

Proverbs 22-11-30b

Let's pick up our study now. We're on the cusp of chapter three and just by way of review, if you don't have these passages in the margin of your Bible or in your notes, let me just invite you to put them there one more time. Chapter two, as I said, is the key to the next seven chapters.

So this first section, verses one through eight, that is the Aleph and Aleph section is the means by which we draw closer to the Lord. I don't think there's any serious believer that would reject the notion that it would be a good thing and a wonderful blessing to be closer to God, to be closer to him through the Lord Jesus Christ, to have a better appreciation and understanding of who he is. This is in fact, finding the fear of the Lord, understanding the knowledge of God.

That is verses one through eight. This theme is going to be revisited in chapter three, verses one through 12. So I have a little note in the margin and I have marks that are indicating these sections.

So there's a little horizontal line at the top of chapter two and at the bottom of verse eight. And within that I have a note, draw closer to the Lord, draw closer to the Lord. And this is going to be expanded in chapter three, verses one through 12.

Chapter three, verses one through 12. When I get to the next section, which is wisdom, what is wisdom proper? This is verses 9, 10, and 11. So I've got those three verses marked off as a section in the margin and wisdom entering my heart, knowledge becoming pleasant to my soul, and the outcome of that discretion and understanding preserving and keeping me.

That section, the role of wisdom, the value of wisdom in verses nine through 11 here is going to be revisited and expanded in chapter three, verses 13 through 26. 13 through 26 of the next chapter. And then it is going to be expanded again in chapter four, verses one through nine.

Four, one through nine. This theme is going to be revisited in three, 13 through 26 and chapter four, verses one through nine. So I just put that in the margin.

This section that we have just seen about wicked men, which is verse 12 through 15. That's the wicked man speaking perverse things, appealing to our desire for delight and rejoicing. This is going to be picked up again in chapter four, verse 10 through 27.

When you get to the section that begins in verse 16 and goes through verse 19, which is the immoral woman, the seductress, she is going to reappear three more times in the upcoming chapters. Chapter five, verse one through 27. One through 23.

Five, one through 23. Again in chapter six and an extended section. This is chapter six,

verse 20 through chapter seven, verse 27.

Long excursus. Wisdom is pictured as a woman. And this is the anti-woman.

This is the opposite woman. This is not the woman representing wisdom. This is the woman representing everything that is not wise.

So she's going to be seen in chapter five, verses one through 23, chapter six, verse 20 through chapter seven, verse 27. And then again in chapter nine, verses 13 through 18. Nine, 13 through 18.

The purpose that is given in verses 20 through 22 is going to be woven throughout the book of Proverbs. So that we can walk in the way of goodness, not in the perverse way of the wicked man, not in the crooked and deathly way of the flattering and seducing woman. But the way of goodness and paths of righteousness in verse 20.

Why? What is the outcome? The upright will dwell in the land. And the blameless will remain in it, will persist, will dwell habitually in it. But the wicked will be cut off from the earth.

Cut off from the land. And the unfaithful will be uprooted from it. Notice the parallelism.

The upright will dwell in it. The wicked will be cut off from it. The upright and blameless will remain in it, but the unfaithful will be uprooted from it, out of it.

Such a fascinating outcome here. And it is devoutly to be wished that we are counted worthy of the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the Father, that we are worthy to inherit and to serve in those kingdoms. So we want to be the upright.

We want to be the blameless. And you can imagine, based on our first session tonight, what the word translated upright in verse 21 is. This is Yasharim, Yashar, Yasharim.

These are those who have the orthodox way, the straight path. God makes your path straight in chapter 3, verse 6. And those upright who are walking the way of goodness and keeping to the paths of righteousness are the Yasharim, dwelling in the land and remaining in it. The wicked will be cut off and uprooted, cut off and uprooted.

It is the opposite of fruitfulness and function, the opposite of future potential. If you're uprooted, your plant is going to wither and die. So with that as a review, now as we enter chapter 3, we saw that that chapter 2, verses 1 through 8 anticipate this section and it is how we are drawn closer to the Lord.

This becomes sort of a cycle where as we keep the fear of the Lord before our eyes and we begin to understand righteousness and justice and straightness, every good path, wisdom and knowledge are pleasant to our soul and knowledge and discretion keep and preserve us. This enhances our appreciation and understanding fear of the Lord and the

fear of the Lord feeds back into that understanding and wisdom. So each compliments and enhances the other and without one, you cannot have the other.

