

Proverbs 23-08-16a

Welcome to Wednesday Night Bible Study at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 16th of August 2023. We resume our study in the book of Proverbs chapter 11.

You will remember from last time that we saw the beginning of this chapter looking at the integrity of the upright and its various expressions. We'll pick up at that point and continue forward in the chapter this evening. It is a fascinating chapter and integrity has to do with truth.

Honesty, truth-telling, lack of deceit, lack of prevarication, lack of dissimulation, lack of misleading, all centers on truth. What is the nature of truth? Pilate famously asked the Lord Jesus, what is truth? When Jesus told him, for this cause I was born and for this reason came I into the world to bear witness to the truth. So we're going to take a look at what truth is, what people are beginning to say it is, and you will be amazed at how this will explain what we see going on around us both socially, politically, and in addition to when you say both there has to be two things.

So both politically and socially and in addition to that spiritually. We'll see that. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, on our concentration, on our memory, and our various means of remembering and applying what we hear and we'll begin.

Father, thank you for another opportunity to spend time together in fellowship around your word. This is our spiritual dining table and we gather with our spiritual family to partake, to share our experiences, our ideas, our prayer requests, our praises, and our challenges. We pray that as we spend this time together that your Holy Spirit will provide the unity and the edification, insight, and understanding into our table talk, which comes from your word, that it will inform our prayers as the Holy Spirit returns this truth to your throne room via our prayers.

We pray that as a result we will be drawn closer together as a fellowship, as a body, and also drawn closer to you through the Lord Jesus Christ under the guidance and ministry of your Spirit. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

You will remember that this chapter begins talking about dishonest scales, something that is deceitful, that cheats others. And I made this point in passing last time, but I want to review it. A dishonest scale doesn't completely deprive the person of goods.

If you are selling wheat but you have a dishonest hen measure or you have a dishonest ephah measure in selling olive oil or selling wheat or barley, they still get some barley, but it's not fair. Turn over to the book of Acts. I just want to emphasize how important this is in God's eyes and the role of the Holy Spirit therein.

If you remember Acts chapter 5, a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession and he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God. Partial, representing something as whole when it is only a part.

There can be a truth. Remember the old oath in the courtroom? I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The whole truth, not half truths, not things that are true, but they would be seen in a completely different light if the rest of the story came out.

For years and years. Remember the radio program? Who was the man? What was the man's name? And now you know the rest of the story. Yeah, Paul Harvey.

Paul Harvey. Now you know the rest of the story. He would tell a story.

He would go along and go along. Then there would be this revelation of who it was, and that completely changed the complexion of what you had heard heretofore. The whole truth.

You remember this story very well. I'm not going to dwell on it, but Old Testament and New, it is an abomination to God to withhold a part of something that should be entire and whole. It doesn't matter if 98% of your body is spotless and without blemish.

If you've got a giant leprous sore on the back of your hand, you are defiled. The entire body is defiled. If only one finger touches a dead body, your entire body is defiled.

You are either wholly sanctified or you are wholly defiled. And if you try to hide that hand, if you try to pretend that all is well when you are hiding something, it's not true. Mostly true, kind of true.

Well, what I have said is true. I just didn't tell all of the truth. It's an abomination to God.

It's a dishonest scale. It's a dishonest weight. Is it worth it to cheat somebody and forfeit your eternal inheritance, forfeit opportunity at the judgment seat to be fully approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, a workman that makes a mistake, you crack a board, but rather than rip out all the sheet rock and put a good stud in there, you just try to cover it up and hope nobody notices.

You over-tighten something and it leaks, but you hide it behind a wall. I saw a program where there was water leaking. And this was on forensic files, by the way.

It's usually murders and such. But this little three-year-old child got deathly ill and they

couldn't figure it out. And the family began to have mid-stage symptoms of Alzheimer's.

And they couldn't figure out what was going on. They thought this has to be environmental. So they sent a forensic team to the house and they discovered that this wonderful mansion that they had bought, which was modeled on Terra, a lot of the rooms were modeled on the, you know, frankly, Scarlet, I don't give a hoot and so on.

This beautiful mansion had this horrific leak, and there was black mold and spores and things coming out. And it did permanent damage to the health of the little boy and to this husband. He never got all of his functioning neurons back that permanently, he had to quit his job.

But the appearance was that this was a wonderful mansion, but these leaks, somebody had just painted over it and disguised it and sold it to the house, sold the house to them and disappeared with the money. So I cannot emphasize, we are here to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. We are not to be part of it.

