

## Proverbs 23-03-08b

Thank you, Dan, and Anna, and Lori, another beautiful reference to what we've been studying on Sundays, referencing the blood of Christ, nothing more profound to think about and to be grateful for, the very centerpiece of God's wisdom. Let's resume our study now. We're looking at Proverbs chapter 8, and we left off at verse 29, wisdom being present when God assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters would not transgress His command.

Anytime you see a reference to the sea, you can safely imagine that there is a greater reference to the chaotic forces of darkness, uncontrollable by man, but God sets their limit. And when we see things in the world today that seem out of control, that seem threatening, and very negative in terms of our lives and our purpose, to remember that if God can set limits for the oceans, for the seas, these massively powerful forces, He has no trouble limiting and filtering what penetrates through our defenses so that we can practice, so that we can exercise our faith, so that we can get used to operating in our spiritual armor. Nothing approaches us without God's consent.

It is designed for our blessing and not for our hurt. And in the same way that I don't sit here worrying about whether the Atlantic Ocean is going to suddenly come washing from the east and inundate us here, or the Pacific, or the Caribbean, or any other ocean of the world, I say science, physics, there are reasons why it can't come. All of science and physics was established by God, and the same God that uses physical barriers to contain the sea also contains evil and spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.

The wickedness that is perpetrated by man against man, man's humanity to man, I like to call it. Nothing gets by our Father in Heaven. He doesn't get busy, He's not distracted.

He doesn't forget. He doesn't get surprised. Everything that we encounter in our life is there in accordance with God's will.

We have nothing to fear. It is designed sometimes to instill fear. I have always been amused because one of the ways they do this in the military is anybody that thinks they might be going Navy Air in their summer training, they take you to Pensacola and they run you through the Dilbert Dunker, which is a mock-up of a cockpit, and it's up above a pool of water, and it goes smashing into the water at a fair amount of speed and then turns upside down, and it's up to you to possess your wits and unfasten your various straps and buckles and swim to the surface.

And there are people who don't survive the Dilbert Dunker. They panic. You're upside down.

You're disoriented. You get the shock of hitting the water and so on. But if you just remember your training, it's a lot of fun.

And I remember both Ken and I, as midshipmen, when we got to the Dunker, it was like a ride at the amusement park, and we kept going around to the end of the line. Guys that didn't do well had to go to the end of the line and do it again. Well, we entered the line, and if you're soaking wet, they figure, well, you must be somebody that didn't do well.

We'll run you through again. And so we would do it two or three times, because if you remember what they teach you, you get plenty of practice in turning the magic buckle and the rest of it. It's really kind of fun.

But this can be our life. Not always will there be joy when we are bereaved, when we are in pain, when we suffer and undergo pressure. It can be very sober and very taxing.

But to remember that it is controlled. They have divers in the water when you do water-based training in the Navy, ready to pluck you out and you're not going to die. You won't drown.

It just can seem that way. And believe me, there are other kinds of training that are much more sobering, and you don't go to the end of the line and say, let me do that again. Once is enough, I passed, goodbye.

But there is safety, and you have to discipline your mind to remember, whatever happens, I am not going to die. It is designed to seem that way in some cases. And our lives can be very fraught with physical peril, with threat, with hardship of all different kinds, financial, social, academic, professional, emotional.

But to step back and remember, wisdom is at our side. It is accessible. So the waters do not transgress His command.

He marked out the foundations of the earth. Limits in our lives are established by God's authority, and there is no greater. Remember how careful Satan had to be when he was afflicting Job? You can go this far, but no farther.

You can do this, but not that. Well allow me to do this. This is how far you can go.

Satan himself, most powerful being outside the Trinity itself, cannot transgress the limits that God sets. Which tells you some interesting things that the Bible doesn't explicitly state. For example, Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days, Satan could not have come to tempt Him except by God the Father's permission.

And you can imagine the sober overwatch of God the Father as the Lord Jesus in His humanity is subjected to those trials and to many others. God in heaven watching over the scene we are seeing in Matthew chapter 27, the crucifixion and the abuse and ill-treatment is an understatement of the Lord Jesus. God in heaven removing protection, establishing limits nevertheless.

You know how Satan disputed over the body of Moses? Did you notice how there is no indication that Satan disputed over the body of Christ when it lay in the heart of the earth? You know why? Limit by Almighty God. You are not going anywhere near that tomb. The body of the Lord Jesus is sacrosanct.

And I imagine there was a lot more than one archangel guarding that tomb. And the forces of Satan, can you see what a strategic advantage it would be if Satan could thwart the resurrection? But not in the plan and purpose of God. That same power limits and guards you and me.

