

Proverbs 23-07-19a

Greetings, welcome to Wednesday Night Study at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 19th day of July, 2023. We're in the book of Proverbs, looking at chapter 11.

We've taken an overview of this. We're going to dig down just a little bit and see the thematic elements here, because these are going to pertain for about the next 10 to 12 chapters. And they're so central to our understanding of how our faith works, how our lives are lived, and what our priorities should be in living a life that is pleasing to God.

It doesn't really get much more central and important than that. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, what a privilege and a blessing it is to spend time together as members of the body of Christ as Your children, worshiping in Your presence, enjoying the benefits of our position in Christ, our opportunity to grow in grace and knowledge by looking at Your Word together in the presence and power of Your Spirit.

We pray that as a result of our time spent tonight, we will be drawn closer to You through the Lord Jesus. We will abide in the vine and bear much fruit, and we will understand exactly how to do so without distraction, without being deceived or deflected, which is the goal of our enemy who roams the earth seeking whom he may devour. We pray that we can resist him steadfast in the faith as we are strengthened and enabled by what You provide to us through Your grace.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's quickly read this first portion of chapter 11.

Having seen the introduction in the first nine chapters, we are faced with a choice. It is the choice of faith or going our own way. It is reliance upon God or relying on ourselves.

Those are the choices. Patty, can you turn on the overhead light for mom so she can see her Bible? It's the switch by the refrigerator. So, it is the choice of faith or self-reliance, self-gratification, going our own way.

And it's a critical choice, and it is behind the truth of these Proverbs. As we saw last time, the Proverbs are not some sort of universal rules that can be expected to apply in every case by every person. The best analogy to this is, do you remember some years ago, they decided that they would scientifically test prayer? So, they went to hospitals and divided the patients into similar cases with similar probabilities, similar diagnoses, similar prognoses, similar outcomes.

They said, all right, we're going to get a group of people, and they're going to pray for one half of this group, and the other is going to be the control group, and there won't be any prayer for them. Not sure how they knew whether or not any of the relatives were praying or not, but they were going to test whether prayer would affect the outcomes.

Well, the results were inconclusive at best.

Why? How can you possibly put the Spirit of God onto a balance scale? How can you determine whether people have grounds for prayer, whether they have a relationship with God that is going to result in those prayers being answered? Simply sitting here and speaking words in an upward direction isn't prayer. Let me ask you, without the need for science, is prayer effective? Does God answer prayer? We all know that He does, but you can't go out into the world and say, let me tell you the seven different prayers that I've answered in the past month or the past three months. Here's what I prayed, and here's the outcome.

See, prayer works. This is individual, and it is dependent entirely on an individual's relationship with God. If there is corporate prayer, it depends on how that group is situated before God, and you can't put that in a can or in a bottle and hand it to somebody else and say, this works for us and it'll work for you.

It is individual between a local church and the Lord God through Jesus Christ, or it is individual. Most of our prayer is individual. So, in the same way, the application of the Proverbs is entirely dependent on your situation with respect to God in heaven.

Is He going to ensure the fulfillment of these truths in your life or in my life? Well, it depends. Are you qualified, just as with every other promise of God? Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They'll mount up with wings like eagles.

They'll run and not be weary. They will walk and not faint. Well, is there a condition to that promise? There is.

Waiting on the Lord. Waiting requires faith. It requires knowledge.

It requires confidence in God's timing, in God's power, in God's control of a situation. And if we enter into that and we are confidently waiting for God to work in and through circumstances for His glory and our benefit, we are not expecting Him to magically solve every problem or instantly remove every obstacle. We know that God's wisdom is greater and higher than our own.

And there are reasons why, as with the apostle Paul, who was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. And Paul prayed three times that it be removed. And God said, No, this is an apostle with one of the most important human missions that's ever been entrusted to someone besides the Lord Jesus Himself.

He's got a messenger of Satan afflicting him. He prays for it to be removed. And God said, No.

Why? My grace is sufficient for you. And in your weakness, God says, my strength will be made manifest. It was necessary.

And if you look at the preceding context, Paul is talking about that experience of being caught up to the third heaven and hearing words that it's not lawful for a man to utter, seeing things that he can't share. He has been entrusted with a revelation that he is not to speak. There is a time to say what we know, and there is a time to keep it to ourselves.

Jesus told any number of people, tell no man, told his disciples, do not tell what I've told you. It's not the right time. God knows what he's doing.

God can reveal. God can leave affliction in our lives for a purpose. And it is a test of faith.

Do we trust God enough to let him have his way? Remember the old hymn, let him have his way with thee. His power will make you what you ought to be and so on. Um, let him have his way with thee.

It takes faith in faith. These Proverbs are true. So let's look at them.

