

Proverbs 22-10-05a

Good evening. Welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 5th of October 2022.

We're in Proverbs chapter 3. We had a fascinating look last week. It was fascinating to me at the fear of the Lord and that is such an interesting topic. I'm going to take some time to develop that and present it in a tightly organized succinct and concise way and I didn't have time this past week to do that.

So for the moment, I'm going to rely on what we saw last week in terms of the fear of the Lord recognizing that we have encountered one of the central themes of Scripture in Proverbs chapter 3 verse 7 fear the Lord and depart from evil, but we're going to take a tangent from that which was a part of my more mainstream preparation for our study and look at something tonight that is very closely allied related and intertwined with it, but approaches from a little bit different perspective. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll begin father. It is an untiring never taken for granted privilege to come together with other believers who appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ and the revelation of your truth your plan and purpose your character your grace and love in the pages of Scripture.

We recognize that they are the means by which we enter into a closer walk greater and more faithful service and a more transparent representation of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth as we function as his presence in his body as we seek to be manifestations of his love and his recognition of the centrality of your plan and purpose in this life and in the ages to come. We pray that the truth we look at tonight from your word will stimulate our thinking that the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts in a way that will be meaningful and effective in motivating us and enabling us to see clearly the path that you would have us take the thoughts to think the actions to perform the interactions to participate in with believers and unbelievers in our periphery each and every day in what remains to us of this life. We pray it in Jesus name.

Amen. Let's read our passage. We have pretty thoroughly examined Proverbs chapter 1 and Proverbs chapter 2. We have come to chapter 3. We focused last week on verse 7. As I said, let's read the first 10 verses in chapter 3. My son do not forget my law but let your heart keep my commands for length of days and long life and peace.

They will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you bind them around your neck write them on the tablet of your heart and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths do not be wise in your own eyes fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones.

Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase. So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. This is a departure in form from what we have seen in the first two chapters.

You remember the big map of Proverbs. We're in the first section chapters 1 through 9 which is the statement of theme and purpose and the introductory section and in chapter 1 we basically have the purpose and effect of this communication. What is its purpose? If it is heard and heeded, what is the effect? That's chapter 1 in a nutshell.

Chapter 1 the first seven verses especially distill the purpose of the book and its effect. Not all books really give you their purpose you it kind of unfolds as you travel through it and you realize at the end of the journey kind of like in John you get 20 chapters in before John says these are written that you might believe and that believing you might have life through his name. He didn't put that in chapter 1 you go way down the road and you're very close to the end before you get that purpose statement Proverbs is right up front.

This is what it is. This is what it's for. And after that opening statement, you might flip back to chapter 1 to see the way this book has been so carefully structured you have the purpose and effect in the first seven verses.

We've been over that many times. We're not going to review that but in verse 7 the fear of the Lord. Beginning of knowledge fools despise it this contrast between wisdom and foolishness between light and darkness between blessing and cursing between prosperity and misery is going to be turned in the light like a many-faceted jewel over and over again.

One of the things that makes brilliant jewels so beautiful and so interesting to look at is the contrast between the light and the dark the interplay the different ways that light is reflected and refracted the different colors that come through even in a diamond, which is allegedly white you see a rainbow of colors due to the prismatic way that it is cut and by examining these parts of the light the beauty of it is enhanced and can be appreciated and one of the important principles of Scripture and I was reminded of it as recently as today is and by the way there is a famous quote by FF Bruce. I didn't bring it with me. It's somewhere else, but he essentially said this FF Bruce was a wonderful scholar of the Bible in decades past and he's written a lot of books.

He did a long study on the on the Gospel of John many prolific writer author commentator and so on but one of the things he said is a distillation of kind of a common-sense truth, but he said if you take a part of the truth and you put it for the whole truth, it's no longer true. If you take a partial truth and you say this is the whole truth now, you've got problems. It is in fact true and it is a part of the truth, but it is not the whole truth.

And we've that theme has been recurring in recent days recent months as we see people taking partial truth and pushing it to be the whole truth and the central truth and the all-important truth not finding balance. One of the things you will remember me saying for the last couple of decades is that for every clear statement of truth in scripture for every command for every exhortation there is at least one other. That balances it limits it and keeps us from taking it to an extreme anytime you find something about which people want to be dogmatic.

And I will die for this. We need some context. Where are the limiting and balancing? Truths that prevent me from taking this to an extreme.

Because they're always there. God is a God of balance toward the end of one of his letters. Paul says let your moderation be known to all.

