

Proverbs 23-08-23a

This is the 23rd of August, 2023. Welcome to Wednesday night Bible study at Grace & Truth Bible Church. We're in the book of Proverbs and we are at chapter 11.

We have covered the first nine verses. We will continue beginning at verse 10 and extending through the end of this section. And we'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and then we will begin.

Father, what a wonderful privilege it is to partake of the wisdom that you have imparted to us here in the book of Proverbs. We're grateful for its preservation across the centuries and how meaningful it is and how obvious it is that it is inspired and directly from you by its continued applicability despite the passage of time. Never more pertinent than in the present day and in our circumstances, we pray that as we look at it together, your Holy Spirit will bless it to our hearts, help us to see its personal application and the effect that it should have on us as we negotiate the daily responsibilities, tasks, and opportunities that you place in our path.

We pray that as a result, we will be fit representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we will grow in grace and knowledge, lay hold of righteousness by faith and fulfill your purpose for our lives as we avail ourselves of the opportunities now and look forward to opportunities in the future kingdoms to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. Proverbs chapter 11.

We saw that this section opened with a reference to the Lord in verse one, and this helps us understand the section beginning and ending here. Verses one through 20 are bracketed by references to Yahweh, to the Lord. And you can tell this when you see the all caps or the small caps in your King James or New King James Bible, when it's in these all caps, that's a helpful clue that you have the tetragrammaton there Y-H-W-H, Yahweh.

In long centuries of tradition by the rabbis not spoken, they would substitute Adonai when they would read the scriptures aloud, because we are in Christ and He is Yeshua, and we have a familial relationship with God the Father. We have no fear of speaking His covenant name, His personal name, and it is one of our privileges as we come boldly to the throne of grace. But you will see that this section, which we are now studying, is bracketed in verse one and verse 20 by references to the Lord and what is an abomination to Him.

So we've covered the first nine verses. Let's pick up at verse 10 and read through verse 20. We saw the righteous and wicked in verse eight.

We saw the hypocrite and the righteous in verse nine. And we pick up now in verse 10. When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices.

When the wicked perish, there is jubilation. Seems like it would be a great disappointment if you perish and everybody cheers and celebrates. This kind of behavior is normally reserved for rascals of the first water, your grade A tin-plated despots and dictators.

And I think there was great jubilation when some of these people on the terrorist watch list get destroyed. But we don't wanna be in that illustrious number. The wicked perish, there is jubilation.

Verse 11, by the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. You see a link, a connection, a similarity of topic here in verses 10 and 11. They seem to go together as a set because both of them refer to the city, the collection of individuals that dwell together in a large and disparate group.

Then in verse 12, he was devoid of wisdom, despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace. A tale bearer in verse 13 reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. And there is a relationship here and a helpful context in verses 12 and 13.

This has to do not with the entire city, but with those who are in your immediate periphery, your neighbor. And it is in the context of your neighbor because you are nearby and you observe or you discover or you know of information related to that neighbor, which provides the opportunity to either be a tale bearer revealing what you know, that you are privy to because of your proximity and the one of a faithful spirit who doesn't talk out of turn, who doesn't tell everything they know. There are people who could not contain information under any circumstance.

If they know a thing, it has to come out. And this is a lack of self-discipline. It is a lack of love.

It is a lack of discernment. It is a lack of character. It is the desire to be the one who for the moment is the celebrity because you're the center of attention while you are communicating information of interest to someone else, disregarding the effect, the impact, the longer term consequences that revealing confidences or information that is limited in its widespread knowledge.

And there are people who just get an adrenaline rush out of being the first to tell. And this is something we can practice even in innocuous contexts. When news breaks, there are people who immediately have to get on their phone and call somebody, text somebody.

