dent there If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation This is the beginning of recovering the image of God that will be ultimately fulfilled at the resurrection How fully will we recover how grandly and Effectively, will we represent the image of God at the resurrection? We're deciding that now How much of the fear of the Lord do we understand how much of the knowledge of God do we find? That's what Proverbs chapter 2 is talking about You can say this is Sam's opinion if you like But my suggestion is don't let anyone tell you that all of us are

created in God's image Adam was created in God's image. The Bible never says anywhere else in Scripture that anybody's got the image of God If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost in Whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not why? Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God Should shine unto them if you don't have Christ you don't have the image Christ who is the image of God Christ shines in the gospel We represent Christ when we are saved and when we are walking in the light and walking in the spirit and recovering the image personifying Representing Christ.

That's the image of God Christ is the image of God That's why John 1 18 says if you've seen me you've seen the father because you've seen the image of God My suggestion don't let anybody try to tell you that we're all made in the image of God Show me a verse that says we are all made in the image of God I can show you countless verses that say we are all as an unclean thing There is none that doeth righteousness No, not one all have sinned and come short of the glory of God if all have sinned and come short of his glory How can we be in his image? It's crazy in my view I Say that to say this Look at the structure of Proverbs chapter 2 if you fulfill these conditions then you will understand the fear of the Lord and Find the knowledge of God Recovering intimacy understanding appreciation for the person of God That's first That's what comes in verse 5 or 6 verse 7 and verse 8 now beginning at verse 9 Then this is our second O's that starts with Aleph Then you will understand Practical things for this earth Righteousness this is practical righteousness Justice equity Every good path. This is the path we walk on this earth first. We have a vertical Relationship established cultivated fleshed out growing In The New Testament the phrase is growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Grow in grace grow in knowledge vertical Then you will understand Righteousness and justice I was so happy to discover these promises when I was a teenager because as I began To reach the threshold of the adult world and I saw the news and I saw people arguing about the Vietnam War Is it right? Is it wrong? sit-ins and college demonstrations Kent State military bad you know going to Canada good and all of this mix of political and social issues Free love free drugs A huge culture shift in the makings and as a teenager, I thought how am I going to figure out who's right and who's wrong you listen to one person and They seem to make a cogent argument you listen to the next guy from a different point of view He seems to be making a cogent argument.

How do I know who's right? How do I know what is right? Many of these things are nuanced you can you can grab one part of it and it's right But it is attached to something that is wrong. This is the promise from God If you fulfill these conditions Then you will understand rightness You'll understand what it is that makes something, right? And where rightness is lacking Righteousness is such an overused term That we've we've lost what it means. It's it's that which is right This it's proper.

It's good. It reflects The character of God the plan and purpose of God it is pleasing in God's sight. It is not sin It is not evil.

It is not disobedience. It is not apathy. It is not indifference.

It's not corrupt. It's not Contaminated it's it's right We'll understand what's right? What a gift to be able to penetrate the fog and Get past the dust and ashes and the muddy water that gets splashed everywhere In which we are immersed especially in a culture with so much overuse of communication media social media internet How can you possibly know what's right God says you'll know what's right you will have a right detector in your soul why Because you will understand the fear of the Lord and you will have found the knowledge of God You will see as he sees you will think as he thinks Issues Propositions ideas Claims actions will strike our heart the way they strike God's heart We will have wisdom from God. We will have understanding from God.

We will have insight and instinctive natural truth detector an instinctive natural Rightness detector and not just in the abstract. Well in these two arguing parties. He's right and he's wrong This is practical rightness for me.

What is right for me people say, you know, what's right for me? May not be right for you One person likes poodles. Another person likes Great Danes. What's right for you? Maybe not.

This is what is right before God for me What is my choice? What is my priority? What is my goal? What things am I going to value what things am I going to devalue then you will understand rightness You'll just have a sense the sailors in the days of wooden ships and iron men could sense a drop in the glass a drop in the barometric pressure and By Experience and by instinct and by long time on the sea They knew that they needed to shorten sail. They knew that they needed to get on the other tack Before other less experienced sailors would say why are you shortening sail? Why are we going on the port tack here? Instead of staying on the starboard. We're making such good progress on this.