Uh, we saw the first set in chapter 10. We're looking at this one in chapter 11, uh, dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. This in Hebrew is literally dishonest scales are, uh, balances of deceit, balances of deceit.

And you put a allegedly known weight on one side, you put the, the substance or the material that is to be sold by weight on the other side. And when they balance, this should be fair. And it is amazing.

When you start looking in scripture, God's emphasis on honesty in dealing with others. This is mentioned, and you may want to write these down. I really encourage you when we look at these references, if I don't have time to dwell on them, write them down.

And in your Bible reading time, just get back to this list, look them up and look at them on the page. Look at them in their context. If there's so much more impact, I feel bad when I just quote these and we move on.

When I look at them on the page of my Bible, and that's how I study, I look them up on the page. They impress themselves on my sight and on my mind and in my heart, because I see them on the page of the word of God more so than hearing it quoted more so than a, than a passing visitation. Proverbs 16, 11, honest weights and scales are the Lord's.

All the weights in the bag are his work. And what does this mean? They used to use stones. The, the proper weights and measures were maintained in the tabernacle and later in the temple and all weights and measures were to be measured against that standard that the temple and the tabernacle before it were the national bureau of standards.

And it emphasized to Israelites that God's desire for honesty had spiritual implications. Honesty and fairness in dealing with others is a reflection of the health and well-being of relationship with God. So I gave you Proverbs 16, 11, Proverbs 20, verse 10, diverse weights and measures.

They are both alike and abomination to the Lord, just as it says here. Can you think of other things that were an abomination to God? Like a man who lies with a man as with a woman is an abomination. And the punishment for abominations in Israel was stoning to death.

If using false weights and false measures is an abomination, what do you think the penalty for that is in Israel? Severe. What do you think it is more importantly in God's eyes at the final judgment? Proverbs 20, verse 23, diverse weights are an abomination to the Lord and dishonest scales are lo tov, not good, not good. Leviticus 19, verse 35, you shall do no injustice in judgment in measurement of length, weight, or volume.

You shall have honest scales, honest weights, and honest ephah, and an honest hen. I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. This is the invocation of authority.

Just as we've seen at the beginning of Paul's letters, Paul states his apostolic authority here. God states his authority to require Israel to be honest. Honest scales, honest weights, honest ephah, and honest hen.

Now, how does that play out in the modern day? We don't spend much time in personal interaction with weighing things. We might have a postal scales tucked away somewhere in our office, but balances and balance scales are something you find in the antique store if you find them at all. What does this mean? What is the principle? Fairness and scrupulous honesty.

If we put something on Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist or listed someplace and somebody comes to buy it, am I going to be honest about its strengths and its weaknesses? Am I going to have full disclosure? When you sell real estate, there is a seller's disclosure where you are supposed to list what you know about the property that might be a potential liability or a potential problem. It's the seller's disclosure. Would you rather hide a flaw in the thing you are selling just to get it sold, put motor honey in the engine so that it won't knock and won't sound bad, wait until the person buys it and you collect the money? Having that money in the short term, quickly spent, soon gone, is nothing compared to standing before God at the judgment seat of Christ and explaining why you didn't have enough faith to trust God for your provision and thought you had to add to it in some small way by cheating somebody in a sale, deceiving them as to the actual status and the actual worth of a thing.

Now that's still kind of in the literal realm. Think more in terms of how we measure one

another. You can watch hearings in our swampy government realms where witnesses are supposed to come forward and give testimony about some investigation that they have undertaken.

Instead of dealing fairly and weighing the evidence that is turned up in that investigation, its sources, its merit, its implications, what should or should not be done on the basis of this investigation, if people use that as an occasion to deflect and dissimulate and dissemble and deceive and try to point attention elsewhere, how honest is that? Is that an honest weight and an honest scale? Is that an honest ephah and an honest hen? Are they representing their constituents for justice wherever it may lead, whatever it may cost in terms of political capital or political influence or some perceived gain or loss in terms of the next election? Am I going to sound good in front of my people, those who agree with me, to seek to destroy someone's reputation, to use a false measure in evaluating someone's presidency or someone's vice presidency or someone's work as a senator or a congressman, to up thumb or down thumb someone at work for one's own interest and one's own benefit or some perceived advantage or disadvantage? This is a false scale and a false weight. Seeking to deceive people as to the truth of a situation or the truth of someone's character or the truth of someone's performance, there is going to be a high price to pay because that sort of behavior is an abomination in God's sight. If you trash some person personally because you see in it some social, political, or other advantage to be gained and you're not really trying to get at the truth, you're not being honest about someone's accomplishments, you only focus on perceived failures or perceived flaws, perceived shortcomings, that is a false weight and a false scale.

