

Proverbs 23-09-13a

Greetings, welcome to Wednesday night at Grace & Truth Bible Church. We are in the book of Proverbs and we are starting chapter 12. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study and we'll dive in.

Father, we're so grateful that you have not left us to try to figure things out on our own. You have given us your word, you have blessed us with your spirit and with those two enablements, we can live a life that transcends the ordinary, that builds into eternity, that prepares us for future life and function. We pray that as we look at this portion of the scriptures this evening, that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, help us to understand what it means and how it applies.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. So Proverbs chapter 12, after many a false attempt to get there, we have finally arrived. Let's read the first 14 verses.

If I cover all 14, you can apply for my sainthood because it will be a miracle. But I'll explain why we're reading 14 of them as soon as we read them. Proverbs chapter 12, in your new King James, it says, "'Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, "'but he who hates correction is stupid.'" There's a refrigerator magnet for you.

See if you can find that in your Bible bookstore. He who hates correction is stupid. "'A good man obtains favor from the Lord, "'but a man of wicked intentions he will condemn.

"'A man is not established by wickedness, "'but the root of the righteous cannot be moved. "'An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, "'but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones. "'The thoughts of the righteous are right, "'but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.'" Isn't that one of those that sounds kind of like an obviousity? When we get there, we'll see it's not nearly so obvious as it sounds in English.

Verse six, "'The words of the wicked are, "'Lie and wait for blood, "'but the mouth of the upright will deliver them. "'The wicked are overthrown and are no more, "'but the house of the righteous will stand. "'A man will be commended according to his wisdom, "'but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised.

"'Better is the one who is slighted, but has a servant, "'than he who honors himself, but lacks bread.'" There's a cryptic one in English. I like some of the more literal translations and we'll read those when we get here. Verse 10, "'A righteous man regards the life of his animal, "'but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, "'or cruelty.

"'He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, "'but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding. "'The wicked covet the catch of evil men, "'but the root of the righteous yields fruit. "'The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, "'but the righteous will come through trouble.

"A man will be satisfied with good ""by the fruit of his mouth."" Now that seems like the usual exposure to Proverbs. You grab a section and read it and it just sounds like a patch quilt. It's here, it's there, it doesn't seem to string together, it doesn't flow.

We saw a much more connected verbiage in those first nine chapters, didn't we? But starting in chapter 10, those nine chapters were the introduction. Now we have the Proverbs of Solomon. That's what chapter 10, verse one said.

So we've looked at chapter 10, we've looked at chapter 11, and we have seen that although it's harder to see in English than it is in Hebrew, there is actually malice of forethought, there is structure, there is symmetry, there is purpose and design in this. Now reading those first 14 verses, we could read the next 14 and it's very similar. If you scan through that though, and you don't have time right now because I'm gonna keep talking, but if you did, if I went quiescent for three or four minutes and let you scan through this, you would notice that the preponderance of this is talking about talking.

It's talking about speech, it's talking about the fruit of the lips, what people say. We saw some of that in the last chapter, right? And so you have these themes of people who are wise and people who are foolish. You have people who are talking and people who are listening.

And you have what comes out of your mouth. What does it result in? What is the future for people who are careless in their speech? What about those who reflect righteousness and integrity in their speech? So quite a lot of this centers on that idea. Now this chapter is a good chapter division.

They did this exactly right. Sometimes I'm less happy with how they divide chapters and verses. This is a great job.

Chapter 12 is a unit unto itself. You could take this out and just do a Proverb 12 study and spend some weeks on it if you wanted to. It is composed of two parts, two symmetrical halves, verse one through 14 and verse 15 through 28.

Each of those divides into a subset. So if you've got a Bible and you're not afraid to mark it, I would suggest that you do this. There is the introduction here in verses one, two and three.

Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. Good man obtains favor from the Lord. Man of wicked intention he will condemn.

These are gonna be the themes. These three verses, verses one through three are gonna come back up. They're gonna float back to the surface of the stew here as we go through this first section of 14 verses.

And so there's this three verse introduction. The first thing it does is in the center of this

three verse intro is give us the agency. You think, well, is it just a law of the universe that he who hates correction is stupid or good things are gonna happen to good people, bad things are gonna happen to bad people.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, there is a reminder here, who ensures these outcomes? Who ensures the wellbeing of the righteous? Who ensures the punishment of the wicked? It's right in the middle of these three verses. It is the Lord. You notice it's the Lord that's made up of uppercase.

It's a bigger L and then the O-R-D are capitals. What does that tell you is in the Hebrew behind this. We're gonna see the other word for Lord in this section.

We read it, went right by it and you didn't see it, but you will in a minute. But this is the Tetragrammaton. This is where people get the word Jehovah, the Y-H-W-H, personal covenant name of God, the Lord.