Because the Lord is at hand. It says in the King James. The Lord is is at your shoulder.

The Lord is watching to make sure you don't become an extremist. We're balanced. We know that a thing is true, but there is another truth.

All things are lawful. That's a Bible truth. Hey, all things are lawful.

That's my central truth. I'm going to go to the mat for that every nothing is against the law. Well, how about the very next line? All things are lawful, Paul says, but not all things are edifying.

I would like what I do to be both. Not unlawful and beneficial something that that effectively represents the Lord Jesus Christ and his character. So for everything I can find in the scripture that gives me Liberty to do a thing.

There is other truth that will prevent it from becoming a license to sin. Remember decades ago, there was a pastor that published a book called Liberty or License and he was talking about Corinthians in the very passage. I just quoted.

So what we're going to look at tonight are imperatives and incentives. I was going to give this a title, which I probably will. It's going to be just like they would be so pleased and smile and pat me on the back at seminary because it alliterates, but it's actually true.

We're going to be looking at imperatives and incentives. Commands and consequences. Make up your own alliterating.

Summary. Now, so let's think about imperatives. Thinking back on the first two chapters of Proverbs.

Have we seen any imperatives? I can tell you that in the first seven verses, there are no imperatives. It is the statement of purpose. It is the introduction of that wisdom and its

importance, but there's no commands in there.

It states the purpose and the desired effect of this wisdom, right? It describes what the fear of the Lord is. It describes what wisdom does, giving prudence to the simple and so on. Beginning in verse 8, we have imperatives.

I would encourage you, if you don't mind marking up your Bible, you can underline, you can circle the imperatives. This is really going to unlock some structural clues that are a second channel of understanding. Seeing the way this is structured.

People in the ancient day could hear this. They would store it in their mind and their mind would detect the structure verbally. We don't know what that is like.

We are very writing oriented. So we need to circle and underline and do things. People were smarter than us.

They weren't wandering goat herds, dusty sandal wearing, head scratchers who said, well, I think I'll write a little bit down and who knew it was going to become scripture. This is the modern view by secularists, atheists, and even some Christians who think, well, these poor Old Testament guys, they were feeling about after God, but they wrote things down that they thought were God and it wasn't. These people in the days of Solomon, when the Bible says Solomon was the wisest man, he was the wisest among very wise.

These are the kind of people that built the pyramids. These are the kind of people that built the Great Wall of China. These are the kind of people who were engineers developing formulas for concrete that nobody can rival and replicate.

Roman engineers, the ancients before them, these people were incredibly smart. The deleterious effects of mutation and breakdown of DNA. We think we're so smart, we're really dummies.

And so now we've got technology and power in the hands of dummies. We're not thinkers as well as doers. Socialism divides the thinkers and doers and that's why it always fails.

In the ancient world, people were both thinkers and doers. Anyway, we need to mark it in our Bible so we can see it. But this is not an artificial imposition of structure.

We are observing what people would hear and understand when this was read to them. And I'm so impressed with the intellectual power of the common Israelite who could listen to scripture being read, go home and talk about it, reproduce it out of their mind. If you could imagine the average person having a near photographic memory for what they hear, that's what Israelites were like.

This is the reason God was comfortable giving them the law in oral form. He didn't say to Moses, create a scriptorium, have each person come in and make a copy of the law, teach them to read, send it home with them. God equipped them with ears and a mind that made them accountable, responsible, and gave them opportunity from what they could remember.

Hear it once, remember it for years. This is how scripture came to be written. The words of Jesus, even 2,000 years ago.

People could listen to Jesus teaching on the side of a hill or in a plane, go back and especially two or three of them talking, remember when he said this? Oh, and he said it was so beautiful. Look at the way he stacked those verbs and those nouns and they wrote it down. Even decades later, they could write it down and reproduce it.

We think, well, that's just not possible. They must have made it up. And it's just, it's heinously ridiculous.

We're just arrogant. We think we're smarter than ancient man. We're dumber than ancient man.

It's not really our fault that this is why human history is coming to a close because if we get any dumber, we won't be worth having around. So I say all of that to say, mark your Bible. All right, so we begin in verse 8. This is the first of our imperatives in the book of Proverbs, which is replete with imperatives.

This is the first one. My son, here. Kind of makes sense, doesn't it? I'm going to give you wisdom.

It's a great thing. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So my son, pay attention.

My son, here. It's the first imperative. Hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother.

