

Proverbs 23-04-12a

Greetings, fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's another Wednesday night in the book of Proverbs. This will be Proverbs chapter 10, which we started last time.

We have seen that after the wonderful introduction in chapters one through nine, there is the collection proper. And rather than being random lottery numbers in a basket that somebody turned the handle and scattered them out and stuck them in a book, there is order, there's structure, there's meaning and purpose in these passages. And Proverbs chapter 10, the first chapter of the actual collection is going to be our exemplar to help us understand the way this book works.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, on our reflections and meditations, and then we'll begin. Father, thank you for this day. We are so often reminded of the gift of the Holy Spirit, his presence and his power in our lives to remind us of who we are and why we're here, to lead us into all truth, to bring to our minds the things that we have learned at the point of pertinence and application.

We are privileged to be studying this portion of your word and to find these timeless truths that are as meaningful today as they were nearly 3,000 years ago when they were first set down in your inspired word. We pray that as we look at this section together, that the Holy Spirit will find us ready pupils and will plant the seed of your word deep in the soil of our souls so that it can grow healthy roots and spring up and bear its fruit, which reflects your glory and the glory of our savior. We ask it in his name.

Amen. Proverbs chapter 10. It is a new section after chapters one through nine, which we have studied in great detail and we see the marker long before there were chapter divisions or verse divisions, there were textual divisions and we see the header for a turn here and a new portion of the book, the Proverbs of Solomon.

Right away when we start reading these, we think, oh yeah, Proverbs. It just, it's like a bunny hopping from hill to hill and a bee zipping from flower to flower, and it just seems to be picking up random thoughts and you just can take them one at a time. You could take them in any order.

You could make a magnet out of it or a air freshener for your car and glance at it from time to time and think, well, there you go. Blessings on the head of the righteous. Violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

Hmm. Yeah, okay. We could have a violent mouth.

Righteous people, their head is blessed. Okay. And then you move on.

It doesn't really seem to have a whole lot of traction beyond the same kind of aphorism

you could get from the world. A stitch in time saves nine. One in the hand is worth two in the bush.

Poor folks have poor ways or wherever you go, there you are. Or of all the people I know, you're one of them. It just, it doesn't really grab us.

We say, you know, I believe I'll flip over to Thessalonians and get into, you know, sink my teeth into some meat. Well, au contraire, mon frere, and frères, or however they pluralize that in French. There's a whole lot more here than meets the eye.

Uh, if you have the notes, which I very hastily posted in the Proverbs folder, right at the top, it says Proverbs 10 notes. There's any way you can tap that link on your phone and it will come up if you get any kind of a PDF reader, but keep that handy, you don't have to try to figure it out yet, I will refer to it as we go through so that you can see. What's going on.

Let me preface by saying people in the ancient near East in general, and Israelites in particular were way smarter than us, way smarter, this notion of goat herds and dusty, you know, camel drivers and people out there, you know, beating the sheep with a stick and such. It's just nonsense. These people could sit and listen to someone read or someone recite from the law of Moses or from the prophets or from the writings, and they had like a tape recorder in their head.

They could go to the temple or to a place where there was a scribe or a prophet who was holding forth. They would listen to the message. They could go back to their people if they were an elder, if they were a father, if they were a clan leader, they could go back home from an assembly feast, let's say in Jerusalem and recapitulate in detail exactly what they heard, you know, people like this.

If you ever, uh, my grandmother was this way. Many of you knew my, my grandmother, Betty, she could take a trip, go visit my uncle in Pittsburgh on a plane and come back and she would have spoken in detail in conversation to somebody sitting next to her on the plane. And this could have been on the going trip.

And then she's been in Pennsylvania for a couple of weeks. And when she came back, she would say, I met the most interesting person on the plane. And then she would begin to tell me their name, their occupation, uh, and incredible detail, she just had a memory for story that was phenomenal.

And she had an interest in people and a heart for people, which has come down to many of her offspring. But I was always amazed and I marveled at the retentive nature of her mind. And days and weeks later, I mean, she knew more about these people than they remembered even saying, and translate that back to the ancient world.

People didn't have pen and paper. They didn't walk around with pot sherds and, and ink

and quills and write stuff down. They didn't have a phone.

They couldn't text. They didn't have notepads and pencils. They used their minds from birth.

As soon as they could speak, as soon as they could understand Hebrew and later Aramaic and later Greek, they, their mind was their notepad. Their, their brain was carried their notebook and we can't do that. So what I'm going to do is we're going to reframe what is in Proverbs chapter 10 slightly.

