

Proverbs 22-12-07b

Let's pick up our study here in Proverbs chapter 3. We'd like to finish this chapter tonight we've seen in some detail the first 12 verses and Beginning in verse 13 now you have happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding this is the beginning of a kind of Bracket if you keep your finger here on verse 13 and look at verse 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her and happy are all those who? retain her Remember in Proverbs chapter 2 how interesting it is the the progression from my son if you receive my words hide my commandments And how it progresses to more and more Action this is a similar, but different kind of progress First of all wisdom Is found happy is the one who finds it Then in verse 18 if you take hold of it when you find it It's one thing to find it. It's something else to say now that I found it. I'm going to lay hold of it I'm gonna get my hands on it and then Happy are all who retain her you found it you got a hold of it you hang on to it Now what does this mean in practical terms? For me I Cannot tell you how many? sermons I have heard how many Bible studies I have participated in as a listener and From the time that I started studying and preparing them for myself There's you know many hundreds Probably thousands I haven't gone back and counted, but it's a lot we've been doing this together for 25 27 years maybe that's a lot of Bible studies and as we come to the scripture, and we dig into it and compare scripture with scripture look at the context try to Ascertain the meaning access some help from the original language and look at culture and cross references and so on we find Truths we find the wisdom of God not just knowledge Which is what is it that is being said in this passage, but turning the corner from observation to? interpretation and application this Hopefully becomes wisdom.

We should be living a different life as a result of these times of study and of Finding wisdom so the question is as we go Study by study week by week class by class and we find wisdom Are we laying hold of it it might be impressive in the moment it might make sense we might assent and agree and Affirm that certainly seems right to me but if I quiz myself Let's see. What was the what was the study we were doing a few years ago? Let's see we were we finished kings and prophets. We were in the book of Malachi What was that book about what was the message of Malachi did I bring any wisdom out of? The study of those four chapters What do I remember about that book? this is Beyond finding and beyond taking hold of this is the retaining Anybody that studies learning anybody who's been a teacher or is a teacher will tell you that the way to? remember and retain is to review to go back and rehearse to Revisit this is why we take notes and It's one thing to subscribe to a devotional or get a daily verse in the email or whatever but Most of us have notes that we've taken in the past Things that we've emphasized even in our Bible if we just pull the Bible out to do some reading day by day as we should and if we've got a note in the margin and we say Let's see what what class was it that we were Was that in that series or did we come here from from a different study? What was the what did we find and lay hold of here? Can I bring it back to my mind? Can I retain it? Can I re?

Invigorate it in my soul and in my heart if we only find and if we kind of catch and release We're we're not going to have a storehouse of fish Catch and release you come home with an empty boat, right? So look at this progression find wisdom lay hold of it and Happy are those who retain it.

This is the importance of our personal Holy Spirit guided review if we do this prayerfully If we do it as a part of our fear of the Lord as a part of our rendering of firstfruits Hopefully in the first part of the day as We gear up for the day. Maybe it's as we're getting dressed. You can be doing mechanical Tasks, you know the the normal ablutions that get the day started but be thinking God has resurrected me from the dead This Morning I Was alive yesterday.

I went to sleep. I could have not woken up at all sleep and death are compared and combined Any number of times in Scripture? I have been raised. I am Lazarus walking out of the tomb here I've got another shot at investing time and opportunity I'm preloaded with memories and conditions and circumstances from yesterday in the days before But this is a new day His mercies are renewed every morning.