The very same authority, the very same God, with the very same purposes in bringing many sons to glory, starting with the first and great Son of God, but including us. It's the same purpose and the same design, the same wisdom that was established before the earth came into being, before the heavens were brought into existence. That same God, His same authority, establishes what does and does not touch us.

It should give us confidence and remind us that things large and small, we go to the wisdom of God. We claim the grace of God. We enjoy the love of God.

It is God's love that has made this available to us, His fatherly care for us. I was beside Him as a master craftsman. I was daily His delight.

Again, when you delight in someone, you think about it. You honor it. You put it in a place of prominence.

Do you remember the classic scene in the book of Esther where the king asks, Haman, what would you do? What should I do to somebody I really want to honor? And Haman thought it was himself. And so he made up all of these extravagant honors, dress him up in the king's clothes, put him on the king's charger, lead him through the streets and have somebody proclaim, thus shall it be done for the man whom the king delights to honor. And of course, it is Haman leading Mordecai down the streets.

That's us. Wisdom delights. God delights in His wisdom.

And to the extent that we delight in it, it delights in us. I love those who love me, verse 17. Rejoicing always before Him.

Rejoicing before Him. This personification really is a strong suggestion and allusion, I think, to the pre-incarnate Christ. In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God. The Word was God. And that Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

But abstract principles and purposes and plans are just that. They can't delight in something. But there is a personality in this wisdom.

And I think that this is an Old Testament allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ, pre-incarnate. People want to say the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament. They want to capitalize the A and say the Angel of the Lord came and says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And because He's speaking in the first person, it must be Jesus. Personally, I don't think so. I think you know my illustration of the telephone.

The telephone can give forth a sound that says, I am the God of Abraham. You don't think the telephone is God. And that's what the Angel does.

He speaks with God's voice in terms that humans can understand. I think this is an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the incarnation, the embodiment.

And His very essence is the wisdom of God. What's interesting is when it says that this wisdom was brought forth and Jesus is referred to as the only begotten Son, the uniquely born Son, the uniquely brought forth Son. And I think that this is a reference not to the eternal second person of the Trinity, but at the very beginning, the idea that God would become man and be instrumental and the fullest expression of God Himself, instrumental in redemption and atonement and salvation.

The idea of being brought forth. And this is why you have allusions in the New Testament to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Not only that He would come, not only that He would be brought forth, not only that He would be a part of creation, but that He would atone for sin once and for all.

In the human race, by the sacrifice of Himself. So when you see this wisdom being brought forth at the beginning, the centerpiece of this creation, as I said in the first session, is Jesus Christ Himself. In His incarnation, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His everlasting representation of us as human beings at the right hand of the Father.

I think that that is anticipated and illustrated here. How many times are we told in the New Testament, Christ formed in you the hope of glory. If you have my words and keep them, that's who loves me.

And I will come to Him and make my home with Him. I and my Father will come, being beside, being delighted in. I love those who love me.

I am beside those who love me. You think about the parallels to what is said of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, and it's very profound. And I think it enriches our appreciation of this particular section of Proverbs with the value of God's wisdom.

In the Old Testament, it was abstract. It was invisible. It was real and it was true, but you couldn't touch it.

You couldn't visualize it. You couldn't see it embodied in a person as we do in retrospect, but it is the same truth. It's just our privilege to enter behind the veil and to see with unveiled face, the beauty and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So, always rejoicing, rejoicing in His inhabited world, verse 31. And my delight was with the sons of men. What is Jesus' favorite self-description? Son of man.

My delight was with the sons of men. It is for members of the human race that the Lord Jesus comes and empties Himself, takes on the form of a servant, comes in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man, humbled Himself, became obedient, and so on. Now, therefore, this is where we turn into interpretation, application.

Given the availability of God's wisdom, the wisdom that defines the universe and defines this time, defines human history, is intimately involved in creation, as was the Lord Jesus. Accompanies and rejoices in the work of God, as does the Lord Jesus. Rejoices always before Him and delights with the sons of men, as the Lord Jesus does.

So what? What should we then think? How should we then live? Verse 32. Now, therefore, listen to me, my children. For blessed are those who keep my ways.

Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain, do not treat lightly, do not set aside as insignificant, do not get distracted and forget. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, watching daily at my gates. What kind of gates could these be? Well, this is going to be illustrated further when we get to chapter nine.

So we will hold that thought. We know that the gates were the place of justice. You could learn a lot about the law in Israel by spending time at the gates, listening to adjudication, listening to cases and disputes being settled at the gates.

It is the place of ingress and egress. It is the place where some things are allowed in and others are not. There is filtering.