Even though it is of no direct relevance or importance, I just, I bet I know something you don't know. And I want to be the one to tell you. And if we discipline ourselves to wait until there is a reason, until there is a purpose to stop and think is the interruption, is the

throwing off stride and off concentration, is it worth my joy in being the communicator of information that this kind of self-gratification is behind gossip and maligning, backbiting, judging, sins of the tongue, verbal sins that harm others, that communicate information at other's expense that can damage their reputation, that take part in judging by diminishing someone in other people's eyes or revealing things that that person would rather not have spoken out loud, it violates the golden rule.

Would you really want someone telling what they saw through your bedroom window, et cetera, do unto others as you would have others do unto you? And that is a helpful test. If the situation was reversed, you know something about Marge over here. Well, if it were reversed, would you want Marge telling the information about you? If not, then be a person who is of a faithful spirit.

A faithful spirit. And faithfulness toward God means that we are reserved and careful. We can be trusted that information stops with us unless it needs to be communicated.

So the application here is it is good practice. Even when we think, well, there's no harm in saying, did you know that somebody wears pink boxer shorts or whatever, what is the need? Is there a need? Is it edifying? We see this in our First Timothy study, First Timothy chapter one, those things that lead to divisions and disputes and dissensions, or does it build up and edify? Is this tale I am about to bear going to unify and build up, or is it gonna cause someone to look askance at someone else? This requires not only self-discipline, but thought to stop and think. It does little good after you've spoken to say words, come back.

Pretend you didn't hear me say that. Please, when you're typing and you type something and you say, well, before I send this, I'm gonna reread it, that's really intemperate. That's not a good thing to say.

You can just backspace delete. You can block it and delete it. You can edit, you can amend, you can tone down.

And we take our time over written communications in many cases, or we should, to be sure that we don't say more than we intend. Well, verbally, once it escapes the lips, it's out. And it can't be unheard, it can't be unspoken.

And the more you try to persuade somebody to forget what I said, the worse you make it, the more emphasis you place upon it. And so to stop and think before we talk about others is the exhortation that is implicit in this particular proverb. And it is related to verse 12.

He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor. Despises his neighbor. What does this mean? If you're devoid of wisdom, you don't take your neighbor's feelings and interest and reputation and opportunities and vulnerabilities into account.

You treat them lightly. Despising in the Bible has the idea of lightly esteeming, of not giving due consideration, of not acting in the law of love. And the golden rule to have no real weight assigned to that person is to despise them.

And someone who is devoid of wisdom, what is the second great commandment that Jesus emphasized? Love whom? Your neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Well, here's someone who is at a disadvantage. The Jewish man who is in the ditch and he's passed by by the self-righteous and the self-interested and I can't be bothered types.

And here's a Samaritan who is generally lightly esteemed and despised by Jewish people. But he sees this person who is at a disadvantage, who can't help himself, who has been savagely attacked and is in the ditch and is in need of help. And he benefits him.

He doesn't go along and find some other people and say, boy, there's a real dumb guy in the ditch. He obviously flashed his money when he shouldn't have and he got robbed and it serves him right. And let me tell you who I saw in the ditch.

I saw him the other day and he was blah, blah, blah. You can expand that parable of the good Samaritan to recognize that people love to tell tales about someone who is vulnerable, someone where a weakness has been exposed or something they would rather not get out. They certainly wouldn't tell people themselves.

Why would we want to bear that tale? It is your neighbor. Who is my neighbor? And the neighbor is someone about whom you know some things, someone with whom you have contact, someone in the immediate periphery. And Jesus did not say the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord, your God, dot, dot, dot.

And the second is like unto it, love the world, love everybody, love the community. It is love your neighbor. Love is intelligently applied because there is knowledge.

And to pervert that knowledge and to turn it into an occasion for sin and gossip is what is in view here. So this is in the context of the neighbor. You are devoid of wisdom, despising your neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace.

It's a wonderful phrase, isn't it? Hold your peace. You let go of your peace if you start talking out of turn. You possess and maintain and hold your peace.

It's not just lack of speaking. There is a fulsomeness of meaning here that you hang onto your shalom. Your shalom is your well-wishing to others.

