

Proverbs 23-03-01b

Ready now to pick up our study in Proverbs chapter 8. We have covered verses 1 through 14 and we pick up now in verse 15. And the thing we want to keep in mind is the practicality of this passage. It isn't an abstraction, it's not academic or aesthetic knowledge.

And the practical nature of it is now going to be emphasized in verse 15. And we'll get to the text note there in verse 16 in a moment. But obviously, there are all kinds of kings.

Not all of them are good kings. Not all of them are righteous or effective. But kings that last, kings that remain kings for very long.

You can look at the history of Israel, you know, this guy was a king for two months or eight months and got superseded. Kings who reign in the sense of duration and success are reigning by means of wisdom. And there are all kinds of decrees that can come from rulers, but if they are just decrees, it is because they are ruling by means of wisdom.

So they decree justice. In verse 16, by me princes rule and nobles. And if you think about it, princes are lower ranking than the king and nobles are often lower ranking than those who are in the cabinet level and the palace level of government.

But how do they accede? How do they advance? How are they promoted? So this is the idea of promotion. Those at the top, if they're going to remain at the top, the kings and the rulers, they have to be operating in wisdom or they're not going to last long. Those who are in the upcoming generation, the princes and the nobles, if they're going to become kings and rulers, they have to learn and function in wisdom.

So this, wherever you are, it's kind of like the Ishim and the B'nai Adam. The Ishim, if you have reached the gentlemen level, you're going to do so in wisdom. And so there is an upward movement, if you will.

So the final line in verse 16, where it says all the judges of the earth, and you'll see a text note that says that this is the reading of the Masoretic text, the Syriac, the Targum and the Vulgate have a different reading and it is righteousness. And I believe that righteousness should be there instead of the earth. The Septuagint is what they have chosen to go with here.

Septuagint, Bomberg, and some manuscripts read earth. I think all of the righteous judges, not any old judge of the earth is ruling in righteousness by wisdom. They have to be judges who are judging righteously.

If they're going to be a righteous judge, they've got to have this wisdom. It's not just any judge in the earth has wisdom. Well, if he's a judge, he must be wise.

We know that's not true. So from the semantics of the passage, I would choose the reading righteousness here. I wouldn't die for it, but that's what I think it is.

So you might just circle the text note and underline the righteousness down below. Now we saw up in verse 13 that wisdom hates pride, arrogance, evil way, and perverse mouth. This is what is not found there.

They're oil and water. They don't mix. They don't coexist.

They don't dwell together. You pretty much have to choose one or the other. And you return to this idea in verse 17.

If this is what she hates, what is it that she loves? I love those who love me. There is a kinship and there is a drawing together. There is a close intimate relationship.

Those who love wisdom are going to be loved by wisdom. And remember, this is not gushy, emotional infatuation. This is Jacob have I loved.

Esau have I hated. I'm incompatible with Esau because he's going his own way. He's pursuing his own agenda.

Jacob, I have loved because he is seeking my way. Jacob prays to God. He sets a stone to him at Bethel.

He makes a vow to God. And he is conscious and aware of the importance of the birthright that associates him with God. And that is his desire.

And he, in a sort of an illicit and unhappy way, big deals his brother out of it. If he had waited, it would have come to him. But he didn't wait in the same way that wives, if men had waited for the right wife and not gotten ahead of themselves, it would have come to them.

David would have probably acquired Bathsheba as his wife and the mother of Solomon in a legitimate way. Uriah may have died in the normal course of battle, but instead David jumps the gun and has him basically murdered and gets in an illicit way. Isaac would have come.

Abraham didn't have to resort to cohabiting with Hagar and having Ishmael and all the complications that have arisen from that. Waiting on God's timing, even when it seems that the time has passed. Well, the time for this would have been 10 years ago.

The time for this would have been 40 or 50 years ago in Abraham's life. The time has passed. The window of opportunity has closed.

If I don't do something now, it's going to be forever impossible. Wait, I say, on the Lord. Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength and so on.

Waiting on the timing. I love those who love me. I will benefit those who look to me for benefit.

How is it that we look to wisdom? Traditionally, and a lot of us in the past and past congregations and churches we've been in or associated with, recognize the value of the word of God. Got to get the word. Got to get the doctrines, the principles, the promises.

Got to learn it. Got to know it. We've memorized chunks of it because we recognize this, but that is not enough.

Any more than recognizing a sin and confessing it is not enough. You've got to recognize it for what it is. Turn from it and pass away.