There is judgment that either accepts or rejects the entrance of persons and things. It is a place of judgment, of discernment, of qualification. Not everyone is qualified to sit in the gate and judge.

The elders in the ancient day would sit at the gates and you would bring your case to the elders. Not everybody was an elder. You can't just decide you are an elder, like people want to decide that they are various things in this day.

Some people want to decide that they are an ethnicity or they want to decide they are a gender. They want to decide they are some category of thing. They want to decide that they are qualified as a pilot when they have no training or experience.

They want to decide that they are an executive. They want to decide that they are a

politician or qualified to govern when they have no qualifications. Other people will go along with the imagination and with the fantasy and will actually vote some of these people in or encourage them and treat them as though they are the thing they imagine themselves to be.

It used to be if someone walked in and said, Hi there, I'm Napoleon Bonaparte, we would say, Of course you are. Well, Nappy, come right this way. I've got a nice little padded room for you.

We'll bring you some food here shortly and protect people from themselves. We'd recognize if someone thought he was a duck, we didn't inflate a swimming pool and fill it with water and get some of the little ducks to keep them company and only talk to them in quacks. We recognize there's something anomalous that this person has a problem.

Their mind is not working right. We need to help them. We need to see if we can get them reconnected to reality.

We didn't sponsor their unreality. But of course, evil on the hockey stick graph today wants to believe that anybody's truth is a truth and the truth and must be respected as such. And the idea that there can be things that simply aren't true is kind of rapidly going out the window.

So it's important that we know wisdom, that we know what is true. Even our own soul is capable of generating things that we believe are true and they're not. There used to be a TV program that I enjoyed watching.

It was very imaginative and well written. And the narrator in a very somber tone would begin, man lives in the sunlit world of what he believes to be reality. But there is unseen by most other things.

And we can believe that we're attached to reality. We can believe that we know the truth. If you want a tragic illustration of this, spend time around someone that is in the downward progress associated with dementia or Alzheimer's, where memory no longer prints.

And someone will tell you something. And then five minutes later, they want to tell you that same thing. And they do not remember at all that they already told you.

They said a thing. They disposed of a thing. They did this or they did that or they did something.

But there is no memory. And without our mind, without our memory, without our recollections, we slowly are no longer ourselves. We can't make good judgments when we're using a partial fact set.

This is like the open AI in the chat GPT trying to provide answers that it's ill-equipped to comment on because the data set is partial. Well, guess what? When it comes to the truths of this world, when it comes to God's purposes, we have only a partial data set. And it is dangerous for us to draw conclusions unaided without reference to an objective standard, without that companion of wisdom beside us to warn us when we are going off the path, when there is a way that seems right to us, but the end thereof is the ways of death.

This wisdom is essential because we are not ourselves and will not be ourselves until we are delivered from the body of this death. Don't trust your mind. Don't trust your memory.

Don't trust your moral sense when it is independent of the wisdom of God. That's a dangerous way to do. And it only takes one or two bad decisions to put us well down the road to ruin.

So, blessed is the man who listens to me, verse 34, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. Now, watching at the gate and waiting at the posts of the doors, what does this mean? There are times when you want the wisdom, you need the wisdom, you're ready for the wisdom, but the wisdom is not there. If it was there, you wouldn't be watching at the gate and waiting at the door, would you? When you're a guy and you first start dating, got your brand spanking new driver's license, scarily driving by yourself after your six months of the company driving, I wouldn't know about this, I'm just abstracting here.

Don't think this was necessarily my personal experience, trying to go pick up a girl. And so you're driving and trying to, you know, it's another thing when you're doing the driving and there's nobody there to give directions and you have to remember the turns in the streets. And so you finally get there and you come up and so you go up the walkway, you knock on the door and you hope this girl is actually going to be there and you're going to go out on this date.

But you're standing on the porch and the door is not open yet. You're hoping that there is a girl ready, willing, and able to go out on a date with you on the other side, but she hasn't appeared yet. And you've got time for your mind to run and you start thinking, you know, did I remember all of my preparatory things? Do I remember how to get from here to the movie house or wherever it is we're going? You know, I'm a brand new driver.

There's just all kinds of things, but you're waiting at the door and it's a time to reflect and be sure that you're fully prepared. Just run through your fund of conversation and whatnot before the guest of honor arrives at the door. But it is not always that this wisdom is instantly available.

This is the point. So suppose that it's not. Why would we be waiting at the gate? Why

would we be waiting at the door, watching and waiting? Isn't the wisdom supposed to always be by our side, just instantly available? Isn't it like a Google prompt that I can just type into at any given second and I'll get the answer? It's not.

