

Proverbs 23-04-12b

We're going to pick up our study in Proverbs chapter 10, and we have seen an example, and it seems as though Solomon in organizing and structuring and presenting this first section of the Proverbs proper after that beautiful nine chapter introduction and giving us the contrast, it is all about choice. He spends nine chapters emphasizing there are two ways you can go. There is lady wisdom, or there is the crafty harlot.

You can be edified and built up and walk the way of wisdom, or you can be seduced and dragged down into darkness. It's a choice. There are two messages being put out, and we've seen that this isn't just for young men who are being told, you know, be chased and be waiting for your woman of your dreams to come along.

And all of that is a wonderful idea. But as with everything else in this book, the young man who is being presented with these concepts and being schooled in these choices is our example. And we can be young, we can be old, we can be male, we can be female, we can be Jew, we can be Greek, we can be slave, we can be free.

All of these choices face us. The crafty harlot is everywhere in the world today, and she's got a great line. She is a sales queen, and it attracts, it lures.

It is persuasive, it is seductive. You remember Dave Hunt years ago wrote a book called The Seduction of Christianity. And this applies to us, young or old, in any situation, we have to constantly be watching, is this the voice of wisdom? Is this calling us to truth, to God, to righteousness, to wisdom, to patience, to the fruit of the spirit? Or is this appealing to my sense of immediate gratification, my short-term view without thinking about consequences? And as I said before the break, hurry, haste, impulsiveness is our enemy.

That is the quickest way to short circuit the kind of thinking that says, this is summer and sleep sounds good, but what's going to happen when winter comes? Am I gonna be the grasshopper knocking at the aunt's door saying, you know, didn't you enjoy that music last summer while you were harvesting and gathering and storing and I was fiddling? And the aunt says, look, I got enough for my family here. You know, you should have been harvesting in the summer instead of sleeping. You had the chance to be wise and therefore to be provided for.

God gave you opportunities to put stuff in the storehouse. If your storehouse is empty, that's on you. There is a time when the door of the ark shuts.

There is a time when the master of the house rises up and shuts the door and somebody comes knocking saying, Lord, Lord, in your name, I did these superficially great things. And Jesus looks back and says, depart from me. I do not know you, where you are from.

You're a worker of iniquity and you're not coming in. And it's gonna be harsh. People that get that reply are going to be weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth.

And this is in the eternal future. This is after the resurrection. The pie in the sky, by and by, everybody will be happy over there is not biblical.

In the Bible, there is the darkness, which is outside. You try to get into the wedding feast without a garment, which was provided, all you had to do was put it on. Wasn't that interesting when we looked at that parable? In those days, the rich man or the king who put on a feast like this for his son provided wedding garments.

All you had to do is walk in and let a servant put one on you and you could come in. But he says, I don't need that. I'm dressed well enough on my own.

And then you're accosted. Why don't you have the garment you are supposed to have on? And he has no reply. And he is cast out, cut in two and apportioned his lot with the hypocrites.

And that's a post-resurrection consequence. People don't wanna hear that, but pushing it away and pretending it isn't real is not the right answer. The right answer is to be the wise son who's gonna make his father glad.

So we saw that in the first five verses. Let's pick up now and look at the next section. If you have my notes before you, you can see that having covered this five-verse section, the next one is a six-verse section.

And I've done the same thing. I've split out the positive and then the negative. The beauty of this is we can instantly see all of these things that are associated in these proverbial sayings with wisdom or with foolishness, with industry or with indolence, with capability or with incompetence.

Are you capable or are you incompetent? Are you wise or are you foolish? Are you righteous or are you wicked? These group together. You don't find the incompetent, but he's righteous. You don't find the foolish, but he's guaranteed life by the Lord.

These things cluster, they group. And the great thing about this is if I see any one of them starting to crop up in my own life, if I see that there is an inroad of unrighteousness, I can fix that. If I see foolishness starting to crop up, if I see laziness starting to crop up, any one of these tells me my righteousness and my wisdom and the other elements in that cluster are in danger.

Any one of these is a dashboard light. If the negative appears, you can count on losing all of the positives. If any one of these negatives creeps in, if you're concentrating on wisdom and righteousness, look at all of the blessings that accrue and that God guarantees.

This is why in our minds, it's helpful to cluster them. So let's, first of all, read in our Bible, verses six through 11. Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

If you just extracted that out and tossed it out for consumption and for thought, it's pretty self-evident once again, right? Well, of course, God's gonna bless the righteous. The righteous are gonna be blessed. It's interesting that he said it's gonna be on his head.