We cannot have righteousness and justice and equity without the fear of the Lord. We can't have the fear of the Lord without righteousness and justice and that Yashar straightness. What does this mean in practical terms? We are being pulled in so many directions as Christians in this modern culture, politically, socially, economically, physically.

When you have an affliction because they can do a thing, should we have them do that thing? If I'm getting a saggy wrinkled face and my hair is falling out, should I get plastic surgery because I can? Should I get hair implants because I can? I'm using something of an absurd example, but there is a spectrum on which the medical establishment is willing to act. You think about gender confused people who map that confusion onto children or think they see it in children. They say, well, I could surgically have this child changed to match what they believe themselves to be.

I'm a girl trapped in a boy's body or vice versa. So medicine can make alterations to try to make the physical match what they think is on the inside. Is it right or is it wrong? Should you or should you not get any given vaccination? Why some vaccines and not others? Why some treatments and not others? Why some palliatives and not others? Should I let them give me morphine knowing that it's addictive? Well, it kind of depends on how long do I think I'm going to last? Is that addictive quality going to really matter if I'm in the final stages of exiting this life and it can be used as a palliative for me or for mine? But we have to think through these things.

What is right? What is just? What comports with the straight path? Is my faith in medicine and doctors or is my faith in God? Can I have faith in both without compromising my Christian identity, my fear of the Lord? What role does my active engagement with the economic world or the medical world or the political world or the social world? How do those interrelate? This is what the book of Proverbs helps us sort out because it is eminently a practical book. If we want to please God in the way we live, we have to understand how righteousness and justice and equity plays out in the decisions. I make tomorrow and the next day and the next day the conversations that I have the activities in which I engage.

How does my personal morality affect those around me? How does my political identity, my social identity, my medical identity? What effect does that have on those around me? This is what Proverbs helps us prioritize and through the wisdom that comes from God and the understanding that God grants to those who fear him. We will know the answers to these questions. What a gift.

I don't have to continue to parse and listen to talking heads and you know, watch PragerU videos and then watch CNN and then watch Fox and then watch MSNBC and

then read the New York Times and then read the Epoch Times and try to get a balance and try to figure out where is the truth? Who knows what and what should I do as a result? There is a great danger in deciding that the answers are out there. If I just expose myself to enough humanly excavated information. Go to the divinely authored information and God will build a truth detector and a righteousness detector and a justice detector and a straight path detector into my soul.

I don't have to know. It's very interesting. If you many of you I'm sure have been in the big tube for an MRI magnetic resonance imaging.

And you have to know before you go in there if any metal associated with your person is sensitive to magnetism or not. So if you've got a titanium plate in you somewhere, no worries. Titanium is completely magnetically neutral.

If you have fillings in your head you say well, but how old are they? Well, they're they're magnetically neutral. Somebody thought of this ahead of time. You don't want to get an MRI and have your fillings flying out that would be unpleasant to say the least.

If your wedding ring is made of gold, you don't have to take it off because gold is not magnetically implicated. But I need to know if I do have something in or around my person that partakes of the magnetically sensitive metal world because bad things can happen. I saw a picture somewhere on the web of the opening of an MRI machine and there's a wheelchair stuck to the top of it that evidently got sucked across the room.

You know, so goes the conceit. The magnetism is so powerful. But you know, they have you put your clothes and your personal belongings like your credit cards.

Don't want to have those two near the machine or suddenly none of them work anymore, at least not on the magnetic stripe portion. So they have you put your belongings in a locker and then you lock it and you have a key. Well, the guy is very careful to say, now put the key on the counter that is far enough and it's an aluminum key anyway.

But what about the little ring? Well, you just keep it far enough away that nothing is going to be implicated, but you have to be sensitive in that environment to things that are or are not magnetic. We as believers in our environment have to be sensitive to things that are or are not of spiritual importance. And when you enter the room with an MRI, you're thinking magnetic metals all the time.

There's iron in my blood. Is it going to heat my blood up? Is my body temperature going to rise over time when this thing keeps waving me with all of these magnet fields? If we could be as sensitive to our spiritual identity and the impact that various things have on our fear of the Lord as we are in other contexts, this leads us directly to a healthy and fruitful life. It is a way of direct access.

It's a straight path through the straight gate that leads to life, not the devious and crooked way that leads to death. So as we enter chapter 3, my son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands. Length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.

Long life is not necessarily a blessing if you are miserable. Length of days and long life and peace. This is life in the sense of an abundant and pleasant and enjoyable and fruitful life.