His faithfulness is great What can I retain and make use of Maybe I don't even need any new truth that day. I don't need to necessarily go back and You know draw a bucket out of the well I've already got a cistern full of water from which I can drink if I access it It's so important to not be in a routine where we find we lay hands on a thing and Three or four days later it has slipped away Retention Building it into our souls in times past there are pastors who talked about this as a as a building and an edifice as a Something that is constructed in the soul out of pieces of truth well There's there's some validity to that So let's look at what's in between these two verses Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding wisdom and understanding notice again in Verse 19 by wisdom God the Lord founded the earth and by understanding he established the heavens Wisdom and understanding this is God's thinking This is God's *modus operandi* if you want to throw some Latin in there and impress your friends. This is how God does things wisdom and understanding These we always love to think about eternal life that partakes of the divine that partakes of the eternal that partakes of the realms of heaven Isn't it wonderful when our thinking our attitudes our approach our? perspective Partakes of God's that's what this is talking about if we find wisdom and gain understanding this is The kind of thinking and the perspective and the attitude and the approach that God himself Used in creating the world the Lord by wisdom founded the earth by understanding.

He established the heavens What two things do you have here? That you also find in Genesis 1 1 in The beginning God created the heavens and the earth Here we find out how he did it with wisdom and understanding We can create God can be creative in us and through us When we partake of his wisdom and his understanding there is a new creation if any man be in Christ What is he a new creation? Christ has been made to us

Wisdom Righteousness Christ is our wisdom Christ formed in us is the hope of glory. It's a new creation and again, these are fine-sounding concepts it Tickles the ear to think oh boy. I'm partaking in God's wisdom and Understanding what does this mean in practical terms when we fold up our books and we get up tomorrow morning and start another day We're in the middle of a work week here trying to get ready for a holiday and a lot of pressure and a lot of crammed schedules and such So wisdom and understanding.

What does that really mean? Well It starts with finding it continues with laying hold of and it persists with retention I Think this me personally and I suspect a lot of people are like me I think my problem isn't so much finding We're blessed with wonderful insight into the Word of God. Nobody has had the resources. Nobody has had the access nobody has had the thousands upon thousands of volumes of References and resources and commentaries and lexicons and helps that we have we can find The wisdom if we're looking for it and we can grasp it It will make sense It will fit into what we've learned before we can build it on the foundation that we've already got But where is it? I? mean honestly, and and this is No, no hands.

No, I don't want any verbal answers from this but Last month was November Can you remember any single point from any Sunday service in November? Think well, let me help myself. We're in Matthew Upper room bread and cup and if we can work our way back and Say, oh, yes And right now we're looking at the role of suffering in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus and that same Sort of role in our own lives, but you notice we kind of have to work our way back to it It's not it's not an immediate. It's not an immediate memory It's not an immediate memory for me and I organized it and presented it we have to make a habit and make a practice and dedicate ourselves to the priority of retaining what we learn Reviewing it personally Whatever part is meaningful and helpful to me personally.

I want to put it down and I want to go back before a Bible class Flip a few pages back. Where are we? Where have we been? How is what am I going to look at tonight fit into the flow? the context the the Setting that we've established It it is this is the practical rubber meets the road. Here's how you make it happen procedure work on retain Work on retaining so Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding Her proceeds are better than the profits of silver and her gain than fine gold She is more precious than rubies and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her once again so much of Proverbs is metaphorical and we're not so much saying well I've got to decide whether I'm gonna try to get some gold today or Try to see if I can find a ruby or I'm gonna reflect on the truth of the Word of God Most of us don't truck with gold and silver and rubies except as we might have a piece of jewelry that Has those components, but that's not our pursuit What is this talking about? This is success and accomplishment and Apprehension or coming to possess in the material realm? any number of diatribes and decrying Prophets on the woes of materialism in American Christianity today, and there's a lot of materialism going on We certainly don't want to

be materialists as soon as you say, I'm a materialist.