And that's what you have in verse two. A good man obtains favor from the Lord. Now this ought to be comforting because we're not hoping for some vague law of social responsibility to work its magic.

God is in his heaven. He knows everything. He knows our hearts.

He knows exactly what opposition we face. He knows the people that are around us and whether they are helpful and beneficial and co-conspirators in the good sense of the term in that we have the fellowship of the spirit. We're in the body of Christ.

We're fellow believers. God knows everything and everybody. And it is he that guarantees this for those people who are trying to walk down the narrow road through the straight gate.

This is a guarantee. You can take this to the bank. The Lord is going to bless the good with his favor.

Now you notice you got some italics there, the word *man* in verse two, it says a good, and then you got *man* in italics. Italics always means there's no word in the original. There's just one word here.

There's not even the word for a. It's just *tov*, good. This can be a good person. This can be good that you are a part of, good that you sponsor, good that is the fruit of your life.

Good that is good in God's eyes and good in God's sight is blessed with his favor. Because of the parallel, nearly all translators say a good person, a good man, but it doesn't say the word *man*. And when he wants to say *man*, he says *man*.

He'll use *ish* as opposed to *isha* for the man and the woman, the husband and the wife. He'll use *adam* for *man*. There's a play on words there.

Man was formed from the dust of the ground and the ground is aduma. So Adam from the aduma, man is dust, even in the little play on words. But good obtains favor from the Lord.

So you can, you know how they used to have this thing in experiencing God, that deal that came out. They said, look around and see where God is at work and join him in his work, which I think is just awful. But God will figure out when, where and how we're gonna be a part of his work.

I don't go tell God, I see you're cutting down a bad tree over here. I'm gonna join you in that work. Well, I may not be the right guy for that.

In any case, what we can do is identify good that is in our periphery. We want to be good. We want to look inside ourselves and try to cultivate God's goodness within us.

We know how to do that. But we can also see good when we bump up against it. And we say, this is something that is genuinely a part of God's plan and purpose.

I see his fingerprints on it. I see the fruit of his righteousness in it. I see the fruit of the spirit.

There is love and joy and peace and patience and gentleness and goodness and faith and meekness and self-control is exuding out of whatever this thing is. I want to be a part of that. I want to embrace it.

I want to stay in touch with it. I want to pray for it. I want to support it and help it and encourage it and so on.

Because that good is going to be blessed with God's favor. It is a promise of the word of God. And wherever we find good, we want to be on the side of the good.

This applies when you're looking in social issues. It applies when you're looking at people running for office. Sometimes it's hard to find any Tov, T-O-V.

But where you find it and where you see it, you want to encourage and support and in some cases be a part of it. Certainly we want to be a source of it because of this blessing. But the two things to remember are, it is an absolute that God's favor is gonna rest on that which is good.

So if we are good, if our relationships are good, if our work is good, God is gonna bless it. And there is a personal individual agent. It is God.

He's real. He's not an abstraction. He's not a force.

He's not a great pool of previous people that all joined their collective ids into something out in the eighth dimension. He is an actual person. He pays attention.

He knows all of the causes and conditions and successions and relations, circumstances, factors, motives, thoughts, and intents of every heart. And he acts. He is active in history.

And when he sees good, he blesses it. That's just a fact. And it's a good thing for us to keep in mind.

Helps us make decisions. Sometimes the water is kind of murky, not real sure if I should go down this road or that road, to switch my metaphor. You don't want to be in the water and on the road at the same time.

But sometimes it's a matter of, well, can I find or identify some good? Is there some tangible, visible, material good in one of these options that I don't see in the others? God's going to bless that good. I'm going to choose that prayerfully until he tells me otherwise. I'm going to go with the best good I can find.

And it's a great decision maker. It's a great help in moving forward. So that is in this introduction.

And we're going to expect to see this principle recur throughout these 14 verses. This section now is going to be followed by several sub-units. So we're going to have four verses coming right after this.

Verse four, verse five, verse six, and verse seven. You can just block them off in your Bible. That's what I do.

This thing is almost unreadable for being marked, this one and some others. But four, five, six, and seven, that's going to be a little sub-unit. And that's going to be all about speech.

This section is about what you say and what you do. So four, five, six, and seven are talking about words and the fruit of the lips and that. That's going to be followed by actions in another section, verses eight through 12.

Eight, nine, 10, 11, and 12, five verses on actions, deeds. Then we're going to have a conclusion. We had a three-verse introduction.

We're going to have a two-verse conclusion. So three-verse introduction, four verses on words, five verses on actions, and then a two-verse conclusion. Interestingly, when we get to verse 15 through 28, it's going to have an identical structure.

Same sub-units, introduction, conclusion, three units in between, just like this. So, actually two units in between. It's a total of four sections.

So this helps us because when you can see that these things are not just like a toad hopping from one place to another in terms of subject matter, that gives us our context.