There is repentance. There is change of mind away from works that lead to death. Not just, oh, didn't know the sin.

Lord, I sinned. Thanks a lot. And driving on, that's not progress.

Recognizing an error, recognizing sin, recognizing transgression, and whether or not there is sorrow involved, there certainly needs to be change of mind. I got to find a way to not have this become a pattern, or if it is a pattern, I've got to find a way to break this pattern. And we have seen scripture teaches us how to do that.

How to get it at its source. How to not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful. That is a surefire method of constantly walking out the door and having sin pounce on you.

God told Cain, it's crouching at the door. I'm telling you right now, if you walk out there unawares and unprepared, it's going to overcome you. You've got to find a way to master it.

God didn't say, sin was crouching at the door, but I drove it away. Jesus doesn't say, Peter, Satan has desired you that he may sift you his wheat, but I banished him. Or Satan roams the earth as a roaring lion, but I've scared him away with a couple of well-timed gunshots.

He's still out there. It's still there. We are the ones who have to be prepared for the onslaught.

And the surprise has been taken away. So now, if we still get pounced on and overtaken and devoured, that's our fault. We've been told it's crouching at the door.

We've been told it's roaming the earth, trying to devour us. We've been told that it wants to sift us. We have to find ways.

And this goes beyond just faithful and just to forgive us our sins, cleanse us of all

unrighteousness, this mechanical. And I really think that if we start applying that kind of thing in a mechanical way, if it's not heartfelt desire for cleansing, forgiveness, and to find a new and better way and stay on the narrow path and not constantly be stepping off of it, I think mechanical confession isn't confession. Change of mind away from dead works.

It's the first stone in the bedrock of the foundation in Hebrews, not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from works associated with death. Faith toward God, walking by faith. So I love those who love me and those who seek me diligently will find me, not those who show up and plop down in a chair for Bible class, not those who listen to a Bible lesson with one ear while they're doing something with hands and heart and head.

This isn't those who hear me from time to time, is it? Seek me diligently. This very same thing that God says about himself, you will seek me and find me when? Say it with me. God says, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

Says that to Israel. It's true anywhere. If we want this wisdom, if we want to be loved by wisdom, when you love somebody very dearly and you're not real sure where they're at, they're not co-located with you, what do you do? You seek them diligently.

There are some believers who look for their keys with more diligence than they look for wisdom from the Word of God, who look for their glasses with more enthusiasm and more energy than they do for the guidance of the Holy Spirit leading into truth, who are more anxious to make an appointment on time than to have regular appointments with God in prayer, who will meet somebody for lunch with more diligence than having the Lord Jesus who is knocking at the door come in and share that meal. We have to examine ourselves and ask ourselves hard questions and don't be afraid of the answer. If it's negative, embrace the answer and do something to change that answer.

Avoiding truth is not a way to fix a problem. I have had plumbing leaks and there is evidence because there's moisture where it should not be. If I just say, you know what, I'm just going to look at the dry ground everywhere.

I'm going to look at the dry floor. I'm going to pretend like everything is dry and good. That way I don't have to fix the plumbing.

When I talk about a recipe for disaster, that's it. We have to diligently seek and when we do, wisdom will be found by us and we will be loved by wisdom and the things that accompany wisdom, prudence, discretion, knowledge, understanding will all come into the room. We can't take this lightly.

This is life. You can't do New Testament Christian living if you don't get this timeless Old and New Testament truth down as a basic skill, as a basic pursuit, as a top priority. Lip

service won't do it.

That's why it says those who seek me diligently. She's out there calling in the open square and at the crossroads at the beginning of this chapter, right? But to simply hear that call, isn't it interesting? It's not enough. Well, you know, I was out in the public square, heard wisdom calling at the crossroads, heard exactly what she said.

That's not enough to hear it in the same way that us reading scripture, hearing a Bible class, listening to something good isn't enough. We've got to say, this is life. This is food for my soul.

I'm going to starve if I don't partake of this, internalize it, digest it, metabolize it and turn it into power and energy. So when we do that, verse 18, riches and honor are with me. It's already said that, you know, wisdom is better than rubies, better than diamonds, better than silver, better than gold, right? So what kind of riches are we talking about here? It doesn't mean, you know, really get after it and diligently seek and all of a sudden the coffers will be full and overflowing.

What kind of riches? All of the quality, valuable things that count. Ask anybody who studies the psyche, human nature, the human mind, the human soul, the human heart, the human experience, those who want to do counseling, who want to help people better their lives, better themselves. Read any of these books.