I hate myself I you know why labor for that which perishes the man with his barns and God says thou fool Do you not know this night your soul is required of you your barn isn't going to come up to the judgment And by the way Mere social action for its own sake isn't going to go to the to the judgment with any kind of positive result either It isn't what we do. It is why we do it and You can't just throw your bread on the water Without God's blessing and without it being a part of God's purpose Just Because we do a thing doesn't make it righteous it's why it is done it is how it is done and everybody has to be the Arbiter of that in their own hearts in the presence of the Holy Spirit and by the standard of the Word of God So it's not simple altruism Generous people aren't automatically in Altruistic and social minded and people looking for justice for the oppressed That doesn't automatically impress God Who knows what the motives are for that except God man looks on the outward appearance the Lord looks on the heart so Proceeds better than the profits of silver and her gain than fine gold By the way, silver and gold and rubies are a part of this present earth, which will perish It is going to be consumed in an enormous Galactic spacefire of some sort and there will be a new earth and there will be a quality of What is described in Revelation as gold and pearls and precious stones But I suspect that these are metaphors for things. We can't even begin to understand Length of days is in her right hand verse 16 in her left hand riches and honor is Every single faithful believer going to be wealthy and Honored in this life and live into their 90s Once again, this is expressive figurative language for those satisfying desirable qualities that make a life worth living that give hope and Confidence and gratitude toward God length of days You may live a very short life, but it is very full You may not be rich, but what you have is like riches It is as enjoyable and more so you can enjoy what you have and you feel rich and You don't have the problems that come with excess wealth and believe me excess wealth is Very problematic very fraught I Don't want to be rich Not in this life But it says length of days riches and honor But what is it really talking about? Well, it gets to the road in verse 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace Peace in the soul is better than rubies Pleasantness is better than a barn full of gold Pleasantness and peace To have a satisfied settled gratified soul Fullness in the spiritual sense That's why wisdom and Understanding are a tree of life to those who take hold of her notice.

It's a tree of life it's not the tree of life because we're speaking in metaphorical terms and in Proverbs you will see references to the tree of life and this doesn't carry the baggage of The Garden of Eden We will find this used again in Proverbs 11 verse 30 you can write this in the margin the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life and He who wins souls is wise We'll have to talk about what it means to win a soul when we get there But the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life Interesting no The role of the tree of life in the garden for Adam and Eve and their separation from it and the result but when we are able to live a life in the light of wisdom and lay hold of God's righteousness by faith and have it shine in And through us this becomes a tree of life to others What a privilege How

would you like to be the tree of life in the garden? How would you like to be a pillar in the temple of God? We're not an actual pillar But the role of a pillar in being a part of the very structure and Being a part of the reflection of the symmetry and the glory and the beauty any place of worship for God is what that? Pillar in the temple is talking about to be a tree of life. You can be such an intrinsic Blessing by your presence by your conversation by your attitude by your patience by your fortitude To be a tree of life, it's in Proverbs 13 verse 12. Hope deferred Makes the heart sick You hope it's supposed to happen on a day, but then it doesn't so you hope for it the next day But then it doesn't happen you hope for it next week next week comes and it doesn't happen.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick But the desire comes It is a tree of life Hope isn't any good unless there is a fulfillment and the wonderful thing about our blessed hope To experience the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ is that hope is not deferred Because we can experience the presence of Christ now Christ can be at home in our hearts if we have his word and keep it and we love him He will come along with his father and make his home with us and his presence will be created in us through the Holy Spirit and through the word and We begin to enjoy and we begin to understand how to act in the presence of the Lord Jesus now So that in his actual presence at and after the rapture we are not ashamed Remember Paul saying that you be not ashamed that is coming What a tragedy to hope and wish for the return of the Lord Jesus, but when he comes We're fleeing in the other direction like the Israelites at the base of Mount Sinai We need to learn how to act in the presence of the Lord Jesus now That's why that hope is not deferred in the ultimate sense We can prepare for it. We can experience it. We can learn to function with it now Hope deferred this is 1312 of Proverbs makes the heart sick.