So we take a look at these first three verses. Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

Well, there is more to this than meets the eye. First of all, whoever loves instruction. This word that is translated instruction here is more often translated admonition or correction, or it's instruction that's designed to help you do something you're not currently doing right.

You go to the rifle range or the grenade range. I can't remember if I've told you this story, not lately, but when we were at Quantico, we went to the grenade range and this is a grenade, here's the pin, here's the spoon. It's a fragmentation grenade, and after you get the instruction on all how it works and what the delay is and the rest of it, pull pin, throw grenade, spoon flies, grenade after about three seconds explodes.

So then we go out to the grenade range and you got these little three-sided shelters and everybody hunkers down behind them and Lieutenant Smith and Lieutenant Jones and Lieutenant Hull are in this little bunker thing. They're, we're lieutenants, we're college graduates. We're supposed to be smart, right? Told us how the thing works.

Okay, Lieutenant Smith, throw your grenade. So Smith stands up, pulls the pin, heaves the thing, the spoon flies, goes down. He, of course, hunkers back down.

Jones, it's your turn. Hands him a grenade, he pulls the pin, lets the spoon fly and stands there with the grenade in his hand right next to me and right next to Smith and just chokes, freezes. And of course, they're, thankfully, there is a first lieutenant or captain instructor in each of these little things.

And after one and a half of your three seconds goes by, the instructor dives for the grenade and heaves it while he's fully in the air, downrange. He hits the deck and the thing goes off and we're not dead. This is another one of those, I'm so happy I'm not dead experiences.

But you get instruction to teach you how to do things that you're not doing right. Believe me, that lieutenant received excessive amounts of grenade instruction after that episode because he did not do it right. And sometimes not doing a thing right can be exceedingly dangerous.

What if you're not driving correctly? What if you have a car full of people and you foul up your responsibility as the driver? You can get everybody in the car dead along with passers-by and oncoming cars and so on. So it's important when you come to a verse like this, it says, whoever loves. This is the word Ahab, A-H-A-B, it's Ahab's name, love.

Worst king in the Old Testament and his name is, he's King Love, King Ahab, Ahab. And it's repeated twice. Who loves, there's really not a subject here.

So it's all in the verb. Who loves admonition, who loves being instructed in a corrective and admonishing way, hey, that's wrong. Quit doing that and do it this way.

Whoever loves that, loves knowledge. The way to get knowledge is to be corrected and to be instructed. Remember the, all scripture is God-breathed and profitable for what? Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction.

That's what the word of God is for. So if you love being corrected, and learning how to do things right, you love actual knowledge. But he who hates correction, this is a different word, but it's a synonym for rebuke and correction.

There are people who love to learn and they love knowledge, but they're not corrected by it. They get knowledge and they're ready to swing it like a bat at people around them. They're ready to look at groups and movements and social issues and whatnot.

And they love to get this information. I'll study up on whatever it might be, viruses or diseases or poverty or statistics in other countries, how many people per 1,000 own a gun and how many gun deaths are there. They get these statistics and then they wanna use them to win arguments and influence debates and whatnot.

It, the reason to learn is to be corrected. It's personal improvement. It is, you know, these people are gonna do what these people are gonna do.

You can very seldom talk somebody out of whatever they've already decided they believe, but I can be corrected. I can improve my understanding. I can gain a better perspective, a better set of priorities, better goals, better values from the word of God.

And I need to look at what it will do for me and not glean it so that I can go whop somebody with it. That's what this verse means. If you love self-improvement, if you love getting corrected and learning to do things right and do them better, do them in the proper order, do them for the right reasons, you're going to gain knowledge.

You love correction, you love knowledge because that's how you get it. But if you don't like being corrected, you're happy with your current operation, the word here that's translated stupid, other translations are more charitable. They say brutish because it has the idea of being an animal.

And so in more literal terms, it's an adjective that comes from a verb and the root meaning of the verb, oddly enough, is to burn. And it comes to mean, in abstract sense, something that is consumed. If ancient Hebrews looked at fire, you put something in it, it gets consumed.

Think about that when you think about the lake of fire. Think about that when you think of Gehenna and the other images of burning in scripture. The idea, the root idea of burning is you put something in there, it's consumed, it's gone, it is no more.

That's the root of this adjective. It's sort of a noun adjective thing and it means to consume. So it would be used of land that was grazed down until there was nothing left.

Remember cattlemen used to hate the sheep guys because you put sheep out in the open range and the sheep would consume. The cattle eat the tops and leave the roots and the lower grass. Sheep eat everything down and kill the grass, I'm told.

So that is the kind of consuming, the grazing down to nothing that was in view. So they said, oh, it must mean brutish. But I personally think there's a little bit more here.

You're not just dumb like an animal, a dumb brute. You're a consumer. The one who hates correction is just a consumer.