Why didn't he just say the righteous are blessed? It says blessings are on the head of the righteous. So I'm gonna put a little post-it note next to that. Why is he using this body part instead of just saying, you know, a righteous man, a righteous son, a righteous servant, but it's on the head of the righteous.

So I need to figure that out here by and by. But violence covers the mouth of the wicked. Blessing on the head of the righteous, violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

Now, how do I know that this is a six verse section? Well, how did Solomon helpfully mark out the five verse section that preceded it? I had that same common element in verse one and in verse five, which was the son, right? Now he's gonna say, all right, if you caught my language here in marking off a section, we're gonna read down, and I'm gonna be watching for this mouth of the wicked covered in violence as I go forward. So verse seven, the memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot. So now I have seen that both in verse six and in verse seven, the contrast is in righteous versus wicked.

One of them was the head and the mouth, and the next one is the reputation. The name and the memory, this is basically reputation, right? So this is gonna have after effects. Righteousness and wickedness is going to have, it's gonna have a tail, it's gonna have a trailer, it's gonna have a lingering effect.

After the righteous and wicked are gone, the effects of that righteousness or wickedness are going to persist. Verse eight, the wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall. Well, this is interesting.

We're talking about righteousness and wickedness and about what is going to be personally visible. You look at the man, there's blessing on his head or there's violence covering his mouth. Then you look at his after effect, his name or his memory.

Now the wise in heart, now this is a personal characteristic. This is a trait. The wise in heart receives commands, receives them.

He doesn't just hear them. He takes them to heart. You get the idea.

This means he acts on them. He gets commands. This implies humility.

It implies respect for authority. It implies knowing what is a legitimate command and what ought to be received and responded to. So, and he's not just wise.

He's not a wise man, not a wise son, not a wise servant. He's wise in heart. So we've moved from something external, the head and the mouth to something conceptual, which is the reputation or the name or the memory.

And now we're moving to the inner man, the heart, the thought life, if you will, the motivation, thoughts and intents of the heart. The heart, the wise in heart will receive command, but a prating fool will fall. What is prating? Prating is a good, not often used word.

I bet you could stay on social media for four weeks and never see prating. What does prating mean? This is a speech characteristic, right? Prating is shallow speech. It's unthoughtful word salad talk.

You're prating. You're just, it's like, nonsense, nonsense talk. And so the wise in heart is receiving.

He's got something inside his heart that when commands come his way, they get there. They arrive at the destination. They get to the heart where they can be analyzed and motivation will act on them.

A prating fool, it doesn't, he's talking. The command, which is set against this, he can't receive a command because he's busy yakking. He's just yak, yak, yak, yak, shallow prating.

And he's a fool to do so. There's something to be heard. There's something to be listened to, something to be analyzed and potentially responded to as an imperative, as something you should do.

You can't, but the prating fool doesn't get so far as that because he's busy talking. You can't listen when you're talking. I saw one of these little aphorism things go by where it was making the point that you can't listen while you're talking.

And the better part of wisdom is to have the discipline, like it says in James, if you can bring your tongue under control, you've got your whole body in subjection. If your whole body's in subjection, when you receive a command, you can act on it, right? But if you're in output mode, this little aphorism thing was something to the effect that a wise person listens to what the other person is saying so that they can think about it. The foolish person listens to what the other person is saying, but they're preparing their answer.

They're wanting to do their output. As soon as this person quits, I've already got what I want to say. I'm thinking about what I'm going to say next instead of thinking about what this person is saying.

And that idea is intrinsic to this verse. That's verse eight, the wise in heart, but a prating fool. Words don't ever get to the heart because he's too busy talking.

Verse nine, he who walks with integrity walks securely. If you walk with integrity, you walk securely. This is one of the first times we've seen a doubled verb.

If you walk in this way, which you can control, you can't always control how secure you are, but you can control how much integrity you express, how much integrity you develop and act within and upon, right? So if you are walking in the integrity, which is by choice and by priority and by goal and respecting your values, your godly scriptural values, walking with integrity, you're walking securely. Security is such a big issue. There's commercials about your lifelock and is your computer secure? Do you need a VPN? Is your phone secure? Are you being hacked? Are you being phished? Are you being, there's a new thing.

It rhymes with phish, but it's like mished or something because they're, oh, it's smished because they're using SMS messages. They're using text messages to, used to be phishing was via email or via the phone, and they would try to fool you into giving up a password or whatever. Well, now they're smishing.

You get texts on your phone that say, your Amazon account has been locked. You know, click here to release it or your Bank of America credit card or this or that or the other. And there are banks and there are cards and there are services.

There are online things that will alert you via text if there is a problem, but you really have to watch these closely. They will say or do anything to get you to click a link. That you've won a Ryobi tool.