So what does scripture say? Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. I listen when wisdom is speaking, but sometimes wisdom goes away and I've got to wait for it to return. This is why I like to tell my boss, he'll say, I do some trivial thing to fix a computer and he'll say, you're a genius.

And I say, sadly, I'm only a part-time genius. The genius comes and goes. There are things at which I appear to be a genius, but there are other things, I am just the opposite.

I am waiting for wisdom to arrive. I'm watching at the gate. I'm waiting at the door for wisdom to come and bail me out.

What do we do in the meantime? Watching and waiting, listening to what was previously said. What is the last wisdom I got? Military troops know this, you can be on the radio and you're waiting for instructions from higher headquarters. Well, what was my last clear set of orders? Until those orders are updated or countermanded, I go with the last orders I received.

Well, but the situation has changed. Well, we'll relay that to battalion headquarters. Well, now I'm sitting.

Well, do I just sit there at the radio waiting until I get an update? I have to implement the last set of orders that I received. And until I get fresh orders, I go with the last wisdom. That's why the order here is so important.

Look at what it says. I'm talking about the sequence here. Blessed is the man who listens to me.

I listen, I digest it. I get the drift of what I should be, what I should do, how I should behave, cultivate the attitudes, the priorities, the goals, the values. But I am watching at the gates.

I am waiting at the doors so that I can find more wisdom, new wisdom, additional wisdom, updates, fresh orders. I listen, but I don't just wander away and say, well, I'm sure glad I heard that sermon by wisdom three weeks ago. That's, I can go on the strength of that 40 days and 40 nights daily, daily.

This is why Bible class twice a week doesn't cut it. We will wither. If you only ate physical food twice a week, how long would you be healthy? Daily, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door.

Doors, people would come out the doors in the morning, go back in the doors at night. This is kind of a twice a day thing. And so the daily idea is even here at the posts of the doors.

Wisdom is going to emerge in the morning. I want to catch her when she's on her way out. Wisdom is going to return at the end of the day.

I want to catch her on the way back in. When she comes out of the door, I want to follow her. I want to be her companion.

I want her to be my companion. And I'm going to come back. And when she goes into wherever she goes, I'm just going to camp at the door until she emerges again.

But there are times when the wisdom is not immediately available. We operate on what we already listened to, what we already know until we get an update to our understanding, until the Holy Spirit reveals a fresh insight. Go with what we know.

Whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. I don't know what you would want more than this. What would you want more than this? I was reading an article earlier this week and somebody was talking about what is it that makes people happy? What is the measure of happiness? And when they would talk to people, especially people in the latter stages of life, some had achieved wealth and fame and had accomplished technological feats, had invented things, had been the CEOs of great companies, had amassed a fortune, had done this, that, and the other.

Many of them had been involved in charities and humanitarian works and all that. But they said, what is it, when you look back over your life, what makes you happiest? What do you think of that really brings you joy as you review your life? It was always relationships. People, connection to family, to close friends.

The thing that gave people genuine joy was relationship. Not, well, you know, when I made my first million, every time I think about that, it just fills me with endorphins of happiness. It's relationships.

Watching children grow and mature and enter into independent life of their own, companionship with spouse, siblings, parents, family, extended family, close friends and co-workers. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. But at the end of the day, it is connection to others that brings joy and contentment.

Now, if life is transient, if the people to whom you are connected are fireflies that fly in at night and are dead by morning, if you are one of those fireflies, you're here and you blink off and on a few times and then you end up feet in the air on the ground, ready for a chicken to come eat you. If it's all transient and ephemeral and impermanent, then what is the quality of that happiness? It is also ephemeral and transient and impermanent. Hence Solomon in Kohelet, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

It's chasing after the wind if there's not something more to this life. So now look at our passage. Whoever finds me finds life and favor from the Lord.

This is eternal life. This is an eternal Lord, an eternal God. The things that we accrue in terms of our relationships to each other as believers and to God himself through Christ is eternal.

This is a treasure that does not fade away. This is opportunity for future relationship. And relationships always involve, we don't just sit in a room staring at each other saying, I sure do like you.

Well, I just like you too. Well, but I liked you first. Well, but I like you more, but I like you a lot.

Well, I like you even more than a lot. Our relationships always have substance, don't they? We have activities. We have shared experience.

We have common goals. We have mutual interests. We have enthusiasms.

We have conversations that there is grist in that mill. There is substance to a relationship. That's more than just the feeling of appreciation or the approval and respect, admiration, and love that might be the container in which all of these other experiences and memories are contained.

So when wisdom says, whoever finds me finds life, this is life in its fullness. This is life in its eternal quality. This includes relationships and connections and experiences, both shared and unique.