We're catching these trade winds They just knew You know people that have had various kinds of Things broken or joint implants or whatever can sense a change in the weather They say well, you know the old elbows aching the knee is Telling me that the rain is coming and it's cloudless sky. There's no wind you say what do you mean rain is coming? But that but they're so often, right? They have a sense That has been developed that many other people lack that's what we'll have it is a rightness detector an understanding of rightness What a valuable gift wouldn't you love to just be right to know what is right so that you can do what is right? Knowing what is right isn't all that helpful Unless you can then follow through I know what a perfect golf swing looks like can I do it? I know how a perfect piece of guitar music got to sound but can I perform it I? know The way Beethoven should sound on the piano, but can I get my fingers to do that? Knowing what is right understanding what is right has the goal of doing what is right? Improving getting closer and closer to that rightness This is our second then then you will understand

rightness and justice justice is Interactions with others Rightness is for me. Can I be right? Can I do right? Can I be right in a right way you can be right in a wrong way you can be obnoxious and off-putting and Be a hindrance to the gospel and to the glory of God by being right in an odious and offensive arrogant way There is a way that seems right and it ends up a Not being right and be leading to death But rightness is for me To understand what is right? Understanding justice.

This is what is proper fair reflective of God's paradigm in the world of others righteousness and justice Equity fairness Fairness a lot of people are flying banners of equity and doing all kinds of unfair things under that flag Genuine fairness Has nuance Remember when we were reading the law of Moses about the 30 pieces of silver last Sunday and We got to the passage that talks about the Value, I believe it's Exodus 21 if memory serves of Slave gored by an ox and it was 30 pieces of silver, but in the context of that here is an ox and if he Gores someone the owner is not held accountable. The ox is to be stoned but if he has gored in the past and His owner doesn't do something to keep him penned up and prevent him from being a danger to others The owner is to be stoned along with the ox fairness It's not fair to hold the owner accountable if he couldn't have known the ox was going to gore someone But if he could have known Now it is fair to hold him accountable Equity when when is it fair to hold someone accountable? And when is it not? Equity and to have a sense of that to know How accountability works how responsibility works and Every good path There's going to be a lot said about paths in this section of Proverbs Every good path. There are good paths These paths the word in Hebrew There there is Derek which is way there are other words that have the idea of softer ground and as you travel these ruts develop and these paths Become to represent habits you habitually go this way So the grass is worn away.

The vegetation is cleared away and this has become a path It's a repeatable Travel it goes the same way every time Every good path. This is the developing of good habits Habitually good behavior good paths Talking about wisdom You know her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace her paths Are peace there will be habitual peace. It's not a promise of absolute peace at all times, but habitually Usually in the main most of the time there's going to be peace The ways are pleasant and the paths are peace Generally, you're going to have a pleasant and a peaceful life pattern of life Can always be interrupted? but in general Now The first 11 Verses here when wisdom enters your heart and knowledge is pleasant to your soul Discretion will preserve you and understanding will keep you It's kind of a summary of that first section Remember the Hebrew alphabet 22 letters Halfway through is 1 through 11 Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, He, Wau, Zayin, Chet, Teit, Yod, Kaf The 12th letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Lamed Lamed So halfway through the psalm we are going to switch from the Aleph half Which is the ifs and the thens To the Lamed half which is the purpose and the goal The in order to section So look at verse 12 to deliver you you should have a note in your margin there This is L or Lamed in order to When wisdom enters your heart knowledge is pleasant to

your soul Discretion will preserve you and understanding will keep you being guarded being kept being preserved And it Begins to remind us of the first part of this proverb if you guard if you hide if you treasure These commands they are going to guard and treasure and protect you You Preserve them they will preserve you you guard and keep them.