If your life is abundant and fruitful, satisfying, enjoyable. We are blessed and we are involved in blessing for others. Then length of days is a great blessing.

Long life is something to be desired and peace. My commands. Look at that phrase at the end of verse 1 of chapter 3. My son do not forget my law.

Let your heart keep my commands. What if you took those my's out and put the. My son do not forget the law, i.e. the law of Moses, but let your heart keep the commandments.

It's a whole different verse, isn't it? Well. The word of God as it exists in David's day are the books of Moses. Right? Possibly Joshua floating around somewhere, but most of what we know is the Old Testament major and minor prophets.

Those don't exist. The wisdom literature is in the process of being set down the Psalms, the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. This is going to be David's son.

So when he says do not forget my law, let your heart keep my commands. Who is this that's talking? It's the father, right? Because he says my son. My son keep my commands.

Do not forget my law. What do we cover in the first session? The people to avoid are the perverse man and the seducing flattering woman that smooth over iniquity and make it sound enticing enjoyable and nothing wrong with it hiding the fact that it leads to death and destruction, right? The man and the woman are in the horizontal realm who are speaking here. This is the peer group.

This is not a wildly older woman trying to seduce a young man where they call that the Cougars, you know, older women who are looking for the pool boy and whatnot. These this is typically the the peer group. So what truth is contained here? Don't look for guidance.

From the surrounding environment from your peers. Look for it from the elders. It is passed down from generation to generation.

It comes sort of vertically. People should look to the faith of our fathers. That's otherwise you can just say we'll look to Moses follow the commands of Moses and you and you'll be

good.

If this is David speaking to Solomon here, he says I have internalized the law of Moses the law from Sinai and I have figured out its practical meaning and application and that is what I am passing on to you. I am taking the law written on tablets of stone and I am putting it on the fleshy tables of your heart because it is on the fleshy tables of my heart. I have brought the word of God to a living reality and practice in my life to the extent that I have done that the David is not going to incorporate the bad decisions that he made and the his failures except possibly by way of negative illustration.

Here's what happened when I didn't do these things, but my law and my commands are the fruitful part the understanding I've gotten this is why God leaves us as older people still on the earth sometimes not at our best anymore. I can't run the way I used to run. I can't even there are many things I can't do like I used to but I do have the opportunity to communicate to those who are coming up after me succeeding generations the covenant of my God the companion of my youth and not forsaking them passing those values and those understandings and those biblical truths worked out in experience the gnosis that I've been able to turn into epinosis.

And we're going to see that very same idea in in Hebrew here and pass that on impress it on those who are younger than us less experience than us and make that available so critical. Don't miss the pronouns here. My son do not forget my law.

Let your heart keep my commands. He's not talking to everybody's son at first blush until this becomes in inspired scripture. This is a father talking to his own son.

And encouraging him to adopt and practice the faith and the hard-won understandings and experience that he himself has gleaned across the years try substituting the and see how this whole verse changes. My law my commands my personal experience with God the ways he has blessed me and guided me. I'm passing this on to you.

Don't forget it. Don't lose it because my length of days my life the peace that God has has given me think about Psalm 23 by David. Green pastures still waters a restored and comforted soul.

Even if I'm walking through the Valley of the shadow. I'm not fearful. This is hard one experiential truth and David is available to pass it on and he says my son.

Don't lose the value those of us who still have people ahead of us. Generation wise. What is their hard one experiential truth in the faith? We need to.

Value that listen to it. Add it to the store of resources in our own soul length of days and long life and peace. They will add to you.

This is why it is valuable to read authors from the past. Clean ideas from commentaries

from decades ago centuries ago in some cases. The Word of God itself gives us narrative and truth that has been set down by those who have gone before and have had experienced the truth of God actively in their lives.

Verse 3 let not mercy and truth forsake you mentioned this a couple of weeks ago, but mercy here is chesed and truth is Emmet chesed or dh depending on how you want to vocalize this and Emmet e m e th Emmet. This is grace and truth chesed is grace. It is loyal love grace and truth in the Old Testament grace and truth in John chapter 1. These are the unchanging facets of relationship between God and his people grace and truth.

Don't lose them. Bind them around your neck write them on the tablet of your heart. Don't hang a stone tablet on your wall.

Don't write them on a scrap of paper and put it in a little special symbolic container on your doorpost or a little leather satchel that you strapped to your head or your hand write them on your heart. Mercy and truth chesed loyal love grace. This is how you find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

It is something of a rarity in the book of Proverbs that you have the word God here in verse 4 Elohim. Almost always when God is referred to in Proverbs. It is the Lord.