We are not to deceive, not only in interpersonal relationships and in business dealings, selling or buying things, there should be full disclosure. I've got a truck that I want to sell, but it's got a tapping noise in the engine and I'm not going to put motor honey in there and then pretend like I don't think there might be something wrong in the engine. If it doesn't sell or if it sells for a lot less, so be it.

It isn't worth it to hide a truth that is a negative about something that you're going to sell. Full disclosure, is God going to bless me if I get an extra thousand dollars for my truck by hiding the fact that something's tapping? I'll just wait until somebody comes along that doesn't care. Maybe they've got an engine they want to drop in there.

Maybe they are a diesel mechanic and they want to do it on their own time. It's a beautiful truck in every other way, but it's got a tapping noise. I've taken it to two dealers and both of them said, what tapping noise? I don't care.

I will say, now that tapping that you hear there, can you hear it? I hear a tapping noise. It didn't used to do that. Full disclosure, I don't know what that is.

I think it might be something in the valve train. That could be an expensive fix. I just want you to know up front, I hear it.

If you can hear it, take that into consideration when you make your offer. I use that as an example because it's painful to me. I wish it didn't have a tapping noise.

I wish I could ask the full blue book value because it's a beautiful truck in every other way. It's had a bunch of other work done to it. It is as close to perfect as a 15-year-old truck can be, except for that tap.

I'm not going to hide that. We have to understand that love is sacrificial. Sometimes that means honest when it costs us something, honest when it's going to keep us from getting as far as we might otherwise get.

Anybody in the world can hide flaws and mask over and paint over and refuse to talk about things that are bad. That should not be us. What makes us distinct? By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another.

In our dealings with one another, we should be totally honest and fair and not in any way let our good be spoken of as evil or in some way defraud somebody else for money. Seriously, that is an abomination in God's sight, false weights, false scales. We talked about that last time.

So in verse three, the integrity of the upright will guide them. If you are not guided by integrity, what are you guided by? A, if integrity doesn't guide you, you are not upright and none of the promises and blessings and benefits that are promised to the upright will be ours. If we are not guided by integrity, let integrity be your guide.

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. If the situation were reversed, whether it is the actual selling of goods or whether it is reputation, do we give each other the benefit of the doubt? I remember not long after we got married, there was something. You don't know this about me, but I can be critical.

I can be sort of obnoxiously critical. And Patty said something one time and it stuck with me. She said, sometimes it doesn't seem like we're on the same team.

And it really cut me to the heart because we ought to be on the same team. We ought to be pulling for our teammates. We ought to be on the positive side and not tearing down and undercutting and carping and criticizing.

We're on the same team. And especially in the one another's of the Christian faith, we're on the same team. We should be looking for ways to encourage and build up so that the team wins, so that the Lord Jesus is glorified.

And we, as his representatives and in our fellowship and in our dealings with one another, we reflect the kind of honesty and the kind of integrity that reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus and shines as a light in contrast to the generation in which we find ourselves in the present day. The integrity of the upright will guide them. The perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.

We say, well, I see perversity and faithlessness all over the place and people seem to be doing fine. What do you think is going to happen at the judgment? In the same way that momentary light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory, these momentary little victories that are achieved by subterfuge and underhandedness and deceitfulness and lack of integrity, these momentary gains will vanish and be replaced with eternal deficit,

eternal loss. You find your inheritance slowly sinking to the bottom of the lake of fire while you're out there roasting weenies at its edge because that's all you get.

Maybe not even all beef weenies. They might be those awful things that you can only afford. It's all you can afford when you're destitute.

Trust me, there is a difference. So verse four, and all of these, as we have seen, and this is the emphasis, everything that happens to us in the day brings us to a point of choosing. We choose when we're deciding what we're going to do today.

Once we decide that's a choice, I am going to do this and not that. Of all of the available things, this is what I'm going to do. That is a choice.

So as you look through this chapter, you find that there are choices in verse one, talking about the scales. Okay, I can choose to be honest or less than honest. Less than honest is deceitful.

If it's anything less than honest, it's deceit. Don't kid yourself. You know, this idea, well, it's kind of like a little white lie.

It's just, sorry, no, if it's not honest, it's lying. It's deceitful and it's an abomination to God. That's our choice in verse one.

In verse two, pride comes, then comes shame, which you could just have that line and that would be sufficient to think about. What is pride? I think well of myself. I want to be well thought of.

I want to be exalted. I want to have the good opinion of others. I want to be esteemed.

I want to be appreciated. And it carries its own destruction. The very pride that makes us want to elevate ourselves, the Bible says when pride comes, shame comes hard on its heels.