But when the desire comes it is a tree of life It Enlivens it energizes it adds something to us that we need to live Without which we can't live Proverbs 15 verse 4 a wholesome tongue is a tree of life But perverseness in it Breaks the spirit a Wholesome tongue wholesome speech wholesome conversation is a tree of life it imparts life it enlivens enriches and transfers life to others The tree of life doesn't just exist so that it can live and it can have a lot of fruit and look like a real Pretty tree the whole purpose of the tree of life in the garden was to be a blessing to Man and woman wholesome tongue tree of life perverseness in the tongue Breaks the spirit it does internal damage To others that's why the perverse man and the immoral woman in chapter 2 of Proverbs are so dangerous It corrodes it corrupts it breaks the spirit So The Opportunity to partake of this tree of life Exists when we take hold of wisdom and We gain understanding Verse 21 actually verse 19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth by understanding he established the heavens by his knowledge the depths were broken up and clouds dropped down the dew There's been a lot of scientific squabbling going on about whether ancient man understood the evaporation and Distillation cycle and where rain comes from and so on I don't think that's really God's point in putting this verse here but what it tells us is that There is a healthy pattern. There is a healthy cycle pictured here

The depths are broken up and you get the idea. This could be a picture of evaporation and then condensation and There is health there is a time for the water to be warm and to evaporate and to go up and disappear and There's a time for it to condense and fall in rain and dew There are two equal and sort of opposite processes at work here and It is a reminder of that truth in Ecclesiastes that there is a time and a purpose to various things that seem like opposites We're not always certain that the time that a thing is happening is the time it ought to be happening But this is where our faith in God comes to the fore The Lord founded the earth and established the heavens and then you have this interplay between the earth and the heavens because the Water in the sea on the surface of the earth Goes up to heaven and then it comes back and distills as do God created these cycles and the message for us is to be patient as God works these seasons You think about Psalm 1 the man who is like a tree planted by the rivers of water bringing forth his fruit in his season Patience and faith go hand in hand in recognizing that it isn't always the time to receive the former or the latter rain It's wonderful when they come but it's not always the season of harvest.

It's not always the season to plant Sometimes it is a season of waiting. It is a season where harsh winds come and snap dead branches out of trees There are seasons For everything and that cycle is referenced here then in verse 21 my son This is another my son section verse 11 began that way verse 21 begins this way Let them not depart. What is them? Go back to the first my son Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding Let them not depart from your eyes.

Keep sound wisdom and discretion They will be life to your soul and grace to your neck Life to your soul This is what's written on the fleshy tablets of your heart and grace to your neck when they accompany you everywhere you go You don't let them out of your sight. I don't want to lose them. I don't want them to forsake me I'll tie him around my neck Then you will walk safely in your way and your foot will not stumble You may go through some rough terrain You may have some steep climbs you may have some Dangerous descents you may have some shadowy valleys.

You may have some windswept hilltops Sometimes a barren and lifeless landscape, but your foot will not falter Anybody can walk a primrose path. Anybody can walk on level ground anybody can Negotiate What is simple? we need wisdom and understanding to negotiate the hard paths the difficult ways when the lights not good and There's not necessarily someone there to lean on Your foot will not stumble when you lie down. You will not be afraid.

I Will both lay me down in peace and sleep for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in Safety you have the same ideas here. I am secure Nothing can happen to me that God does not send or allow God is paying close attention to me because I am someone paying close attention to him When you lie down you will not be afraid you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet You will not be afraid to go to sleep Do not be afraid of

sudden terror nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes Because it will come But don't be afraid for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due this harks back to the firstfruits and honoring God with our possessions Whatever those possessions are Immaterial or material Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so It's not always within my power Sometimes the resources that God has entrusted to me are spoken for and I cannot contribute to every worthy charity or Every worthy cause I can't necessarily help with every problem That any person in my periphery has I have to be a good steward if it is in my power to do so Balancing the responsibilities and the priorities that God assigns us We make these decisions before the Lord we do what we can when it is in our power to do so Do not say to your neighbor go and come back and tomorrow I will give it in the same way that God's discipline on an individual basis is Immediate he deals with us in the present Same with our ability to help don't say well come back later. Maybe I'll help you then Tomorrow I will give it when you have it with you Never put off to tomorrow what you can do today here it is in the Bible specifically in the arena of Ability to help someone in our periphery Not mailing a check off to some faceless charity who's in turn gonna broker it to some other faceless person who's gonna invest it in something or spend it on something and You know nine dominoes down the road.