You have won something from Harbor Freight. You've, those, click here for a free set of sockets. All they want you to do, they can't put something on your device unless you act.

And so what are they doing? Any means possible to get you to allow something in. So he who walks with integrity walks securely. Where is security? We say, well, I need better defenses.

I need more awareness. I need to read up on this and that and the other. What does this say? You concentrate on integrity.

God will tend to your security. He will put the wall of fire. He will alert you.

God, the Holy Spirit will use the wisdom and the truth you have in your soul and you will know the truth. And the truth will deliver you, free you from the snare and the trap. He who dwells, remember our Psalm 91 memorized verses, he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

That's security. Then you move on down to the snare of the fowler and the perilous pestilence. He doesn't say, we will teach you nine different ways to identify a fowler snare.

And we'll give you an education on how many different pestilences there are that are a peril to you. Just dwell in the secret place of the Most High. Abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

That is security. How do you dwell? How do you abide? Integrity. Cultivate personal integrity.

Where does it come from? It is the word of God. It is the spirit of God. That's integrity.

That is what builds character in our souls. So walk with integrity. You're walking securely.

You don't have to be afraid. How many verses on fear do we have? God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of what? Power, love, and a sound mind. It's our heart of integrity, of character.

That takes away the spirit of fear. Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, I am your God.

I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.

Integrity, character, God's righteousness is his mighty right hand that upholds us. But he who perverts his ways will become known. A more colloquial expression of this would be, will be exposed.

They'll be exposed. It's gonna be evident to passersby. Wow, there's a train wreck.

That you can't hide that kind of foolishness. He who perverts his ways, that perversity is going to out. It is going to be visible.

It is going to damage your reputation, your name, your memory. Perversity is going to attach and it is going to trail debris behind it. That's verse nine.

Verse 10, he who winks with the eye causes trouble. This says, but, it should say and. This is a wow.

You can translate it nine different ways. This is and. This is a synonymous distich, distich.

A synonymous two line verse. He who winks with the eye causes trouble and a prating fool will fall. Oh, prating fool.

Have we seen that in our recent context? Yes, we have. We saw it in verse eight. So I'm thinking, well, I would think this might be the end of my section, except the section

began earlier than the prating fool, but now I'm realizing there must be some bracketing symmetry just like that five verse section that began this.

So prating fool. So I'm going to be very interested in my next verse, which is verse 11. The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

Aha, violence covers the mouth of the wicked. Where I had the concept of a son in verse one and the son in verse five, I got the mouth, the violence covering the mouth of the wicked in verse six. And I have it again in verse 11.

This is my outside bracket. I don't have to look any further. And within that bracket, I see another symmetry, which is the prating fool.

Prating fool falls in verse eight and the prating fool falls in verse 10. So without trying to count lines or get too legalistic about perfect balance and equality in the two sections, I know that both the mouth of the wicked covered in violence and the prating fool are outside only one verse, which is what verse? It's verse nine. He who walks with integrity walks securely.

He who perverts his ways will become known. The agency of success or failure, the agency of walking securely or being exposed as a fool, it's choice. We choose.

When you think about the preceding section where the center of the symmetry was the Lord will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but he, the Lord will cast away the desire of the wicked. That was the main idea that is like a jewel set in those surrounding verses of one and two and four and five above. Here, integrity or perverting your way.

It's a choice. We ourselves do it. And depending on what we do, we're either going to walk securely or fall.

So if you look at my notes now, I've taken all of the positives and grouped them together in verses six through 11. So verse six, the head of the righteous, blessings light upon it, it says in the JPS. In verse seven, the name of the righteous is invoked in blessing.

The memory of the righteous is blessed is what it says in the New King James. But in JPS, it says the name of the righteous is remembered. It's invoked, it's rehearsed in blessing.

May the blessings of Abraham be upon you. May the blessings of the Lord Jesus be upon you. Blessings in Christ and a name that is invoked at the same time that you're thinking about blessing and praying for blessing and hoping for blessing.

May you be blessed. You know, in Israel, they say, may you be blessed like Leah or blessed like Rachel or blessed like one of the fruitful and productive women of the Old Testament. The name of the righteous is invoked in blessing.

In verse eight, he of wise heart accepts commands. We've talked about that in detail. In

verse nine, he who lives blamelessly lives safely.

He who walks in integrity walks securely. The JPS, I like how they're trying to bring out the symmetry in the Hebrew, because you have he who has a wise heart walks securely. He who lives blamelessly lives safely.