There's so much in this. This assumes the presence of a father and mother, one each, in the home, imparting instruction in wisdom and godliness. It just assumes it.

It doesn't say, now, we sure hope that you have a godly father and we hope that you've only got one mother and that she's there with you and not out working and that she'll be able to. It just says, look, this is going to happen. This is my plan and purpose.

This is how the family goes. Hear the instruction of your father. Do not forsake the law of your mother.

First two imperatives. Hear it and don't forsake it. The spiritual instruction you receive from your parents.

That's the imperative. Immediately, in verse 9, you have the incentive. Why listen to your father and mother? Because the instruction and the law that you receive from them will be a graceful ornament on your head and chains about your neck.

This is the pattern. We have it right here in verses 8 and 9. This is the pattern for the next many paragraphs here is imperative and incentive. Here's the command and here's the consequence.

Here's the concomitant. So we have this interleaved with descriptions and scenarios that are going to elaborate on the incentive. It doesn't elaborate on the command, but it elaborates on the reasons to heed the command.

So you get just to be sure we've we've got the pattern that we're going to we're going to catch this pattern. It's repeated in verse 10. My son, if sinners incite you, entice you, do not consent.

It's a negative imperative. We had a positive imperative, hear the instruction, had a positive imperative and a negative imperative, do not forsake. Now we have, if sinners incite you, entice you, do not consent.

Skip down to verse 15 and 16. You remember the description. These are ne'er-do-well, layabout, evil company.

So you get down to verse 15 and here's another imperative. My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your foot from their path.

This is is an inclusio. It's an opening and a closing. And so you have you have a negative, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

Verse 15. My son, do not walk in the way with them and then a positive. Keep your foot from their path.

So we have sort of a double positive command. Listen to your father. Don't forsake your mother in terms of their instruction.

That's the positive. Don't consent to sinners. And so this dichotomy, this choice and isn't life about choices.

It pretty much every day. We make choices. There is a good choice and there's a host of bad choices.

And it would seem. So blatantly obvious as not worth mentioning that you would want to make good choices and not make bad choices. But remember this is something we have as a heritage and a leftover from the days when people were reasonable and logical and sensible.

And the reason many of us are so confused when we look and listen at what is being done and said in in the current day is it's incomprehensible to us that people would not function on sensibility common sense. Remember the Jane Austen thing sense and sensibility sense and sensibility. It's rapidly fading.

It's like the bison. It's like the dodo. It's like the other animals that have gone extinct.

You just take it for granted that it's there. It's like the telephone booth. It was just ubiquitous.

You think well, it's it's like the Volkswagen bug. You couldn't swing a dead cat without hitting a Volkswagen all through my life until about 10 years ago. Now, if you see a Volkswagen, it's a freak of nature.

They've all been gobbled up collected and they're stored in garages or they're in junkyards one or the other but they're not in traffic. You never see them. And I only bring that up because sometimes you don't realize something is gone until you start looking around for it common sense has become an uncommon virtue, especially in younger generations and you folks that are, you know, very much younger.

I grieve for you and the world. You're going to have to try to function in where people are unpredictable because they're irrational. You look at the reason here, my son do these good things because they are grace.

They are life. They are peace. They are prosperity.

They bless you in the presence and they equip you for the future. If sinners entice you don't consent because their ways are ways of death and you think ah, I think I would like to choose life prosperity peace the pleasure and the blessing of God rather than unpredictability backstabbing chaos and disgrace and the curse of God. Which should I choose? Those of us that were raised on common sense would say, hmm, you know, I really think I'm going to choose the good and eschew the bad.

That kind of thinking has gone the way of the pager. Who carries a pager anymore? It's been supplanted by something else and the idea that you should sit and consider the consequences what man when he is planning to build something doesn't sit down and count the cost people today don't count the cost don't anticipate the future don't take it into consideration. This is what I want to do now.

This is what I think now this narrative appeals to me now. And so there is no external check on the compass in the soul. The compass can be pointing any of the 360 degrees and 359 of those are wrong.

But there is no service call on the compass. This is what God provides us through the Holy Spirit. So don't take for granted and just skim through the Proverbs Proverbs is a

call to rational logical thinking and consideration of consequences.

There are good consequences. There are good outcomes. There are bad consequences and there are bad outcomes.

If you pay people to not work. How long will it be until there is no product to be a socialist and distribute socialism has failed every single time because it takes over a functional capitalistic entity that has the means of production and it's producing a product and there is profit and there is repetition and there's enhancement and growth it takes it over co-ops it and then says we should distribute this equally to everybody. And so everyone quits producing.