I've got one I'm working my way through now. You know, how can I live a fulfilled life of contentment and peace and genuine deep seated happiness and a feeling of productivity and outward looking benefit to others and so on? What does everybody want? That kind of riches. That's riches.

A life that doesn't depend on what I have or I don't have, doesn't depend on the bank account, doesn't depend on possessions, doesn't depend that much on circumstance. Like Paul, whatever state I find myself, man, I'm good to go. I'm content.

This is okay because I carry my wealth with me. Riches and honor. What if you're dishonored? What if people under appreciate you? What if they misconstrue you? What if they cancel you? What if they hate on you? What if they take you lightly of little importance? What kind of honor are we talking about here? This is not the honor from fallible, fickle, misguided, confused people with their own set of confirmation biases and filters and prejudices and partial pieces of knowledge.

They don't understand. They don't know why they see a thing. Boy, the world is rife with, I put this two and this two together and I get four down here and this two and this two have nothing to do with each other.

I saw another one of these meme trope quick signage. I'll post it and repost it and it gets posted by everybody and repeated a million ways about Francis Scott Key writing the

poem that became the words to the Star-Spangled Banner about Fort McHenry and all of that. War of 1812, remember? Well, read the third stanza.

Nobody ever sings the third stanza of the Star-Spangled Banner because he talks about slaves having no place to hide and Francis Scott Key was a slave owner and he wrote the third stanza and he's going to hunt down these escaped slaves and do them in and it's in the Star-Spangled Banner. I'm not even going to dignify that with a response. People were so much more adept at both using and understanding language in those days.

The slaves and the hirelings that are spoken of in the third stanza of the poem that became the Star-Spangled Banner are the conscript and mercenary troops of the British Army who are going to have no place to hide. Shame on you for hiring on with the British. You will be found.

There's no place for you to hide. Not American slaves of any stripe or sort and the fact that Mr. Key had some slaves is neither here nor there. There's another meme, trope, signage, quick aphorism, nonsense thing floating all over the thing about what they're doing is, you know, let's chip away and undermine anything that people makes them proud of the United States.

For people to look back with any kind of loyalty or whatever, oh, the Pledge of Allegiance. Did you know that the Pledge of Allegiance was written by a socialist? He was a Baptist minister and he got kicked out of several churches and then he wrote the Pledge of Allegiance and, you know, who would dare say the pledge knowing the history of the man that wrote it? You can research that and find out that it's so the guy had some socialist leanings. But do you remember when the Communist Manifesto was written? And do you remember when 1917 and, you know, Russian communism and so on came out? This is before that.

And many people were looking at the possibilities of different forms of government. And if you understand that there is nothing intrinsically evil in socialism, it is what the evil people who inhabit it and abuse and misuse it, a construct of how to allocate that when does it become evil? If you say, well, everybody should have everything in common. So if you've got stuff, I'm going to come take it from you.

That's not a part of socialism per se. Socialism in its ideal is where people voluntarily contribute, like in the first few chapters of Acts. Nothing evil in that socialism was there.

It is what people do with it and to it that makes it evil. Anyway, I'm not going to belabor the poor guy that there was a there was a school effort in public school for kids to get them to understand the importance of the flag and the importance of our republic for which it stands and to try to find things that would unify one nation. It's indivisible.

It's got liberty and justice for all. And we want to find unifying concepts. It doesn't matter

what your opinions are on something that doesn't pertain.

We're talking about our republic here and to to bring the flag to the floor that's got that wonderful symbolism of unity. No, no, no. He was a socialist and he was a Baptist minister, got kicked out of his church.

So the pledge is is completely useless. This kind of extremely faulty thinking just makes your head explode while your hair is on fire. Just picture that.

In any case, look at this. Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness. These are the things conferred by God.

They transcend human fickleness, human partiality, human bigotry, human silliness, human confirmation bias, human logical fallacies of every stripe, genuine riches, permanent riches, riches you can take with you into the future kingdoms of the son and the father. These are riches you will never lose. This is honor that cannot be taken from you, cannot be stripped away.

They're never going to break your sword over their knee. They're never going to pull off your epaulets and your badges of rank. They're never going to strip you of your medals because they come from God.

That's the kind of riches you want. That's what wisdom confers. Enduring riches and righteousness.

My fruit is better than gold. Yes, better than fine gold. You say, well, there's gold and then there's gold.