This is speaking the truth in love. This is living the life that God has called us to and the fellowship and the unity both with each other and with the Lord Jesus Christ and through Him with the Father and the ever-present comforter, the Holy Spirit who energizes and enables and empowers all of those connections. It's the electricity in the system.

The Spirit of God. But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul to fail to appreciate, to fail to pursue, to fail to watch and to wait, to fail to value and accrue and go after wisdom, failing to listen, failing to wait, failing to watch, sins against his own soul. All those who hate me love death.

This is not hate in the vituperation emotional sense. This is hate. Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.

This is, I don't have any interest in watching over and promoting and protecting and enabling and empowering and so on. You're not an issue. You're not an interest.

My focus is on Jacob. My focus is not on Esau. God's not following Esau around, lighting him on fire and hurling thunderbolts from heaven.

He just, it's neglect. Sometimes there is nothing more awful than neglect to not have an interest taken in you, not have an appreciation, not having fellowship, not having an active pursuit. Someone's not watching at your gate or waiting at your door.

They're not wanting you by their side. And neglect is an awful thing. That's what we do to ourselves if we neglect this so great salvation, as it says in the New Testament.

All those who hate me love death. Look quickly now at chapter nine, Wisdom has built her house. She has hewn out her seven pillars.

This I can go another hour on, but I won't. I'll go about three minutes. Wisdom has built her house.

Remember in chapter eight, chapter seven, the house that the crafty harlot has with her Egyptian silks and her perfumes and all of her, that it is a place of death. All those who go down to her wind up in the realms of death. This is a different kind of house.

Wisdom has built her house. She has hewn out her seven pillars. It's so interesting to think about this.

Wisdom here, the very first word it's in boldface and that's appropriate, at least it is in my Bible, because in Hebrew, this is plural. This is a plural of emphasis or of excellency. When you want to talk about the sea in its might, you have to say mayim.

It's the seas. It's when you talk about the heavens and their vastness, it's shamayim and wisdom has this plural of excellency here. It's the profundity and the amazingness of wisdom.

She has her own house. We saw an allusion to this in verse 34. She's got a house that has gates and doors with posts, but this is a seven pillared house.

It's a mansion and it's made of stone. It's got permanence. It's got substance.

It's got lasting structure. The pillars, typically in a house of this nature in the ancient Near East, these pillars would be on the inside. There is an inner courtyard and you see these pillars around the inner court and there is a gallery on top of these pillars off from which you can look down into this inner court.

There might be a fountain. There might be some garden decor in there. There might be some statuary, but it's a beautiful multi-story house.

These seven pillars support the inner balcony or the gallery. And so four of the pillars are in the corners, right? And then in between those four, you're gonna have five, six, seven. The eighth is missing because that's the entrance.

And so there are seven pillars, four at the corners, three more between the corner pillars

with one left open for the entrance, the door, the gate at which we should be watching and waiting, right? So seven, of course, has great significance in scripture. The seven fold spirit of God that you have referenced in Isaiah 11, verse two. But whatever else you wanna say about it, I could imagine without a great leap of imagination, a dispensational idea that each of the pillars represents a different phase in human history.

But that's a bit of a stretch. I'm just happy that seven is the number of perfection. It's the number of God's completeness.

Four plus three, everything dealing with humanity, everything dealing with deity combined, you get seven. Four plus three, universality, eternity, all in one. So she has made and adorned this house.

And this is the house to which we are invited. This is the house in which we want to spend time, to be invited in. And when we're not in, we wanna be at the gate waiting to get in.

And this is where we will pick up next time. But our appreciation of this wisdom is doubly enhanced because with the second view, the stereoscopic three-dimensional idea that this wisdom, all of its characteristics are true of amplified and exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And when you put chapter eight and chapter nine with John chapter one, the first half of that chapter, the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, you have God's wisdom manifest to us in the law, the prophets, the writings, and in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

How can we lose? How can we fail with such a wonderful resource made available to us by the grace of God? What a wonderful God we have. What a gracious heavenly father. What a tremendous savior to such a worm as I, as the hymn says, have this manifest gift bestowed.

More about it next week. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the tremendous gift, the unspeakable gift that you have given to us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, foreshadowed and anticipated in these wonderful words about your wisdom, the wisdom you brought forth, the wisdom you manifested, consulted, and took delight in a mutual delight in the creation in which we dwell.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, your Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts, help us to see our lives in this greater context and in doing so be motivated to persevere, to run with patience the race that is set before us, to avail ourselves of the strength and the wisdom that you have placed in our hands so that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and be qualified to be presented before your throne. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.