You have the fear of the Lord in chapter 2 verse 5 you have the Lord giving wisdom and verse 6 and so on you do occasionally see God mentioned as God you will find the knowledge of God the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God, but so often it is Yahweh the personal relational name of God in Proverbs here where it could have been used we have favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man and when God is mentioned as Elohim rather than Yahweh it connotes it suggests God at the judgment the impartial God the God who sits on the throne and adjudicates the Lord is the personal name. It's this is a very loose and poor analogy, but you can say. Here is my paternal ancestor father or dad dad is the relational way when I when I see him I say hey dad when he is coming home from work and I have malfunctioned as a child and mother says wait he doesn't she doesn't say wait till dad gets home.

She says wait till your father gets home. This is kind of the suggestive difference. Here so finding the knowledge of God you'll understand the fear of the Lord that even though he's the Lord and it's his personal covenant name for Israel.

He is to be respected. He's not so familiar that we lose respect. We understand the fear of the Lord and we find the knowledge of God.

What is the basis on which God establishes righteousness and justice and straight paths equity you come to that understanding so we will find favor and high esteem in the judgment of the father in the judgment of God and in the sight of men, even if they disagree with you, they will respect you. They have to respect your choice. Why because

you're consistent you are humble you have a basis for your belief and for your practice that is the outworking of that belief and you find favor and esteem.

You are respected even if people's violently disagree with you. They will respect you why because mercy and truth characterize your position. So you can't be bombastic.

You can't be insulting. You can't be contemptuous in your debate and in your character assassination of those that disagree with you. So many people fail on this point in the Christian world, even Christian to Christian.

There is personal assault and contempt grace and truth bind them around your neck. Don't go anywhere without them and your position and your view will be respected by people and esteemed by God himself at the judgment. We've talked about verses 5 and 6 here trust in the Lord with all your heart.

We're going to see on Sunday in our continuation of the study of suffering those who misunderstand suffering and misconstrue suffering those who use the problem of suffering in the world as a basis for rejecting God and even the notion of the existence of the biblical God. This is the area of failure leaning on one's own understanding. God must make sense to my understanding or there just can't be one.

There can't be a God that I don't understand. God himself and many of the elements of God's plan and purpose are not understandable to us any more than computer code behind a software program is understandable to the ones who use it. They just want it to work and people want a feature and it's not coded into the software.

Well, but I wanted to do this. I've got a long list of things. I would love software to be able to do if I'm doing a repetitive task.

Why isn't there an AI by now in Microsoft Office software that sees me doing a repetitive task analyzes its essential components. You know, he's going down this column and he's changing this. He's entering something that's over in this other column.

Why don't I suggest an automated way for me to do this and would you like me to do this? Is there any question I should answer as I go line by line or page by page on this? Is there something that needs to change and the intelligence would do this? Well, nobody's coded that into the software. It's something I want but it's not a part of the program. I can say I don't believe in this program.

I think this is a terrible program and I reject it. I'm not going to use it anymore or I can understand that there are reasons why maybe that feature can't be included. But leaning on our own understanding and demanding that God explain himself on my terms.

This was the only mistake Job made. Who is this that darkens counsel without knowledge? The only charge God lodges against Job and the repentance that Job makes

afterward. I spoke out of turn and I repent.

That's the only transaction that in any way indicts Job in that entire long book. Job was willing to submit himself to God, but he began to question toward the end of those dialogues. Why doesn't God explain himself to me? Why doesn't he let me read chapter 1 and chapter 2 and why doesn't he explain to me why I am singled out for this particular test and debate between God and Satan? Why me? And at the end Job says, you know, I spoke out of turn.

I don't need to know why you do what you do. That's how Job changes his mind. You know, earlier he says, I wish there was somebody who could let me approach God and let me ask my questions and have him give me my answers.

But I know that I would melt away. I would be unqualified and his glory would essentially squash me like a bug. It would overwhelm me.

But I want to ask him these questions. God's answer to Job is, remember who I am. That's enough for you for now.

That's enough for you for now. Remember who you're dealing with. Trust that I know what I'm doing.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. Job's three friends begin to implicate him in reasoning why suffering is happening in his case.

Some of them say you must have sinned. Some of them say, well, you violated the tradition. Some of these them say, well, there's a mysterious spooky spiritual reason why.

Remember the different approaches that Eliphaz and Bildad and his friends are making at the time. Each of them comes at it from a different angle. And Job doesn't agree with any of them, but he does start falling for the notion that, well, it ought to be explicable to me.