As soon as you admit pride, shame is going to topple it over. Pride goeth before a fall. You're trying to rise, you're going to fall.

And a haughty spirit that wants to build itself up, precedes destruction. You can't get promoted by pride. You can't elevate yourself with a built-in negative altitude with it.

The harder I try to raise myself, and have you ever seen this? There are people who just push and want you to know their accomplishments. They name drop. They just find ways to let you know that they're accomplished, that they've got a degree from somewhere, or they got an appreciation or an award, or they were asked to speak, or they were in some other way honored.

It just comes up in the conversation. People are trying too hard to impress you.

Psychology 101, this usually is rooted in insecurity.

Secure people don't have to tell you what they've done or what they can do. Secure people don't try to impress. As soon as you try, you automatically press the down button on the elevator.

You're getting in there trying to go to the penthouse, and when you press up, it goes down. So that's verse two. And there is a choice.

We should find our security, our identity, our confidence in the Lord Jesus. I have been bought with a price, and it was a very precious price. I belong to God.

He purchased me. He considers me valuable. That's enough.

Why should I fear what men can do to me? Why should I covet what men can praise me for? I don't need to fear their wrath, and I don't need to curry their favor. I should be who I am in Christ and let God figure out if people are going to be impressed or not. That's the choice in verse two.

What is the choice in verse three? Is it integrity or perversity? In any given avenue, it's a choice. Our lives are all about choice, aren't they? We're just choosing our way through the day. And you remember, I think it was last year, I was talking about this book that I read where we don't really know the influences that affect our choice, and there are subtle cues that we imbibe and that we absorb from the environment, and it winds up expressing itself in our choice.

This is why. You don't need to buy books and figure out what's influencing your choice, because even while you're reading the book, your choices are still being influenced. How can we overcome these subconscious cues and these subliminal influences? The Word of God is alive and powerful.

What we are doing right now, trying to get the Word of God into our souls and into the circulation of our thinking, this is what enables us and empowers us and raises us supernaturally above the slings and arrows of outrageous influence. But bad company corrupts good morals. And if we expose ourselves all day long to social media and trends and reporting on any news network, just the constant stream of material, the great thing is, and I've mentioned this before, but a little bit of the Word of God, it is super concentrated.

God's power is such that 15 to 20 minutes of reflection and rehearsal and remembering and praying about what we have learned from the Word of God can antidote us for a great portion of the day. You can fend off no end of satanic influence and human viewpoint and subjectivity and the pull and the sway and the winds that want to blow us like a rudderless ship. A little bit of the Word of God anchors us.

You build your house on the rock, it doesn't matter how many storms come. Jesus only talked about one storm, right? When the rain came and the floods hit and the winds blew, the house on the sand collapsed. And by the way, the implication in that house on the rock, house on the sand comparison that Jesus made is the man is inside it.

He doesn't come back and say, oh, look, I left Maui to go to California for something. I've come back and my house is burned down. The implication is that you are sheltering and taking refuge in the house.

And when the house on the sand falls, you are crushed within it. When the house on the rock stands, you are safe and secure and blessed inside it. The house is your domicile.

It's where you are, where we are. So these ideas are important. And a little bit of the Word of God, but we've got to have that little bit.

We can't say, well, I heard a Bible class week before last. So hopefully that will inoculate me against all future germs. Watching daily at my gates.

Remember the first 10 chapters? Wisdom cries out to the young man. Those who are watching daily, we need a daily infusion. We need daily strength.

Think about physical food. You can eat one meal a day and do great. Some of us, that's what we do.

You can get two or three meals. That's probably even better. But you need some food every day.

You need some rest every day. You need some restoration and some rejuvenation every day. It is the same spiritually.

You can't go day after day giving no thought to who we are and why we're here and not be swayed, not be blown off course, not be immersed and caught up and deceived into subjectivity. Thinking something is real, thinking something is true, truth is going to be our subject tonight. You can't handle the truth, nor can you identify the truth, nor can you be bolstered and secured by the truth when you have a constant stream of human viewpoint, misinformation, disinformation, doctrines of demons, and so on.

So it is a choice in verse four. What is our choice? Are we generous or are we stingy? Are we liberal or are we selfish? Riches will not profit in the day of wrath. Why try to hang on to what you will ultimately not be able to keep? Why not find ways to benefit one another with such things as we have? In a time of crisis, wealth will not save you.