It's the same content, but because we are not as smart as they are, we're going to reorder it a little bit so that it makes sense to us the way it made sense to them when they heard it. We've talked about postmodernism and how, you know, you try to have a conversation with somebody in one of the most recent generations, unless you're in one of those generations. And it's like trying to describe green to a blind person.

You know, there's no vocabulary. There's no common ground. You can't refer or designate or, or denotate or annotate or connote anything to them.

It, there's just no, no bridge between the minds in some cases. Well, this is going to be our bridge. We are going to be able to get back to what these Proverbs say.

And, uh, later on, I'll have a suggestion for you on how you can do even more with this, but let's start, set your notes aside just for the moment. And let's look at the first five verses of Proverbs 10. This is what we looked at last time.

And you remember me pointing out that there is symmetry there. You remember a wise son makes a glad father in verse one and a foolish son is the grief of his mother. So you've got the introduction of wisdom and foolishness and joy and sorrow, right? So there there's opposites there, joy and sorrow.

Those are opposites, wise and foolish. Those are opposites. But those two opposite pairs are tied to a single thing, which is the son, right? You go down to verse five.

He who gathers in summer is a wise son. He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame. Same idea there.

You've got son as you're combining, you know, your, your single feature out of which you have, um, industry and diligence in the summer or sleeping, gathering. In the summer, sleeping in harvest. And this is your outside bracket.

When you come in and you look at verse two, treasures of wickedness, profit, nothing. It looks like treasure, but it's not. Righteousness delivers from death.

What is more valuable than your life? Righteousness secures your life. It delivers you from death. Your, your life does not end.

You look at verse four, which is the inside parallel here. He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Poverty and riches in both verse two and in verse four, but it's not just wrote repetition, it's not just restating the obvious, these concepts of richness and poverty, they start out as material treasures compared to the value of righteousness in verse two, and then lack of industry in verse four resulting in poverty, but the hand of the diligent, a diligent hand, someone who is willing to work and take advantage of opportunities that makes rich.

And so once again, you have this and you can take those two verses and, and put them together in your mind and reflect on, meditate on, think about what is righteousness? Well, it is put in parallel with diligence, with seeing an opportunity that requires effort, requires work, but you engage in that effort and in that work because there is a hope, there is a motivation beyond the moment instead of, well, my motivation at the moment is to take a nap. And so I'm going to, even though the harvest is going on, well, nobody dragged me out there and stuck a sickle in my hand. So I'm going to lay down and take a nap.

And as you, when, when people heard these Proverbs recited or read and when they memorized them, all of this would be in their head, just like it is in your notes or on the page of your Bible. And they could pull these up and do the kind of reflection that we've got to be looking at a page to do. So that was the kind of symmetry that we looked at last week.

Now I want to show you a second level. If you look at the notes that I made, or you can do this for yourself, what we're going to do is separate out the things associated with the wise son, and we're going to list them all. So what I did, if you've got my notes, great.

If you don't, you can make your own, start out by saying, put one in a circle. This is going to be verse one, wise son, who is the father's joy, right? That's the heading. His dad is glad.

This son came along, makes his father happy, gratifies his father. And of course we immediately think we have a heavenly father and we hope that he's gratified, glad that he brought us into the spiritual world via new birth. Okay.

What do we know about this? We're going to pick out all of the positives in the succeeding verses. So what do we know? Well, in verse two, this wise son who is the father's joy, and you just put a circle two underneath that first line, his righteousness delivers from death. That's the positive side of verse two.

The righteousness of this wise son, it's under that heading. He doesn't have to worry about death. Death is not the issue for him because his righteousness delivers him.

In verse three, the Lord will not let the righteous go hungry. And we're already beginning

to see these things that we can compare. If you're wise, you're righteous.

You are delivered. God will not let you go hungry. My God shall supply all your needs.

Take no thought for what you will eat. Give us this day, our daily bread, pray to God and let him handle it. Right? These are new Testament truths drawn from old Testament truths.

It is the same truth. So that's first three. Now, if you can see on my notes, I angled in one, two, and three in a little bit.

Now I'm going to come back out with four and five. So in verse four, the capable son lays in stores during the summer. If my translation differs slightly from yours, this is the Jewish publication society, they have a really beautiful translation here in Proverbs.

And, and if you hear anything different from the new King James, it is because this, these are people who know Hebrew Jewish publications. So I love to read out of the Tanakh, which is where this comes from. The concepts are the same, but in, I think in some ways the vocabulary they use is, is richer.

So verse four, the capable son lays in stores during the summer. As I look back over my preceding points, the Lord will not let the righteous go hungry. He's going to be delivered from death.