I really need an answer because I don't qualify for any of the answers that you're giving me. And I want to know why God has brought this suffering upon me. Trust in the Lord.

Lean not on your own understanding. The only way we can do this is to cultivate humility. God resists the proud.

Job's three friends thought they understood why Job must be suffering and a sacrifice is required to relieve them of guilt for that sin. Fear the Lord and depart from evil. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

Verse 7. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Remember the psalm we looked at earlier? The wicked man justifies himself, flatters himself when the subject comes up of right and

wrong and whether or not he is engaging in hate instead of love for neighbor and love for God. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

The fear of the Lord should be before our eyes. Not our wisdom and need for explanation. Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

One of the few times in Proverbs that this is put in an imperative form talks about the fear of the Lord, having it, understanding it, what it comprises and leads to, but the exhortation to fear the Lord. This is one of only two places in Proverbs where you have it. Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

Depart from evil. We just saw that exhortation in verses 12 through 19 of the preceding chapter. Don't listen to the perverse man.

Don't be fooled by the flattering woman. Depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones.

Now, literal or figurative? Do we know of people who suffered affliction and they feared the Lord and they departed from evil? Did that make them healthy? Is Christian science a valid understanding that disease is all in your mind? And if you're spiritually healthy, the disease will disappear and fall away. This is figurative, clearly. So it will be health to your navel.

That's how we know it's figurative. It will be health to your belly button and strength to your bones. Is faithfulness and avoiding evil going to give you better bones? Can it reverse osteoporosis? Clearly not.

In the same way that the lust of the flesh doesn't actually emanate from our skin cells and our muscle cells and our bone cells and organs within. The heart is put for spiritual truth. The loins or the innards are put for emotions.

Well, same thing here. A healthy body in the physical realm allows you potential to do many things. You can run and not be weary.

You can walk and not faint. You can perform tasks. You can be of service.

You can carry burdens. Well, because this is a metaphor, if you have inner strength of two different kinds, one is flesh in terms of the navel. The navel is where it is representing what is behind there, which is your digestive system and your circulatory system and your respiration system and your personal processing of air and food and so on is going to be enhanced and you will have structure.

Instead of entering into the structure built by the seductive woman with her flattering words, you have an inner structure. It is strength to your bones. It is health to your own processing.

You can look at the world. You can listen to what is being said. You can watch what is going on.

You can have experience of circumstance and you will be healthy. You won't be depressed. You won't be discouraged.

You won't be deflected. You won't be deceived. You will be strong in what you process the navel for a baby.

That's where all of the nourishment and material for building a human body came from from the mother and people in the ancient world understood this. That is the connection. That's how the baby grew.

This is how we grow. This is how we flourish. So fear the Lord depart from evil.

You will be able to process and benefit from whatever you take in and you will build a structure that gives you strength strength for the journey strength for the burden. 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.

Once again, this is metaphorical. It is symbolic. You can't simply tithe and expect blessing.

Honor the Lord. Is a spiritual attitude. This is synonymous with fear of the Lord.

So what do we do in our lives? We give God place as we plan our activities as we spend our time as we use our resources. Are we first and foremost thinking about how we can best represent God how we can be a living testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ in the ways that we invest the resources that we have and appreciate what comes to us through the blessing of God. We're gonna have a lot to say about this on Sunday, but we are coming now to suffering in verse 11 and 12.

This is suffering for the purpose of discipline. My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord nor to test his correction for whom the Lord loves. He corrects just as a father the son in whom he delights.

This is the only place in Proverbs that directly addresses any kind of suffering suffering proper. And it addresses it in terms of the unhappy experience of being disciplined by God. This is by no means the only reason or even the most common reason that people suffer but it is mentioned here and we're going to be continuing that study of suffering on Sunday.

So we'll leave off this point and remembering that we know how to cultivate the fear of the Lord. We know how to keep it before our eyes. We know how to judge ourselves so that we are not judged.

We do not follow the pattern of the man who is wise in his own eyes Psalm 36 verse 3. We know how to avoid this. We know how to be on the right side of God's justice how to be worthy of his favor and high esteem as you find it in verse 4 and doing that is the only way to have not only an enjoyable life but a future with great potential father. Thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the clarity with which these things are expressed to us in this section of your word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will help us to understand it and see its pertinence and application in our own hearts and our own lives. May we be susceptible and amenable to the convicting ministry of your spirit so that we can keep our relationship with you front and center in our attention and in our priorities.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.