I heard over and over again in my youth about the stock market crash of 1929 and people who had been wealthy a few hours earlier found themselves bankrupt and were jumping out of 28 story buildings and entering into extreme poverty where they had

previously been rich. This is why we are to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven where moth and corrosion do not corrupt and thieves do not break in and steal. Eternal wealth versus the transient stewardship and possession of things in this life.

But it is a choice. Focus on righteousness. Righteousness is eternal money in the bank, if you will.

It is the investment plan in the bank of heaven, so to speak. That's a choice. In verse five, righteousness versus wickedness.

And this is actually five, six, seven, and eight. You see righteous and wicked in verse five, righteous and unfaithful in verse six, wicked and unjust in verse seven. You see the righteous and the wicked in verse eight.

We make decisions that characterize us as either righteous or unrighteous. We're either walking in integrity or we are perverse. We are either laying hold of righteousness by faith or we're not.

But it's all choice. And we tend to forget that we're choosing our way through the day. And it is the nature of those choices.

Any unbeliever, any uninformed, apathetic, indifferent believer can run through the day making decisions that don't count on eternity. You and I have the privilege and the opportunity to make every single decision count on eternity, count toward our eternal future. Whatever is not of faith is sin.

But we decide, okay, today, here are the chores. Here are the tasks. These are needed things.

I'm going to do them, but I want to do them as under the Lord. If I'm going to mow and trim, if I'm going to do laundry, if I'm going to go to my job and punch the clock or do labor for which I am recompensed, I can convert this into eternal capital, something that counts. I can do it as a person of faith and do it as unto the Lord.

If the Lord Jesus was my supervisor, if the Lord Jesus was inspecting my work, if this was God's yard, if this was the Lord Jesus's house, if this person for whom I am doing a job was the Lord Jesus, how diligent would I be? How faithful? How good a job would I do? And the Lord Jesus doesn't expect perfection. He doesn't expect that we're just going to agonize over every detail as though it was going to be inspected by a Marine Corps colonel with a white glove. Reasonable work that is fitting and proper and is an exceptionally good job, it doesn't have to be perfect, but it ought to be as good as we can do within the parameters of time, energy, opportunity, materials.

You can't always do everything. Work on pianos a while and you'll discover that you can do something that makes this piano in as good a tune as you can make it and it plays as

well as you can make it. Could I take it apart and fix a small thing here and add a spring there and re-glue a whole set of felts back here so that the action would be tighter and more even? I could, but I will tell you, even if the piano belonged to the Lord Jesus, unless He wants me to take an extra six hours and charge Him for those hours at my hourly rate, the piano serves its purpose.

There's a child in their first or second year of lessons, they don't know or care that the felt is worn or not worn. They don't care that the action is a little uneven. I use that as an illustration that doing things as under the Lord doesn't mean that we kill ourselves and try to make everything perfect.

It is reasonable. Would I be comfortable having the Lord Jesus take a look at this work and I say, you know, Lord, in the time constraints and the opportunity constraints within the means of the customer, this is, I think this is fair work. I am not ashamed for you to look at this and see what I have done.

That's the standard. Can you stand in front of the Lord Jesus and say, I did as good a job as I can do within the constraints of my time, my ability, economics, and so on. It's reasonable.

But I didn't do a sloppy job. I didn't deceive the customer and say, I tuned the whole piano when I only tuned six octaves and nobody plays the bottom and the top. I'll just skip those.

If it was the Lord's piano, I wouldn't skip an octave and charge as though I had tuned the whole piano. Again, I'm just using this as an example. We should be able to go before the Lord and present the work that we've done as unto him.

Would he be disappointed in me? Did I slack? Was I lazy? Was I inadequate? Is it incomplete? Did I deceive someone about the quality of the work? That's an abomination. That's an unjust skill. It's a choice.

Every single thing we do should be as unto the Lord. When you get up and get dressed, you have a responsibility to take your morning medicine or do your grooming, make yourself fit for presentation in society and not be a black eye as a representative of the Lord Jesus. You're sloppy or you're unkempt or you're lackadaisical, lazy, unseemly.

We represent the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was not rich, but he had a nice robe that people provided for him and he wore it. And he wasn't unclean.

He wasn't unkempt. He wasn't unseemly. And we shouldn't be either.

These are choices. When you get to verse nine, the hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor. But through knowledge, the righteous will be delivered.

If you use your mouth to destroy your neighbor, what are you doing? Isn't recompense and justice in God's hands? This is the nature of judging. It is one thing to discern that, you know, I think my neighbor is acting as he should. He's leaving his dog out in the hot sun with no water.