It doesn't matter. 24 karat, not as good as this. Why? At 24 karat gold, every ounce of gold on this planet is going to melt with a fervent heat and disappear.

It is going to disappear. It is going to vaporize. It will be gone and then the vapor will be gone.

Why accumulate what you cannot keep when you can lay hold of something you'll never lose? It just makes sense if you have an eye on eternity. My revenue better than choice silver. The finest gold you can think of, this transcends it.

The silver you've ever seen, this is better. I traverse the way of righteousness. Notice there were the loves and the hates of wisdom and what is never found in association with her and what is always found in association with her.

Then you have the enumeration of what she confers, the ability to rule, the ability to be the next one, to exceed to that rule, to be promoted to that rule. What is one of the overcomer promises? I will grant to sit with me on my throne. They will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years, the martyrs, right? Whatever there is to whether you

want to be a prince or a judge or a ruler or a cabinet member, this wisdom is what is required to do it.

You want to look to petty squabbles and petty competitions and trying to climb to the top of some human flesh heap in this life or do you want the kind of promotion and qualification that endures throughout all eternity? All we have to do is think about it a little bit and it just makes such great sense. The problem is we don't stop and think. So this is what it confers and this is what it is by way of possession.

It gives us abilities and qualifications and it gives us a kind of tangible inheritance, something we possess that can't be taken from us. Verse 20, I traverse the way of righteousness in the midst of the paths of justice. When you have a way and a path, this is movement.

This is progress, right? Wisdom gives us not only abilities, not only possessions, but we move with it. We travel with it. We make progress.

We move forward. You think of the narrow way through the straight gate. You think of continuing on in ways we can hardly imagine.

Contrast this with Psalm 1. Are you walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, sitting in the seat of the scornful? Or through delight in the law of the Lord and reflecting on it day and night, are you planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth your fruit in your season? Are you in the way of righteousness instead of the way of sinners? Are you in the midst of the paths of justice? What's the difference in righteousness and justice? There are people who are taking the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says in chapter 5, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Hunger and thirst after righteousness. *Dikaiosune* in Greek.

And they say, well, if I go back to my classical Greek lexicon and I go back to this source and that source, I can find cases where people use *dikaiosune* for justice. So I'm going to re-translate this, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice. And now it's going to be social justice.

I hunger and thirst for people to be treated right and not to be picked on and not to be oppressed. And so you transform it from righteousness, which is by faith. And they say, see, Jesus isn't talking about the righteousness Paul talks about.

We're going to split off. Paul is talking about forensic righteousness and righteousness in an academic and judgmental sense. Jesus was talking about people justice and doing right.

Is Jesus in favor of doing unto others as you would have others do unto you? Yes, of course. And he said as much. But what are you hungering and thirsting for? And this is

where your prejudice and your confirmation bias actively blinds you to proper biblical interpretation.

Your hermeneutic just goes out the window. What is it about hunger and thirst? Is it external or internal? Is your hollow feeling when you need food inside or outside? It's inside. If you are thirsting, where is it? It's inside.

Is your hunger and thirst a social need or a personal need? Blessed are those who have an angst when they see the hungry and the thirsty, for they will be given water and food to distribute. Is that what Jesus said? This is a personal desire. And you could say, well, I still want justice to work.

So blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice to be done for them. Because in the kingdom, justice will come. Vengeance is mine.

I don't know exactly what it is. Well, fine. But still, this is an individual hunger and individual thirst, and it is going to be individually filled.

How do you pervert this and convert it into Jesus advocating for social justice? We should be social justice warriors. We hunger and thirst for these people over here and those people over there and this gender group and this group of the poor and this group of the homeless and this group of the refugees and the illegal aliens and the rest of them. I want justice for them.

And I'm going to claim Jesus words that it's going to be fulfilled in the here and now. I want justice for them. And I'm going to become an agent of change so that it is a blindness.

I traverse the way of righteousness in the midst of the paths of justice. Righteousness is the righteousness, which is by faith. It does not change.

It is being in the right, understanding what is right, doing what is right, advocating what is right. Justice is in Hebrew, your dean group to judge or Shafat to judge. Justice is the product, a judge who has right standards.

Remember earlier, those who judge, the judges of righteousness in verse 16. We're back to that here in verse 20. And that's why I think these interconnected links in this section tell us what the right reading is.

But this is our personal judgment. This is the individual who possesses this wisdom is going to judge rightly, not in the forensic sense of courts or sitting in the gate. This is judging in circumstances.