They will guard and keep you To Deliver you So once again if we read our marginal notes be at the beginning we have if if if if then then Now beginning in verse 12 to deliver you to save you Do you see the next place? I had you put a Lamed Verse 16 To deliver you and Lamed is also going to begin verse 20 You can put an L next to verse 20 so that la ma on so that Starts with the letter L in verse 20 To deliver you to deliver you So that Beautifully beautifully constructed carefully designed 22 line section here In the same way that we saw that the the then sections had two parts then you will come to a closer personal appreciation for God and Then you will have Wisdom To understand righteousness and justice equity in every good path you will first of all appreciate God your love for God will grow and Your horizontal Activities and relationships Will grow and be enhanced with righteousness and justice fairness every good path on the earth We had those two then's that are a result of fulfilling these conditions now, we're gonna have two purposes Let's see if we can figure out the comparison and contrast of these two purposes in verse 12 and verse 16 the first one in verse 12 to deliver you from the way of evil From the man who speaks perverse things so to deliver me from Men and their evil ways that's going to be verse 12 We've got more detail but look down at verse 16 to deliver you from the immoral woman Who flatters with her words? The first deliverance is from the man who speaks perversity and his paths leave uprightness Verse 13 those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness There are words and ways that men try to drag us into To be delivered from that Wisdom will deliver us from men with perverse words and perverse ways You get to verse 16 to deliver you from the immoral woman With perverse words flattering with your words her words Who forsakes the companion of her youth verse 18 her house leads down to death and her paths lead to the dead Perverse words perverse ways men in verse 12 Woman in verse 16 We always Generally think of men making more of an intellectual appeal using reason using Persuasion in the realm of gain, you know, let's let's lie in wait. We saw in chapter 1 so that we can Shed blood and gain treasure. This is how we'll do it.

I've got a cunning plan to Get what I want Women represent the emotional appeal the seduction the persuasion that sort of Pushes your reason to the side. You don't think about consequences. You don't think about tomorrow Let's live in the moment let's let's give in to stimulation and to the offered pleasure that is blinding me to Reality to consequences to obligations to promises I've made to covenants that I should keep to who I am and why I'm here the the seduction persuasion stimulation of the moment is blinding My mind it's not blinding me with science.

It's blinding me with perfume and You know feminine allure So you have the man you

can be delivered from These approaches that appeal to Greed that appeal to power that appeal to The kind of stimulation that comes from controlling or taking control of others To be delivered from the woman who is Drawing you into a place. You really shouldn't be this is the foreign woman The the word here is used of Foreigners or strange it's translated foreign or strange. This is a woman Why would it be describing her as strange or foreign? This is not the right? woman a woman of Israel who is an object of Engagement and marriage this is a woman that is over the line.

This is Improper this is adultery. This is fornication. This is Strange to the right way it is off the good path She is strange or foreign.

This is what you are not supposed to do this is strange and foreign to a young man of Israel Who should be circumspect? Who should be orderly and thoughtful? respectful and Dedicated to purity and to God's law this woman represents everything that is strange and foreign to that ideal The immoral woman the seductress who flatters with her words she forsakes the companion of her youth Forsakes this is the breaking of covenant. We saw the same thing Judah doing it in Malachi Forgetting the covenant of her God Forsaking the companion and forgetting the covenant this starts with the horizontal forsaking the companion of her youth that's That's the man to whom she's betrothed or married and then the covenant is with God She messes up the horizontal she forsakes the vertical Her house leads to death her paths to the dead none who go to her return nor do they regain the paths of life This is about paths. There is a right path.

There is a wayward path There's a narrow path. There's a broad and wide way Jesus in in Matthew 7 13 and 14 Talks about the narrow way wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction two paths two kinds of women there is the woman that you Admire that you secure to whom you are betrothed with whom you make covenant before God and with whom you stick through thick and thin and then there is the Wayward strange foreign woman who wants to get you to throw that all over for a momentary fling Then verse 20 so that you may walk in the way of goodness and Keep to the paths of righteousness another beautiful summary statement leading to this two-verse conclusion The upright will dwell in the land and the blameless will remain in it But the wicked will be cut off from the earth and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it Certain future promise to those who are upright and blameless Versus those who are wicked and unfaithful it is a choice Which way do you take? It's not as simple as Yogi Berra when you come to a fork in the road take it Which fork which do you choose? These choices make a difference There is a way That seems right and isn't if you're listening to this Seductive voice that says That's not really what God means that's not really what God says let me tell you what God means and what God says If you know God so well that you know what he has said and what he does say What he has done and what he will do if you come to Understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God nobody can seduce you off the path nobody can fool you With a perverse line of argument That's the promise what a wonderful section this Proverbs chapter 2 Well,

we've seen quite a bit plenty to chew on we'll close here in a word of prayer Father thank you for the truth of your word Thank you for the beauty with which it is expressed the depth of the riches and the knowledge That you reveal to us in these pages. We pray that as we reflect on them and as we Aim our heart at Better understanding at Seeking wisdom and searching for it as for hid treasure that your Holy Spirit will grant us insight and understanding Renew us transform us Enable us to become worthy Sacrifices on the altar so that we can come to understand your good and acceptable and perfect will we ask it in Jesus name Amen