What could I do? I could dial up the SPCA or the county animal shelter people and say, I see a dog and there's no water. I'm afraid it's going to die. But if you go bad-mouthing your neighbor to everybody and saying, well, he's such a rascal, he doesn't water his dog and he doesn't paint his fence and he lets his petunias die and his house is flaking and peeling.

And you just begin to disparage and try to undermine and create a penalty for someone because you think they're not acting as they should. This is slander and it doesn't reflect integrity. If there is indeed something in terms of life, limb or property that is at risk, we can certainly speak up.

But to attack a neighbor, especially with things that are drummed up to be greater than they are, to major on the minors and to not be fair and balanced in an evaluation, to not try to find something positive to add into the negative if it comes up in conversation. And these destroying of a neighbor has the implication from the Hebrew language here of actually taking them to court, taking them before the elders and trying to get them punished for some slight or some alleged malfeasance or something that's been blown out of proportion. And the godless person here in verse 9, the hypocrite, this word means it's a polluted person.

Somebody themselves is unclean, is not fit, isn't whole, isn't clean, isn't righteous, and instead of fixing their own righteousness, they're attacking their neighbor. This is the beam and the moat idea. You're going to take your neighbor and destroy him and you yourself are polluted.

You have no room to talk. You've got your own problems and you ought to be addressing those. And this has become widespread in Christianity.

The deconstruct, reconstruct movement is quick to attack and vilify and call out all of the bad things that happened in their old church. And they neglect to mention any of the good things. Did their church have a ministry to the homeless? Did they have a ministry for ladies who have been divorced by their husband and left with children and no child support? And many churches have wonderful ministries, but somebody says, well, I was overlooked and they wouldn't let me do this and I felt neglected for that.

And they do nothing but attack that church and all of Christianity as a result. Well, my church represents Christianity, so boo on conservative Christianity, boo on evangelicals, boo on the denomination that my church is from. And there's no balance.

There's no recognition. Well, they did try. It could have been people within the church that were abusing their position or failing to do their brotherly love job.

But the church did have some redeeming qualities. There was good Sunday school or a good pastor or a good choir or they maintained their parking lot very well, something. But people who themselves have deep and significant problems and they're busy sublimating and sending their negative criticism out to others.

This is the Old Testament version of the beam and the moat. That's verse nine. Well, it is all about choice.

And in order to choose, this is our point for the first session, you have to know the issues. If we just blow through the day and don't stop and think and don't stop and apply what we know about integrity versus perversity, about righteousness versus faithlessness, about love versus selfishness. If we don't stop and bring to bear what we have learned from the word of God, we will default.

Have you ever been filling out a form or going through choices in the installation of software on your computer or on your phone? And there are just defaults. And if you're not careful, you just flip through the defaults and you wind up with adware and apps that you never wanted. And you've opted into sharing all of your information.

And the default choices many times are not desirable. And you've got to read each screen. Every time Windows does an update, well, don't you want Bing to be your default search engine and don't you want Edge to be your default browser? And no, don't you want to share your information with Microsoft? No.

Don't you want to sign up for Office 365? No. But if you don't carefully read each screen, and if you just accept the defaults, you will be down a bad road, a bad road. If you just default your way through the day, if we just go with the flow, we're going to do the very same thing.

We need to read each decision. We need to think about each option and bring to bear what we know. I am signing away my privacy.

I am selling myself as the product to people who want to know my every move in my browser, on my computer, my searches. I saw something the other day where Patti and Anna Lynn and Elizabeth went to the Gathering Place. The very next day, I'm reading Patti's Facebook feed, the Gathering Place, the Gathering Place, the Gathering Place.

And I'm thinking, how did they know they went to the Gathering Place? Did somebody make a post or put up a picture? I don't know how they knew. I didn't even know what the Gathering Place was. But after they went, the very next day in Facebook, well, here's the Gathering Place, and here's pictures of people swimming and bicycling and whatnot.

You give away your data if you're not careful. We need to be careful as we go through our day that we don't give away our spiritual opportunities to the enemy and lose our opportunities to invest in righteousness by faith, reflecting the glory of God through Christ, being guided by the Holy Spirit, applying what we know from the Word of God in each of these choice situations, whether it is honesty versus dishonesty in verse one, humility versus pride in verse two, integrity versus perversity in verse three, generosity versus selfishness in verse four, righteousness versus wickedness in verses five, six, seven, and eight. How important is that? It gets four verses in this chapter.

And the integrity versus slander in verse nine, and we're going to see when we come back in verse 10 and following, there is blessing versus cursing. We choose it every time we move through the day. Well, let's pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we'll pick up at verse 10.