What is the right path? What person should I help? And what person should I not? With whom should I fellowship? And with whom should I establish a distance? What is the

righteous and just dealing with my fellow man? That's what a judge does. He judges his fellow man and determines how he should be treated. We do this individually.

Should I spend more time? Should I try to speak the truth in love and see if I can, you know, hate the garment spotted by the flesh, but pull this person out of the fire? As it says in James, or should I say, you know, God's going to have to deal with you, or maybe he's going to use a different person who's in a different, got a different angle, got a different take, different relationship. That person will be able to evangelize or counsel or speak truth that will help affect a change in your life. But I am not that person.

How do I judge that wisdom? And for us, this is wisdom. It's implied here. It is overt for us in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

When do I speak? When do I remain silent? When do I point out an error? When do I absorb it? When do I cultivate? When do I refrain? There is a time to gather stones. There is a time to cast them and scatter them. There is a time to rend.

There is a time to sew. There is a time to bind. And there's a time to separate.

Look at those times and seasons in Ecclesiastes for purposes, various purposes. Wisdom tells us which one it is. So important.

There is a way of righteousness that is not the way of sinners. And there is a path of justice that enables me to walk in fellowship and in caravan and in group with some people and not in caravan and not in group and not in concert and fellowship with others. I just don't respond to invitations and I don't issue invitations.

Others I cultivate. I will find a way to be with and to draw closer. How do I know when to do that? Wisdom.

Verse 21, in order that, and now another one of these internal connections, in order that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth. This is intangible wealth. This is profitable and beneficial and so valuable now and in the ages to come.

Those who love me, and we are back to verse 17, those who love me to inherit wealth, that I fill their treasuries. These are the treasuries you carry around in your soul. I am satisfied.

My cup runs over. The table before me is full of food, as it were, if you take the table and the presence of the enemies in the classic sense. We've been through Psalm 23.

You remember, there's a idea. This is surpassing wealth and possession and inheritance and understanding, prudence, knowledge, wisdom, guidance, more valuable because you are not diverted by mere materiality and mere earthly shallow relationships. Well, this brings us to verse 22, and this is what we're going to see.

We've seen wisdom's self-description, what's associated with her. We've seen what she confers by way of possession, what she confers by way of ability, what she confers by way of insight and perception, what she confers by way of righteousness and judgment. Now we're going to see her relationship to God Himself, beginning in verse 22.

And if you want to attain to understanding the mind of the Lord and entering into the counsel that He dispenses and figuring out why God does what He does, this is the wisdom that was with God when He originated everything, when He organized everything, when He purposed everything. And to enter into this wisdom is to begin to understand everything God has done from the beginning. Wow.

Science can't figure out how the Big Bang happened, what instigated it, how it managed to organize everything. But when God instantiated our creation, when He started it, when He began it, when He commanded it, when He decreed it, the wisdom that was with Him as an eyewitness is with us. Wisdom will answer our questions about origins, about purposes, about ongoing circumstances.

Why is it this and not that? From the very beginning, when the blueprints were on the table and the materials were gathered and construction began, wisdom was there and wisdom is right with us. That's going to be a fun thing to look at next time. But it is not just knowledge of the Word of God and it is not just Holy Spirit indwelling and filling.

Wisdom is when those two things are mixed, when they are both diligently sought, when they are both exceptionally and unconditionally valued above all things. Because this is our entree. This is the mind of Christ.

As a preview, what we are going to see in 22 and following in this chapter, many of the same things that are said about the Lord Jesus Christ and His role in creation are said of wisdom here. Why? In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God.

The Word was God. As was the Holy Spirit. Read Genesis 1-2.

The Spirit of God is hovering on the face of the deep. The Spirit and the Word were there at the beginning of creation. And it is those same things we have access to.

What a privilege. What an opportunity for us. We'll be looking at that in detail next time.

We're going to close here in a word of prayer. If you have a few minutes, I'm going to share some news after the prayer. If you need to go, go.

But it's a turkey dinner. Father, thank You for blessing us with the possession of Your Word. We can have as many copies of it as we want.

We can access it in dozens and dozens of ways. We thank You for the presence and power of Your Holy Spirit. We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus.

Through His work, we have these privileges. We stand before You. We have the opportunity to communicate with You and have You communicate to us in ways that are made meaningful and understandable to us in our flesh, in our fallenness, in our incarnate limitations.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that they will sink deep into the soil of our souls, and sprout to bring forth a 100-fold crop that reflects Your glory and redounds to the praise of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.