So he's not going to starve. He's not going to starve to death. Certainly.

How is it? He's not going to starve. Is God going to parachute food in a, you know, Raven's going to drop it on his head like Elijah at the brook Cherith? What does it say? The capable son lays in stores during summer. The reason God's providing for him and the reason he is not going to die.

And the reason he has his needs met is his righteousness has motivated him to do those things that ensure that he's not going to starve. This reminds me of the story of the hurricane that flooded the shoreline town and everything is underwater and a guy is out there dog paddling for all he's worth and the storm is blowing and there's a rescue boat that comes by and says, uh, hold still, sir, we'll, we'll pull you in. And he says, no, no, God's going to deliver me.

I've prayed and God's going to deliver me. And a second boat comes by and a third with the same conversation and eventually drowns and goes to glory. And he's got a cross look on his face.

And when he comes to the judgment bar, he says, Lord, I trusted in you. And I prayed and I was expecting you to deliver me. And God says, you know, I sent three boats.

Uh, there, there is mechanism. There is material means by which God fulfills his

promises and people who are waiting for some supernatural and unusual, uh, provision from God, instead of watching for the summer and the harvest and opportunities to use a diligent hand and to be wise in identifying those opportunities that God will use to bless, to provide, to preserve, to secure. This is our God-given common sense, our God-given wisdom leading to righteousness and our faith manifests itself in works and in work.

All of that is in these first five verses, instead of just tripping through the Proverbs and saying, well, a wise son makes a glad father. We, as we start to break this down, it, it, there is meat here to chew on and to think about. That's just the, the, uh, the positive side of those first five verses.

And you see in verse five, as you come all the way back out, his diligent hands enrich, he is enriched in multiple ways. This like many Proverbs and parables has both a, a material aspect, but more so in the spiritual realm. Diligence enriches us in many ways.

We are spiritually enriched. We're enriched in our soul. We have satisfaction and a job well done.

We are comfortable and secure, and we can be a blessing to others because we have been diligent and faithful and watchful and looking for the leading of God, that's the, the wise son and the father's joy, a point from each of those five verses related to him. And you notice that in those, each time the positive comes first. Wise son comes first in verse one.

Um, and, and then you have, uh, treasures of wickedness, profit, nothing righteous that delivers from death. It's the reverse. You have the, the, the opposite.

The Lord will not allow the righteous to famish, but he casts away the desire of the wicked. He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. And it, it alternates.

And it's interesting to see that you have the positive followed by the negative. Then you have the negative followed by the positive. Then you have the positive followed by the negative.

Then you have the negative followed by the positive. And this is an alert to watch for the order. The order makes a difference and you've got this right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot pattern in these five.

And anytime you have an odd number, you know, you always want to kind of look in the middle to see what is this symmetry bracketing what's in the middle that is being so emphasized. And of course, verse three, all of this is part of God's plan. The Lord will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but he casts away the desire of the wicked.

You see the role of wisdom and the role of righteousness in the first two verses. You see the laziness versus diligence in the fourth and fifth verses, but right in the middle, the emphasis is the reason this works and the reason it is secure and meaningful, God is behind it. This is God's plan and God's order.

So in verse three, right in the middle of that symmetry, you have this powerful statement that the Lord is the one at work to will and to do for his good purpose in the life of the righteous, the wise, the dutiful, the diligent, the watchful, and he is going to ensure that the wicked are not going to have their cravings ultimately satisfied. That's the first five on the positive. Now let's go back and review the negative.

And on my notes, you'll see that the next five lines in those are headed by the dull and foolish son, back to verse one, the dull and foolish son who is his mother's sorrow. You don't want to disappoint either one of your parents, but it's interesting that the wise son gratifies the father. The foolish and dull son is a sorrow to his mother.

And you get the idea that because the two shall become one flesh, these are two different aspects of the parental view of the children, the child. So dull and foolish sorrow to those who brought you into the world and raised you and had hopes for you and invested in you and dedicated you to God and hope that you would turn out. But it is your foolishness that is the source and the cause of the sorrow.

Well, then in verse two, what was the negative side? This dull and foolish son, he may, if he gets gain, it is going to be ill gotten. He's not getting it by legitimate hard work, by investing himself in opportunities, by having a diligent hand and so on. Any gain that he has is ill gotten and it is not going to avail.

It isn't going to do the things that wisdom and righteousness achieved for that, that faithful son up above. Whatever he does accumulate, none of those blessings accrue. Doesn't make his dad happy.

It doesn't lead to life. It doesn't keep him from going hungry. You can think about the prodigal son story.