As Paul says, as much as it is up to you, live peaceably with all men. Hold your peace, preserve the peace, contribute to peace. Strife and dissension and ill feeling and ill will is something that James talks about when the tongue wags and that tongue is set on fire by the flames of hell.

Not a good thing. So we've seen now verse 10 and 11. What is the consideration? What is the reputation of the righteous versus the wicked in a city? We should be known as people who pursue righteousness, not as those who perpetrate wickedness.

And there is blessing by association. This is an Old Testament expression of blessing by association. The city is happy to have righteous people within it.

And when it goes well with those righteous people, the city rejoices and they rejoice even more when the wicked are getting their comeuppance. This of course, supposes that you have a city that does celebrate righteousness and doesn't enjoy wickedness. And in the days of David and Solomon, when these Proverbs were being assembled and were told cities in Israel celebrated righteousness.

They were glad to have King David. They were glad to have King Solomon. Shalom, peace is in his very name.

And they celebrated the righteousness that brought about the peace in that kingdom. If you have a degenerate and wicked population that assembles into cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, Sodom and Gomorrah don't rejoice when the righteous do well. And they don't go into jubilation when the wicked get their comeuppance.

They are the wicked. And so, as we have seen from the very beginning, these Proverbs, these principles, and these promises are activated by and true in the realm of faith, faith, faithfulness, pursuit of relationship with God and accountability before God. And there are people outside that realm for whom these things do not apply and for whom they are not true.

Keep your finger here and turn back to Proverbs 1. Just as a reminder, Proverbs 1, the Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, what is the purpose of these Proverbs? To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity, to give prudence to the simple, to the young man, knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear and increase learning. And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.

To understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their puzzles, their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. All of this is tied to that pursuit of relationship with God and the life that is pleasing in his sight.

So as we continue now in our section, we've seen verses 10 and 11, verses 12 and 13. Verse 14, and one of the more famous proverbial sayings in the entire collection is here, where there is no counsel, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. Verse 15, he who is surety for a stranger will suffer, but one who hates being surety is secure.

So we have safety and security in view here with two different bases. One has to do with advice, counsel. This is in the realm of plans and purposes.

When you seek advice or you're getting counsel, you're trying to map a path forward. You want to solve a problem. You want to initiate a project.

You want to advance a cause of some kind. What is the means of so doing? There might be several different ways of doing it. How is it done? Well, this is in the realm of counsel.

These Hebrew words used here deal with purposes, plans, advice on how to achieve a goal and so on. There is a pretty severe mistranslation here that has led to confusion. And so I want to talk about that here in verse 14.

Where there is no counsel, the people fall. For lack of good advice, a good plan, in consultation with others, people fall. You need a plan and you want some people to help you come up with this plan.

Find people with experience, with knowledge, with insight, and without that, people fall. Try building a house without consulting anybody else. Try designing your own house.

Don't know anything about king studs or jack studs or plates or joists or rafters or any of that? Good luck. You don't even have to wait for the storm to come and the rains to fall and beat on your house. The thing will collapse of its own weight.

You need information, right? So far, so good. It's the second half of this proverbial saying that is the kicker. I think everyone would agree, you know, you're best off with good counsel, a good plan, advice from people who know what they're talking about.

Otherwise, people fall. But in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. There is a double mistranslation here.

One mistranslated word is based on the other. So let me start with the key word here. Counselors.

Is that singular or plural? It's got an S on it, right? But not in Hebrew. Not in Hebrew. There should be an E or an O on the end of this word if it is plural, but it's not.

It is a common, masculine, singular, absolute noun. Singular. Number matters.

The word translated multitude, multitude's one of your longer words. Multitude, three syllables, however many letters. In Hebrew, it's just two letters.

R-B or V. Rav. Rav. You know this word, whether you know it or not.

Do you remember over in 2 Kings 18, days of Hezekiah, Sennacherib is threatening invasion of Judah and he sends messengers to Hezekiah and says, I've rolled up

everybody else in my path and I'm gonna roll over you. Remember that? Do you remember the person that he sent to deliver that message? What was that guy's name? Rav Shaka. Remember the Rav Shaka? That's not his personal name.