You give no credit for the good. You only concentrate on the bad. And whatever side of politics you find yourself, whatever side of evaluation of those who have the rule over us, those who bear authority by God's will, cuidado, be careful, false evaluation, failing to have a balanced view that uses accurate weights and accurate measures, is an abomination and not something God's people should ever engage in, especially within the household of faith.

And remember, these Proverbs and these scriptures in the Old Testament were delivered to God's people to tell them how to conduct themselves with each other. This is part of the one and others. People rarely did business with those who were outside, but there were caravans from Egypt, there were traders that came from the surrounding Arab nations and so on, and it was just as important to be fair and just with those who are outside as those who are within.

So, Deuteronomy 25, 13 through 16, you shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. Depending on who comes up, you reach into the bag and, well, I'm only going to give them a little bit. I'll use the light stone here, and the amount of grain they get is going to be, because I'm discriminating.

I'll give more to my friends and less to my enemies. I'll give more to those that I want to impress and less to those whose opinion I consider to be worthless. Do not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light.

You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. And by the way, if it's in your house, what does that tell you? When your neighbor comes over, and this is a personal transaction, it's not so much business, but you're going to give to someone and you say, well, here's a hen of oil, here's an ephah of flour, but the measure that you use is light. Somebody you want to impress comes over, you bring out the heavy measure, the big measure.

You shall have, and again, this is Deuteronomy 25, 13 through 16. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure. Why? So that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

All who do such things, all who behave unrighteously are an abomination to the Lord your God. Do you see the progression? We've gone from these false weights and differing measures being an abomination to the person who uses them being an abomination. Judgment falls from God on the person who countenances and who practices this kind of dishonesty.

Psalms 66, verse 18, if I regard iniquity in my heart, if I allow my heart to practice and countenance iniquity, the Lord will not hear me. I no longer have a prayer life. God won't hear my requests.

God won't hear my pleas. God won't hear my thanksgiving. Remember the self-righteous Pharisee Jesus described who stood on the corner saying, Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men.

God's not going to hear that either. Uh, this was a theme in the prophets major and minor. You go to Hosea chapter 12, verse seven, a cunning Canaanite has deceitful scales in his hand.

He loves to oppress. You're no better than unbelievers. You're no better than godless, pagan, idol worshiping Canaanites whom God judged with his people, deprive them of their land and their future, their posterity.

Why? Three generation curse. I will cut off after the third generation, those who hate me. Amos chapter eight, verses five and six, people who say, when will the new moon be passed so that we may sell grain? These enforced Sabbaths and holidays are tedious to me.

When can I get back to making a profit taking this time off to honor God at the new moon? Well, this is just a pain. Really? Is it sometimes inconvenient to set aside time for Bible study, for reflection on God's word for fellowship with God's people for prayer

facilitated by God, the Holy spirit in the name of the son directed to the father. Well, I'm busy.

I've got stuff that has to be done. Stop and think Amos eight, five, and six. These people say, when will the new moon be passed that we may sell grain? When will the Sabbath be passed that we may trade wheat? And they make the EFA small and the shekel large, big shekels, little EFAs, marking the stuff up unfairly and deceitfully falsifying the scales by deceit, that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, even sell the bad wheat.

I will do whatever I need to do to get ahead. Even if it's at the expense of the poor, I'll sell them out. Micah chapter six, verse 10.

Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked and the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? The thing about the bag is you can reach in there and pick whichever one you want and not be seen. I'm reaching into the bag. They're not laying out on the table open to view.

And every time somebody comes up for something to be weighed and measured, I pick up the proper weight. Oh, they're in a bag. Oh, I didn't have room on the table.

Let me just get it here. You pick the one you want for your own purposes. Well, Jesus goes on to talk about this in Matthew chapter seven, verse 12.

Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them. This is the law and the prophets. People only want to quote the one later where Jesus says, you know, love the Lord, your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

This is the law and the prophets. Well, what does the law of love do? Treat others the way you want to be treated. It works itself out in action.

Paul reviews this and we've memorized it. Philippians four, eight. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report.

If there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think meditate on these things, figure out how that can characterize our life, pursue it and cultivate it in our fellowship. First Thessalonians four, six, no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother. The Lord is the Avenger of all such.

We have forewarned you about this. We have testified to you about this. Don't defraud your brother.

The Lord is the Avenger of all such. So the perfect stone you find in Leviticus 19.35 and 36 and in Numbers chapter three, verse 50. We've already read Leviticus 19.35 and 36 on his scales, on his weights and so on.

You can see an example in Numbers three, verse 50, from the firstborn of the children of Israel, he took the money 1,365 shekels according to the shekel of the sanctuary. That's the standard by which these shekels are measured and determined to be fair. So to cultivate fairness and honesty and justice in both our physical interactions with others, our business transactions with others, buying and selling, and also what we say about others, our evaluation in our conversation and in our online postings and in our interactions with each other.