I'm just waiting for my handout and I no longer have an incentive to produce. If you thought about that you would say if there's no workers there will be no product if there's no product we're all going to starve. But if you ever want a good review of that just a quick summary of it there's probably an article someplace on the web about New Harmony Indiana a man named John Owen came over from Scotland back in the 1820s or so and was convinced that socialism was the greatest thing.

And so he came over and bought a town in Indiana that had been built by Lutherans. It had 160 buildings beautifully constructed. These were hardworking skillful carpenters and iron workers and so on.

They built this beautiful town of Harmony and they had dozens of thriving businesses where they were prosperous. They accumulated a great deal of capital and then their pastor their Lutheran pastor had a vision kind of like John Smith. You know the 1820s were a time when the 1800s in general were a time when people would have a vision and go off and do weird things.

That's how you have you know Utah and the Mormon tabernacle and the rest of it. Anyway, this guy got a vision and so they packed up and left and they sold their town to John Owen who came over from Scotland. He said I'm going to make this a socialist utopia.

And so over 800 individuals and families moved there didn't have to buy any land. They lived there free of charge. In less than two years the place imploded.

All of the businesses failed. The buildings were in disrepair. The people were starving.

All they had were intellectuals sitting around thinking socialist thoughts and the thing in two years they took a beautifully functioning. They took over this town and their philosophy and their government and their approach ruined it and they all they all fled and left. I say that to say this.

The cause and effect thinking of God is in our passage. My son perform this imperative

because there is a positive consequence ignoring this imperative ignoring God and his wisdom. There is a consequence cause and effect.

We need to be people who think in all areas of life in terms of cause and effect. It is not enough to say well this way seems right to me. What is the Bible saying? There is a way that seems right to a man.

Seems right the narrative works for me. But the ends thereof are the ways of death not just death the ways of death. All of its associated perils hazards and effects on others.

I'm not just going to plow myself into the ground. I'm going to be a hardship and a great cause of unhappiness to others, but it seems right. You can't trust your seems right detector.

Don't trust it. We have to be empowered. We have to be enlightened by God's spirit and God's word and take every thought captive.

Why does Paul say take every thought captive for Christ? Because they're running loose. They're scattering like cats. Take every thought captive.

That means you've got to consciously get a hold of it and restrain it. Point it in the right direction. You ever taught a dog to heel? It's a it's a process isn't it? Dog has to be taken captive and led down the path in the position with the posture that is proper for a dog to be walked safely effectively and eventually pleasantly when a dog learns to heel.

It's a joy the leash is slack trots faithfully by your left side wherever you walk. They just walk right beside you. The few times we've successfully accomplished that it's just a joy to take a dog like that.

So many of our dogs. I'm thinking of one in particular right now that wonderful lovable little creature and he could have so much fun. If he would respond to the command to come.

He gets out the gate. If I said dog name come and he would stop in his tracks and come back. That dog could have the run of the property but because this dog when it gets out wants to run all the way off the property across the road and well into other people's property where there are dogs, you know, six times his size and start fights and just scrap and and get into trouble.

He cannot be blessed with freedom and autonomy. I we have to restrain him and have to limit him and have to lock him up when we're gone because he can't be trusted with freedom. He can't be trusted with opportunity.

He can't take his thoughts captive. He can't think about the consequences of what he does Proverbs is designed to take especially a young person. Ideally you figure this out

when you're young.

And teach us to think about opportunities possibilities options potentials in terms of consequences effects outcomes. This doesn't come to us in a blinding flash. We don't have the instinct to do that.

Our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked narratives from other people cannot be trusted the experiences of others the blog posts of others cannot be trusted. There's only one trustworthy guide and it is the wisdom that is speaking in these chapters. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Why? We've we've heard that we've talked about it now for some weeks. Why is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom close your Bibles get out a piece of paper? Answer this question in a sentence. Why is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom because fear of the Lord forces us to think objectively about how this action this thought this pattern this option and my engaging in it will be viewed by God.

If I fear God then the first thing I think about is what's he going to think of this? Will he be pleased? Is this a part of his plan and purpose for me personally? Or is he going to be displeased and? State that I have left the narrow way and I'm no longer aimed at the straight gate from his perspective. Am I representing the Lord Jesus Christ? Or am I not? What is my effect on fellow members of the body of Christ? The fear of the Lord is going to cause me to consider the words that I say the actions that I take the priorities that I set the goals that I pursue the money that I spend the time that I invest every single thing first comes under consideration in terms of what's the Lord think of this? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it is wise to take him into account before we say do think or pursue anything. And if I decide if I conclude if the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the Word of God tells me this is not something that pleases God.