If there's a sense in which he takes his inheritance at the wrong time and in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons, and it becomes ill gotten gains and he squanders it and he's miserable. So his ill gotten wealth is of no avail. That's verse two.

You come into the kind of center of the V shape here in verse three, I indent one, two, and three, and then come back out. In verse three, notice the Lord denies the wicked what they crave. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. You can read any number of celebrities who have achieved everything, gotten everything, most recently I was reading

something George Harrison said of the And those guys achieved the ultimate of anything you could imagine. And he said, you know, I discovered pretty early on, that's not where it's at.

The fame, the wealth, the opportunities, it didn't satisfy that hunger in my soul. And evidently he looked at and rejected Christianity, but that's why he went over to India and got with the Maharishi guy and went in the guru route and tried to find it in himself by meditation and so on. But he never did find it.

He never did. His gains, be they well or ill gotten, didn't satisfy. And the Lord denies that craving.

Why would God deny people satisfaction and peace and happiness in their wicked cravings? How else are they going to know they're on the wrong track? What else is going to motivate people to turn and to say, this isn't it. Where is truth? Where is that for which I was created? There is something missing. I need to find it.

If God granted them the desire of their heart because he's just a loving God and doesn't want anybody to be unhappy, where would redemption and reconciliation and propitiation be? There are times when we need our pain. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens. He scourges every son whom he receives.

Why? For our benefit. It motivates us and corrects us, instructs us in righteousness. We need pain.

We need correction. We need hard knocks. We need that which discourages from time to time.

So the Lord is at the center, right in the middle of these symmetrical brackets. It is the Lord who blesses the righteous and the wise with more to him who has more will be given to him who has not. Even what he has will be taken away, Jesus said.

Why? We need that lack. We need to develop a sense of need. We need need.

Otherwise, this is the problem of people who are self-satisfied and do not have a sense of need. If you don't recognize a problem, you have no interest in a solution. Somebody calls me up and says they want to give me aluminum siding and I've got a great house that doesn't need siding.

How are they going to get me to, if they're ever going to sell me aluminum, they're going to have to show me why I need it because I'm satisfied. I got a great exterior to my house. Somebody wants to sell me a metal roof.

You're going to have to explain to me why I need it. If I don't have a sense of need, I'm not buying, right? So this is God's grace. Denying things is often an expression of grace,

of God's love, of God's desire to turn us, to bless us, to move us upward and onward and closer to himself.

And we often think, well, a parent would never deny something to their child. Oh, yes, they will. Those of us who have been parents know you need to deny some things or that child is going to make themselves sick or hurt themselves, etc.

Verse four, what is on the negative side? Coming back out now from the center in verse three. He who sleeps during harvest is, I love this translation in the Tanakh, he who sleeps during harvest is an incompetent. He's an incompetent.

He is not competent. He is not qualified. He is not skilled.

He's not worthy. Name a thing, whether it is surgery or repair, where you want an incompetent person to do it for you. God doesn't want incompetent people engaged in his work either.

And not all of us, Old Testament or new, turn out to be competent, to be used by God in his plan and purpose. So the natural question becomes, well, sleeping in harvest is a symptom of incompetence, what is the root problem in incompetence? How do you become competent? It isn't just by being awake. How do we gain a skill? You have to go out and try.

Sometimes you err and come short again and again, but we learn by doing. We learn from our mistakes, but we get out there and make the effort. And by God's grace, we can learn when things go well, and we can learn when things go poorly.

But people who are incompetent, what's the easy rationalization? Oh, I'm not qualified to do that. I don't know how to do that. I'm not ready.

There's other people that would be better at that than me. This is the devil's own lie. You're incompetent because you are not going out in the strength of God, claiming the promises of God, in our age, relying on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, which is the power.

Cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength, who has a heart that departs from the Lord. He's going to be like a shrub in the desert and not see good when it comes. It doesn't see good when it comes.

Harvest has come. I don't see where I'm going to do any good in that. I'm going to go sleep.

We're only four verses into Proverbs chapter 10, and you could think about these things for another week. This is why I'm writing them down. And look how interesting it is when you stack them together.

Let's finish this negative side. Number five is negligent hands cause poverty. This is not just significant within these first five verses.

This is significant as we move forward in the chapter. You can see in my notes that in verse five on the negative side, I have poverty circled. You can see in verse five on the positive side, I have enriched, circled, treasure, wealth, riches versus poverty, want, unfulfilled desire.

This is a theme that is introduced here, right? Well, as we go to our break, I just want to point something out. When you get down, look at verse 15 in this chapter, this is where we're heading. The rich man's wealth is his strong city.