And we say, well, let me tell you about the rascality of this person and that person. God will hold us to account, especially if those evaluations are tainted, if they are misweighted. Notice with a false balance and a false scale, a false ifa and a false hen, people still get something.

It just isn't right. It's not balanced. There's too little of the good and too much of the bad.

There is some self-centered, self-gratifying advantage in minimizing the good and maximizing the bad. And if it's not fair and it's not right, if you give no credit whatsoever for good things, you only focus on the bad, that's a false balance. That's a faulty scale.

God will judge. It's an abomination to not be fair, to not give credit where credit is due. What a wonderful political discourse we would have if everyone would give credit where credit is due, point out the faults and the flaws, point out the shortcomings, but also credit where things were done right.

You don't see that anywhere in the public square without doing a lot of hard looking. So as we continue here in chapter 11, dishonest scales, a just weight is his delight. Verse two, when pride comes, then comes shame.

We saw this back in Proverbs chapter three, verses 34 and 35. God scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble. The wise will inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.

It is arrogant for us to pronounce judgment on one another with inadequate knowledge, partial information, too great a distance. This is why, as we saw on Sunday, it is a very troublesome thing to evaluate guidance, Christian living counsel that comes from books and from online faces who are at a distance, and you can't judge the source. You can't evaluate whether this is a good tree producing good fruit or a bad tree producing bad fruit because the tree is at such a distance that the fruit has been plucked and shipped.

You don't know the nature of that tree. Proverbs 16, 18, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Quoted again in the New Testament.

In verse 19, it is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud. Why? That spoil is not going to last. That temporary advantage is going to vanish.

Remember when Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4 was walking around on his balcony saying, is not this the great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty? When the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven. This wasn't Daniel. This wasn't Ananias or Mishael or Azariah.

A voice from heaven spoke. While he was still saying these words, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you.

They shall drive you from men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen. Seven times shall pass over you until you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses.

It is important for us to remember this truth, whether we are looking at our own accomplishments or looking at those in government, God grants either in his permissive will or in his directive will, who is in charge. If we have bad government, guess what? As a nation, as a culture, as a collective group of people, we deserve it. If the United States of America were made up of God-fearing, Lord Jesus-following, Bible-studying, praying, humble people, remember what God said to Israel? If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and seek my face, then I will hear from heaven.

I will heal their land. If we've got an unhealed land, you know why? We're Sodom and we're Gomorrah. And sometimes even the people of God are basically lost and we're escaping by the skin of our teeth because we're just only slightly better by relationship than the people who dwell in the city.

And the fire and brimstone needs to fall. Daniel 4, 30-32, those words spoken to Nebuchadnezzar. What is the value of humility? Jesus talked about it.

We saw it in Matthew. It's in Luke 14, 8-11. When you were invited by anyone to a wedding feast, not sit down in the best place, let someone more honorable than you be invited by him.

And he who invited you and him comes and says to you, give place to this man. And then you begin with shame to take the lower place. When you were invited, go and sit down in the lowest place so that when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, friend, go up higher.

Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted.

So you have later on in the epistles, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God

that he may exalt you in due time. Remember again, the Pharisee who was praying, Lord, I thank you that I'm not like other men. And then there was the humble man beating his breast.

Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. Jesus said in Luke 18, 14, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.

He who humbles himself will be exalted. So the importance of humility. What is the point of these parables? It isn't to look around and say, well, there's a proud man.

I'm waiting for him to take a fall. There's a humble man. I'm waiting for him to be exalted.

It is personal application. These proverbs are activated by faith. They are true for me because I am a person of faith.

They will not be true for me if I am a rascal and a reprobate and uninterested and apathetic and indifferent to what the Lord Jesus Christ purchased for me with his own blood. If I'm uninterested, if I'm distracted, if I'm deflected, if I am busy gratifying myself, I will certainly fall under the judgment of God, but I will not be able to claim the positive side of these proverbs or any of the other promises of God. I don't qualify.

I am not waiting on the Lord. So I will not be of good cheer and he's not going to strengthen my heart. And all of those other wonderful promises will not pertain to me.

And I can say, but I'm a Christian. How come I didn't receive the positive promises? How come God's not answering my prayers? You haven't been warned. We haven't been warned by the negative side.

We haven't been chastened whom the Lord loves. He chastens. He scourges the sons he receives.

Why? Not because he's bitter and angry and upset. It is for our good. It is to motivate us in the right direction.

Don't turn to the right hand. Don't turn to the left. Go down that straight path.

We're going to see the straight path described when we come back from the break. But to take these proverbs to heart first in the negative sense, don't make these mistakes. Don't suffer these outcomes.

Leave us free to enjoy the positive side of them, which is true for those who pursue relationship and righteousness from God and with God by faith. Well, let's take our break. We'll resume at verse three when we return.