And then in verse 10, remember 10 is universally, but both halves are negative. So for the righteous, you skip to verse 11. So we have six, seven, eight, nine, and then 11 is our fifth verse in the blessing category.

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. If you have my notes and look at them, you will notice having put the positive side of verse six, seven, eight, nine, and 11, all one line after another. Notice in verse six and verse seven, blessing is in verse six and blessing is in verse seven.

The head of the righteous blessing lights upon it. Then the name of the righteous, the reputation of the righteous, the influence of the righteous is invoked in blessing. Blessing falls on his head.

Where is it coming from? Why does he have blessing on his head? Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the father of lights. So blessing from God is on the head of the righteous. And now there is blessing by association.

His name, his influence, his reputation, his presence is going to be invoked by others. They're gonna say, wow, there's an example of blessing. I hope you are blessed the way that person is blessed.

I hope you are blessed the way this forebear, this ancestor, this family member that has gone before. I hope you can have a life well lived and as blessed by God as this person had. It's invoked in blessing.

And when you invoke someone's name in blessing, when you mention their memory, you're hoping that that is going to continue, that it is going to spread, that others will be able to partake of and enjoy that association and blessing that comes there from. Then you have in the center of that, he of wise heart accepts commands. This is the way of wisdom.

It's a characteristic of wisdom. It cultivates and multiplies and stores and enhances wisdom to be receptive to instruction, to imperative. It takes humility to receive commands, to receive imperatives, to take them on board and seek to carry them out.

That is the heart of the positive side. Then as you come to verse nine, if you live blamelessly, you live safely. If you walk in integrity, you walk securely.

There's a life there. You are living. The walk is your life.

Walk circumspectly, redeem the time. Our walk, our Christian walk is a metaphor for our Christian life, right? So if you are living blamelessly, you are living safely. The mouth of the righteous in verse 11 is a fountain of life.

So you can see that blessing is arriving at his head. It's becoming a part of his reputation and his influence and his lifestyle. And it is coming out of his speech.

His conversation, his fellowship is a fountain of life. It flows from God onto his head, gets inside him. He is humble.

He learns, and then he shares. It comes out of his mouth as a fountain of life to others. God is the source of the living water, but this wise man is the fountain.

He's the fountain out of which this life comes. Can you think of a New Testament parallel to this idea? Was there a day when Jesus said something about out of his belly will flow rivers of living water? Look it up, right in the margin. That's this.

And we get that by not looking at these Proverbs in isolation, but looking at the flow, looking at the association, looking at the beautiful structure here that enables us to see this progression from blessing on the head of one who is righteous, who is receiving commands, the effect in his influence and his reputation, and speaking the truth in love, he becomes a fountain of life to others. God's life, God's wisdom, God's righteousness. You become an agent, a source, where God can spread those in the horizontal direction.

That's on the positive side. What about the negative? We go back to verse six, the mouth of the wicked lawlessness covers violence. They translate this lawlessness in the Tanakh.

It is the opposite of character and integrity and upbuilding and blessing. This is destructive. It is perverse.

It is downgrading, denigrating. It divides instead of building. It shatters instead of uniting.

It has every negative effect. The mouth of the wicked, the more they talk, the worse things get. And we're going to see that explicitly stated a bit later in this chapter.

The fame of the wicked, the name of the wicked, the reputation of the wicked, rots. And almost every version you go to translate this Hebrew word the same. It is rot.

This is the decay, the effulgence of eye-watering disintegration. Of biological life. This is roadkill.

This is Judas with his guts spilling out. This word rots is very graphic in Hebrew. And it is a stench.

You can smell something dead from a lot further away than you can smell a beautiful

flower. It spreads, it is evident, you can't miss it. And it is so off-putting.

Such an opposite of blessing. So the memory, the thought of the wicked, you can imagine people in the political realm thinking about their opposites and their enemies. And anytime they think about them, it just boils their blood.

That's the name of the wicked. In verse eight, he of foolish speech comes to grief. He is a denigrating, rotting influence on others.

And he himself is going to come to grief. His effect on others is bad. And his effect on himself is bad.

In verse nine, he who walks a crooked path will be exposed. It's going to be evident. If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, you will know them by their fruits, Jesus said.

And the crooked walking path, this is what has happened to many prominent people in Christian denominational circles and megachurches and such. You think, wow, how the mighty have fallen. They were up, up, up, up, and then a crooked path gets exposed and they come crashing down.

And the fruit and the labor of years, good things that people thought had been done. You know, one floating dead insect in your punch bowl, let's say, nobody wants to drink the punch. Doesn't matter how many gallons of good punch is in there.

One floating roach in there, the punch ain't happening. And there are people saying, well, I'll just dip around the roach. If people see something floating in the punch bowl, sorry, no, I don't care how many gallons there are.