The destruction of the poor is their poverty. I can't tell you how many different commentaries I have checked. And when they get to verse 15, they say, you know, some of the Proverbs are really more inspired and more inspiring than others.

This is really kind of a truism. It's kind of an obviousity. It's a it's a tautology almost.

Well, the riches, the riches are a fortress and the poor man, well, he's just out there, you know, twisting slowly in the wind. What what is the inspiring divine truth that you get if you just is anybody going to take verse 15, put it on a magnet and stick it on the fridge? This is this is my life verse, right? I need to get rich. So I've got a fortress.

Well, we are going to see as we move toward verse 15, when we come back from the break, we're going to look at at verse six through 11. And then we're going to move into the third section, which contains verse 15. You can see it in my notes here, six through 11.

The first section is five verses. The next symmetrical section is six verses. And the section that contains verse 15 at its heart is is seven verses.

And that verse 15 is right in the middle. And by the time we get to verse 15, we're going to find out it's not talking about money, riches, money, treasure, a money fortress. It's talking about something entirely different.

We got our first clue right here in this first section. What kind of wealth and what kind of poverty are we talking about? It is that which comes from God. Money is just an artifice.

It's a metaphor. It's a symbol. But verse 15 is not talking about get enough cash and you can build a big, strong tower.

This is Tower of Babel thinking, right? Do I want the Tower of Babel or do I want to be in an ark made of bulrushes getting shoved out into the Nile? That's not what this is talking about. It is talking about the wealth and the poverty that is going to be described as we move forward and toward verse 15. By the time we get there, because we have digested

the content of the context, this verse 15 is going to pop with fresh and new significance.

It's not a tautology. It's not a truism. It's not an obviosity.

It is at the heart of this seven verse section. Five, six, seven. It's a beautifully structured chapter.

It's gorgeous. I wish we could do it in Hebrew. If I had time to show you the symmetries and the poetry that is in the original, it would roll your socks down.

But this is enough for us to chew on and to digest. So we're going to pause here and take our break. But my encouragement is once we see these attributes that are all ascribed to the wise son, I want to turn the corner into interpretation and application.

I'm not just tossing off an aphorism here. I am thinking whether I am old or young, whether my father is alive or gone to glory. The wise son here is put for the righteous, anyone who is wise.

You can be half the human race as women. The wise son is just a convenient peg on which to hang righteousness, wisdom, diligence, faithfulness. When there is an opportunity, he's just he's just an example.

The Lord Jesus is our example. We don't consider ourselves to be the Lord Jesus. We're not Jewish.

We're not living 2000 years ago. We're not the son of God as well as the son of man. How is he our example? We don't have any trouble understanding that it is example of patience, of dedication, of prayer, of living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

It's the same here just because it's talking about a wise son making his father glad doesn't mean that, well, you know, I'm really not a son at this point, so I'm just going to move forward in Proverbs. So I find something that fits every single word from the mouth of God is what we are to live by. And these are deep, meaty words.

So I'm hoping that by separating the positive into one group and the negative into another, we can begin to see what the original hearers and the original listeners heard and thought and discussed with one another about these Proverbs. They hang together. They speak truth because they're in this group and they are carefully crafted, carefully ordered, carefully structured.

And to look at it long enough, the structure just reveals itself. The emphasis reveals itself. The truths begin to emerge.

But people in the ancient day would sit and think the enemy of our lives is hurry, pressed for time. Got to got to wrap this up. I got something else scheduled.

I got something else on the burner here. Can't can't think too long. Can't dwell too long.

Can't reflect too long. Can't pray too long. Can't look at this too long.

Deadly, deadly. These truths in God's word are not going to come and work their power in our lives in the hands of the Holy Spirit if we do not do Psalm 1. Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. And in that law, he meditates day and night.

Whatever he's doing, cycle some of that through. Let me just take a quick read through this before I mow the lawn or before I do the dishes or before I sort the laundry or fold the clothes or before I vacuum the carpet. Let me just take a quick look through, get it up into my immediate short term memory and chew on it while I'm doing a repetitive task, something I don't have to think about too much.

I've got to commute. Glance at it. We have to load it back up.

These people wrote it on the wall in their mind and they could just. This is what Dr. Chris used to say about his memory. When I read something, when I look at something, it's like it's written on a page.

And anytime I want to come back to it, I just pull up that page and I can read it in my mind. He's like the Old Testament people. He may have been an Old Testament person as old as he was.

In any case, we have to do whatever it takes to get this loaded into our mind and and reflect on it so that the Holy Spirit can activate it and energize it and lead us into that truth. We'll see more of this when we come back from the break.