His mama didn't look down in the cradle and say, oh, he looks like Rav Shaka. That's his title. Shaka is prince and Rav is chief.

The head, the great one. Like Jackie Gleason, the great one. He could have been Rav Gleason.

Great. So now, if I take the word great and I stick it on a singular word for counselor, how do you get a multitude of counselors out of that? It is a great counselor or the great counselor. Right? It's singular.

This is a travesty of translation with very few to compare to it in scripture. It's got nothing to do with a multitude of counselors. Now, there is a verse that talks about more than one counselor and we'll get to it in a minute, but let's get this one straight first.

So what is this saying? If you don't get some good advice and make a plan, people fall, but in a great counselor, Rav. And then it says there is safety. Safety.

The word here is shua with some prefixes and suffixes. What do you know about shua as in Yeshua? What does it mean? Does it mean to be safe or does it mean to be saved, to be delivered? Yeshua is the deliverer. In a great counselor, there is deliverance.

Instead of falling, you are saved. You are delivered. It's not safety of an abstract amorphous general.

Well, we'll have no fires here because we've made it all out of asbestos. It's got nothing to do with that. Where there is no carefully thought out plan based on the counsel of wise people, people fall.

But where there is a great counselor, what are the names given to the Lord Jesus in Isaiah's prophecy? Unto us, a child is born. Unto us, a son is given and his name shall be Khaled. What? Wonderful counselor.

It's one name. Wonderful counselor. Every one of those phrases there is a two word appellation.

Appellation. Wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace. Wonderful counselor.

That's for us, the Lord Jesus. With a great counselor, Jesus said, I'm going away. I will send you another comforter.

He will lead you into truth. He will take the things of me and communicate them to you.

How do we metabolize and digest and understand and come to an applicational strategy from the word of God? It's God's Holy Spirit sent to us by the Lord Jesus Christ at the behest of God, the father.

The entire triune God is interested in us having godly counsel, divine counsel, divine plan and purpose, divine advice. The Lord our God is one Lord, right? If you don't have a good plan based on wisdom, people fall. Pride goeth before a fall.

Same root word, tough fall. Haughty spirit goes before destruction. It takes humility to submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that he can exalt us in due time.

In general terms, this proverb says, if you've got a great counselor, there's going to be deliverance. If there is a brilliant general, if there is a brilliant leader, but for us in spiritual terms, because this is in the Yahweh section here, it begins and ends with God. Sometimes the counsel from God comes to us in the person of someone who is wise, someone who knows, someone who is the right man for the hour.

Look at George Washington in his day and in his time. God used him. Without him, there would be no United States of America, anything like what we have ever seen in history.

The reason he used to be celebrated so widely and so greatly and so grandly is people appreciated the signature role that his wisdom and his leadership and his counsel provided in the early days of the US of A. For us, we are not looking around to find a political leader or a social figure or a media influencer or someone who can tell us their opinion night by night. We have a greater, grander counselor. It's very interesting because this word for counsel is from Yaats, Y-A-A-T-S.

One of the pieces of knowledge about Hebrew that you know, because I have repeated it ad nauseum is, remember the O-E infix? When you find a Hebrew word that starts out as Yaats and I change it to Yoetz, what does that tell you? What does that do? Remember, it does the very same thing as putting I-N-G on a verb. Yaats means to counsel, so Yoetz is someone who is counseling, right? It's a Rav Yoetz, a great counseling guy. And Yaats is translated as, as counsel many times in the Old Testament.

Between counsel and counselor, you've got about almost 50 uses where that's how it's translated. It's either counsel or counselor, but it is translated consult, the verb to consult, to go to someone and ask, what do you think? And this is particularly important now because you can find places where people want to say, well, I just want to get a bunch of people's advice. It's the multitude of counselors, there is safety.

Keep your finger here and turn just a page over to Proverbs 15, verse 22. Proverbs 15, 22. Without counsel, plans go awry.