And a little leaven leavens the whole lump. So many New Testament principles and doctrines are drawn directly and expressed directly in beautiful terms. But if you go be bopping through the Proverbs and just read one after the other, we can't see this.

We're in too much of a hurry. Got to slow down and take our time, chew on them. So he who walks a crooked path will be exposed.

Verse 10, he who winks his eye brings sorrow. What does this mean? Who's winking with the eye? At the root, at the core, my best understanding of this is you're not serious. When people are winking, they're making light.

They're saying one thing, but they're winking, you know, they're putting on. Winking of the eye, at a minimum, you're not serious. You're not taking things to heart.

It's a joke. It's a pratfall. It's, you know, those who are in the know in your little plot, you know, you look over there and wink while you're about to deceive someone.

Watch me while I do this. It makes an issue of self. It makes an issue of superfluous and

shallow and inconsequential things.

In scripture, from the index to the maps, God never winks. Jesus does a lot of things, but he never winks. You don't see any of the prophets of God, any of the apostles of God winking.

Winking is associated with evil, with self-indulgence, shallowness. So this winking is a bad thing. He who winks with the eye causes trouble.

This is like a joke gone bad. This is putting something over and somebody gets hurt. This is destructive.

It's insensitive. It is to no point and no purpose. It's not speaking the truth in love.

It is the opposite. I'm going to put something over on this person. Watch me.

I wink. Got a few other people in the know and we're going to perpetrate a scam. He who winks with the eye causes trouble and a prating fool will fall.

This is the outside effect. This is the effect on others, causes trouble. And this prating fool who's winking and speaking shallow words and talking insensible word salads is going to fall.

The effect on him, it's the same as the wise in heart receiving commands, but the prating fool will fall. What is the effect on the outside? What is the effect on the inside? And then in verse 11, the mouth of the righteous is a well of life. After you have finished listening to a conversation or listening to a presentation, what is the effect? Do you come away with the water of life? You can let a chicken out of a pen and maybe the water bowl got kicked over because chickens are dumb.

And they'll kick their own water bowl over and now they got no water. And if they've gone with that water for a while, when you put water out there, the dumbest animal in the world has a sense that there's water nearby and will go to it and drink and slake their thirst and rebuild their reserves and get healthy and get better and get well and get hydrated. There is an instinct for water, for life.

The mouth of the righteous is a well of life. I'm trying to think now, have I heard something about water or a fountain here recently? Yes, I have. The fountain of life was just mentioned in verse 11 here.

He's a well of life, a fountain of life. Violence covers the mouth of the wicked. This is trouble.

This is the opposite and it covers his mouth. It's on the outside. He can't say anything without it being colored and influenced by violence, by lawlessness.

It is the opposite of God's way, God's word, God's will, God's truth, God's life. So by grouping these together, we can now look at it and say, have I got symptoms of the negative side? Is there something coming out of my mouth that shouldn't? Am I impenetrable when it comes to receiving commands? Am I on the way of wisdom and righteousness and all of these positive things? Is there a blessing on my head? Am I in the periphery of other people who are sources of blessing and sources of good speech and good conversation? Should I cultivate that more and cultivate contact with these whose mouth is covered with violence less? Am I constantly getting dragged down a bad road? I choose. I choose if I'm gonna gather in the summer.

I choose if I'm gonna sleep in the harvest. I choose wisdom. I choose foolishness.

And as we go through these beautifully orchestrated ideas, we can use them as a standard by which we measure ourselves. And we can make decisions. We can reorder our priorities.

We can be better stewards of our time and our opportunities reviewing these truths. They are put in these pithy, short forms to be remembered. To be carried around in the heart, brought to mind when opportunity presents itself.

To chew on them and to benefit from them. So I hope that by reordering these a bit and giving ourselves the advantage that these people were born and raised with, that they will be memorable for us and they will be helpful for us. And we won't just treat it as a stitch in time saves nine and move on, but use them as the grist for our spiritual mill and bring that to bear.

Have it be something the Holy Spirit can use to produce his fruit in our lives. Well, we'll continue and we'll look at this third section in chapter 10, verses 12 through 18, seven verses next time. Father, thank you so much for the gift of your word, the nourishment, the manna and the water of life for our souls.

We pray that as we take time to reflect and to meditate on the truths that have been presented in this portion of your word, that your Holy Spirit will breathe into them fresh life and fire that like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, we can be transformed, we can be renewed, we can be energized, guided and motivated to live the life to which we have been called in the time that remains to us until the Lord Jesus returns to take us to himself and present us before your throne. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.