Now, I have a choice. How many times do we kind of know there's a voice in the back of our head saying this is not a good idea. You know, you've had to don't take three.

You've done a little of this that's moderation anymore is going to be excess, you know, how many movies are you going to watch in a night? How much time are you going to burn on this activity? How many helpings are you going to partake of? How much time are you going to spend on this recreational thing balance? Nothing wrong with recreation unless you take it to excess nothing wrong with food unless you take it to excess not nothing wrong with a glass of wine unless you take it to excess. There's nothing wrong with watching movies unless you take it to excess. Well, where is excess and if the witness of the Word and the Spirit tell me all right this far and no farther it's time to do something else.

What if I choose to ignore that which is this is how we sin when we know better. We

impulsively override. There is an override wouldn't be great.

If there wasn't we like to think if I if I knew what was right wouldn't be great. If I just because I know it I can't do the wrong. We know something is wrong and we do it.

Anyway, we know something is right and we don't do it. I should do that. You know what and it's not doing it and we we just get the bit in our teeth and decide that that's another one of those things.

I was Patty and I were talking about all of these sayings that we use all the time people don't think about their origins kind of like the nursery rhymes. I was musing about the disappearance of a lot of nursery rhymes that if you traced him out, they really had a lot of wisdom in them. But you know taking the bit in your teeth people don't work with horses much anymore.

The certainly city people don't what what is it when a horse takes the bit in his teeth? The bit sits behind a horse's teeth. And when you pull on the reins that bit gets into the part of the jaw that forces his head to turn and it's just like riding a motorcycle wherever the head turns. That's where it goes.

It's like the steering wheel of your car. You turn the wheel the car is going to follow right and so you can turn a horse because you're turning his head and he's going to follow his head. But if he gets the bit in his teeth now, there's no discomfort when you pull on the reins and he's going to go his way instead of your way.

You have lost control of the horse when he gets the bit in his teeth. Well, we get the bit in our teeth and the word and the witness of the Spirit no longer persuade us. We decide usually through a lack of thinking.

How does this happen? How is it that we decide we're going to do something that we know is wrong and we're going to do it. Anyway, how do we how do we manage that? How do we get that to happen? We purposely shut our eyes to consequences. We shut our eyes to the observation of God.

We shut our eyes to let your moderation be known to all because the Lord is at hand. I pretend like the Lord is not at hand and now I don't have to be moderate. I don't have to be considerate.

We just we wall that off. We block it out. Hear me now.

This is what people are doing in the modern day when you look around and say I don't know. This doesn't make any sense. How can people be so unreasonable? They're doing the very same thing and we are doing the very same thing.

They are walling off and blinding themselves to reason to cause and effect to action and

consequence. They just shut it off. They shut it down and you think well, that's just that's just crazy.

That's insane. Romans chapter 2. We do the very same thing every time we sin because we know better. How is it we sin when we know better? How is it we let our anger or our worry or our impatience or whatever it may be? How is it we let it take the upper hand and we sin? This is common to man.

We're made out of the same dirt. We're molded out of the same clay and we all spoil in the potter's hand when we stop responding. To wisdom when we stop prioritizing the fear of the Lord, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because if we are so awestruck by God and so respectful of him and so aware of his presence around us and within us that we don't dare take the bit in our teeth.

We don't dare gratify ourselves or shut off the voice of his spirit and the and the witness of his word. We don't dare. What is it that can overcome this impulse to blind ourselves and just go our own way? Fear of the Lord.

I am so aware of him so aware of his claim on my life. The price that was paid to purchase me. I don't dare.

This is how we walk the path of holiness. This is how we bear the fruit of the spirit. This is how we flee youthful lusts.

This is how we overcome our fallen nature. This is how we are not persuaded by the world. We are not in deceived by Satan.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it prevents us from shutting down our sensitivity to cause and effect to imperative and incentive. And we've got no business. Looking around in disgust at people in the world who are illogical because every time we sin, we are doing the very same thing.

We say, well, they're suppressing the truth and unrighteousness. Yeah, and so are we. So I can't fix them, but I can sure do something about me.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back. We're going to see this pattern work itself out imperative incentive.