Similar to the idea that people fall. If they have any plans, if they're not good plans, they're going to go awry, but in the multitude of counselors, they are established.

Multitude, there's the second time we have multitude of counselors.

We've already seen in our chapter 11, verse 14 statement. This is not a multitude of counselors. This is the greatness of a counselor.

A great counselor. Here, you do in fact have the plural. This is rav yo'atzim and these plans that have gone awry in the first phrase there isn't the same as what we had in chapter 11.

Without counsel, it says, and the word counsel is sod. S-O, long O, S-O-D. And once again, it's ain, it's b-A-I-N, in the lack of sod.

Sod is talking about a counsel, C-O-U-N-C-I-L, a group of individuals who are meeting privately, more or less in secret. This is strategy that is done behind closed doors. This is a closed door meeting.

Sod intrinsically means this is private and secret. So without security in the meeting, without caution about who knows what you are planning, sod, it's even translated inward or secret several times in scripture. And when it is used of getting together with other people, it's private, it's an inner circle.

It's close knit, which implies people on the outside don't know what's going on. So in chapter 15, verse 22, without security in your advisory meeting, if these things leak, if they get out to people who shouldn't have that information, your plans are gonna go awry. And these plans are, this word is translated as what you devise, your thoughts, your cunning plan.

This is invention. You're coming up with something that is special and unique. This isn't just a general strategy.

It's not just, well, we're gonna do these steps. This is creative. This is surprise.

This is counterintuitive to the enemy. And so the idea in 15.22 is if you don't ensure that only the right people know what's going on, this is why we have classified documents. This is why we have security clearances in our government.

Not everybody in the population needs to know our plans and purposes. And if they get out, it can spoil negotiations. It can spoil the success of an operation.

Any number of troops can die if your plan gets out because you didn't maintain security in the planning phase. So without security in the meeting that comes up with the strategy and the means of securing the objective, it is going to fall apart. It will go awry.

And this is from Parar. And it means it is frustrated. It is nullified.

It comes to no good end. It is of no use. It's annulled or disannulled.

Shattered, split, divided, cracked, breaking apart. If it fragments and dissolves, it becomes useless. And this is a specific thing that we'll see when we get to chapter 15 in its context.

But this is a different idea than either one of these passages is commonly understood. Well, in the multitude of counselors, they're safe. You all just ask around and ask a whole bunch of people.

This typically doesn't end well. Let me just quickly give you some passages about this. In Genesis 3, 17, when God's talking to Adam, and he says, because you have listened to the voice of your wife, you got some counsel from your wife, but it was bad counsel.

Just getting counsel in and of itself isn't necessarily a good thing. What about Genesis 16, two? Sarah says to Abraham, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my servant.

It may be that I shall obtain children by her. And you end up with the Hagar Ishmael, because Abram, it says, listened to the voice of Sarai, Genesis 16, two. He listened to counsel that was bad counsel.

You go to Joshua 9, 14, where you have the men taking provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord. This is in the context. You remember there's Jebusites and things going on in Joshua 9, and they don't ask counsel of the Lord.

Same thing in the times of the kings. When you get down to Chronicles 10, verses 13 and 14, Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord and also consulted a medium seeking guidance.

He goes to the witch of Endor. He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David.

Same thing in 2 Chronicles 22, verse four. King doing evil in the sight of the Lord as the house of Ahab had done after the death of his father, they were his counselors to his undoing. So simply getting a bunch of counselors, we need perception.

We need to be aware of what is good and what is bad counsel. And where does that come from? It comes from the guidance of the word of God. So we'll have more to say about this multitude of counselors idea, but I think you can see in both of these cases in Proverbs, the idea is not get a bunch of people's opinion and the good will be somewhere in the middle.

Not at all. You can get a multitude of counsel and it's all bad. So what is our conclusion? It is the greatness of counsel.

Where do we go for great counsel and solid wisdom? The word of God. More when we

come back from the break.