Hopefully somebody will be helped This is in our power in our periphery We are making a first-hand judgment of whether this is something God wants me to do I have it in my power to do so. I have the resource to do it. I have the opportunity to do it Don't put it off Well, maybe this person will go away and not come back and I won't have to do it That's not the attitude God wants to see if it's in our power if he's given us the resource to do it Don't delay do what you can do do it now Do not devise evil against your neighbor for he dwells by you for safety's sake Do not strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm If he's done, you know harm then you have no cause for strife and if you look at all of the safety and lack of fear that is mentioned up above if It's very difficult for anyone to do us actual harm It's got to be pretty severe before we're going to strive But there is a time to strive But we don't calculate and scheme retribution and evil against a neighbor and Unless he has done us a pretty grievous harm.

We don't have a cause Do Not envy the oppressor and do not choose any of his ways this is where your wings I've always thought about this Not always I was thinking about it this past week Actually, we talked about left wing people and right wing people. Did you ever see a bird? That's only got a right wing How well does it fly? How about an airplane? It's only got a right wing or it's only got a left wing Don't you kind of need both wings? And Congress you got to get both wings to agree on something for bipartisan support before you can get something done and Balance is the key if you are so one-winged That you can't get anything from the other one you're gonna be in a real tight circle Do not envy the oppressor choose none of his ways For the perverse is an abomination to the Lord

But he imparts his secret counsel his Otherwise unrevealed wisdom to the upright God will give us a wisdom that is not common to man He will give us unique insight. He will give us special illumination when we need it Secret counsel to the upright The curse of the Lord is already on the house of the wicked.

We don't have to find ways to penalize them hurt them badmouth them Somehow judge them judging as you know is when you inflict a penalty of your own devising The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked. He blesses the home of the just I'm gonna let the wicked deal with the Lord on his own He might not even be wicked maybe I'm wicked and I'm so screwed up I'm not exercising good judgment, but I've got my hands full making sure that my home is qualified as just so that God will bless it Surely he scorns the scornful but gives grace to the humble James 4 6 God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble humility is the key Humility is teachability Humility is power under the control of The Holy Spirit and the Word of God Teach ability Power under control an ox who pays attention to the guidance that comes from the ox driver So that you plow a straight furrow you pull a heavy load Directly to its destination God scorns the scornful but gives grace to the humble the wise shall inherit glory Shame shall be the legacy of fools pretty self-explanatory they're very Motivating for us, but I would say the key in this section is that single word in verse 18 Happy are all who retain retain Wisdom and understanding it's at the center of the chapter. It's at the center of fulfillment of all of these wonderful potentials and That should be our goal.

Can we find practical ways to? Support and encourage that retention. Yes, we can Absolutely, I can do that. I can make that happen Very practical very down-to-earth so under the Doctrine I learned long ago from a pastor in Tulsa he was big on labeling doctrines and he once taught the doctrine of give it a shot so this coming week, let's Let's make an effort on Retention and watch what God does in our lives and in our hearts to give us rest and restoration Peaceful sleep freedom from fear and all of the benefits that wisdom and understanding confer on us Drawing us closer to God through Christ Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for this wonderful passage how clear how Important it is for us to understand and to put into practice. We pray that your spirit will Encourage us comfort us Empower and enable us to put these truths into practice in our own lives so that we can be a tree of life A source of blessing to those around us and a means of reflecting your glory now and in the ages to come We pray it in Jesus name. Amen