You're consuming information, but it's like eating wind. You're not being changed by it. You're not being improved by it.

You're just a constant gatherer and it just gets consumed. As soon as you get a hold of it, it burns. You have no substance.

You have no product. You've got no benefit. So that's verse one.

Whoever loves correction, if you see instruction there, you might change it to correction. But he who hates rebuke, you can really put either word in either place. Both of them mean correction and rebuke and instruction.

All three are wrapped up in these words. You're just a consumer to be consumed. It's just the idea that a flame is just gonna leave nothing.

And it's very poetic. This is poetry. These are not just aphorisms.

They are poetic. So what does it mean for something to burn or be burned? Flame doesn't last forever. It's whatever was there is no more.

We saw verse two, good obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of wicked intentions, he will condemn. And these are juxtaposed for a reason. You would say, well, obviously God likes to bless good people and he's gonna condemn bad people, but it's the juxtaposition of these ideas.

Good obtains God's favor, but there are people who do good or appear to be good or act good, but their intentions are not good. And these intentions in the New King James, it's translated wicked intentions, but the word behind this means you're kind of, you're running a scheme. You're being a bit subversive here.

You've got a little plan. You're gonna fool some people by looking like it's good. These people that call you up and say, I'm with such and such a charity, and we're helping this particular group.

And then you call the people that they claim to be affiliated with. They say, please don't get to those people. They talk in our name and we have no relation to them whatsoever.

We never get a dime from them. They call people up and say, children of fallen officers and that. They're not, they're just scammers.

They appear to be doing something good, but it's translated in the Old King James, mischievous devices. They're divisors, they are schemers and plotters. They have an appearance of good.

You see this in politics all the time. Oh, our policy, we're doing this, that and the other that sounds good. But behind the scenes, it's all subversion and personal gain and benefit under the guise wearing the mask of good.

And God sees through that. That's the point of this verse. A man who is running a wicked scheme behind a mask of goodness, he will condemn.

And the condemnation of the Lord is not something anybody wants to be under because there is no escape. There is no appeal. There is no defense.

If God condemns you, you are well and truly condemned and it has consequences. God's favor, what is the opposite of God's favor? You remember when to obey is better than the fat of rams and man looks on the outward appearance, the Lord looks on the heart and God will bless someone who is obedient, but others he will lightly esteem. Being lightly esteemed by God is a bad thing and being condemned by God is way worse.

Those are first two verses. Third verse, a man is not established by wickedness, but the root of righteousness cannot be moved. This is a weird proverb because both of the verses, both halves of it have a no in it, an L-O, low, the negative.

And you would say, well, if you're wicked, you'll blow away. If you're righteous, you will stick and stay. But this is the negative side.

Wickedness will not establish a man and the righteous will not be moved. In another place, you remember he says, you will never suffer the righteous to be moved. And so a man is not established by wickedness.

And this is a comfort because why do the wicked prosper? You look around and it seems like nefarious people are getting over and making money and sailing in their boats and living in their penthouses and enjoying their chemicals of choice and living the high life, but it is very impermanent. Even if it lasts for this life, our momentary light afflictions work for us an eternal weight of glory. The momentary pleasures of this life are followed by an eternity of no pleasure at a minimum.

Even people that don't go to the Lake of Fire can end up in the darkness, which is

outside. And what happens out there? Where there is partying and celebration and hail fellow well met? In the resurrection after the Great White Throne Judgment and everybody is going to Lake of Fire goes and that's over with and gone, those folks are no more. There is still weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth outside.

These are people that were saved but didn't get with the program. And Old Testament anew, it tells you if you don't wake up and pay attention, the lack of favor from God is gonna put you out there waiting for somebody to bring the creaky wagon of leaves from the tree of life for healing. So a man is not established by wickedness.

He may look established, he may seem to have advantages but that is a house built on the sand. And when the storms comes, it is going to be utterly destroyed. What happens on the other side of that coin? The root of the righteous cannot be moved.

Now think about this. This is our last thought before the break. What does that mean? Look at that second half.

What part of the righteous might be moved? Everything above the root. The root of the righteous is not moved but we can have setbacks, we can have difficulty. Somebody can, you know, something can come along, tear off our branches, strip off our leaves, pound away our fruit, snap off the trunk.

Remember the Lord Jesus Christ, the prophecy that said he will be called a Nazarene in the New Testament. They go to the Old Testament, they say there's no Old Testament passage that says he'll be a Nazarene, that he'll be from Nazareth. What is the Old Testament passage that that refers to? It's a play on words, which Hebrew is so fond of and this chapter is full of them.

But netzer means root. And the Old Testament said there will be a root shoot from the stump of Jesse. The roots of the tribe of Judah, the roots of the clan of which Jesse was a part and of which David came, that Southern kingdom went out in 586 BC, never to be rebuilt, never to have another Davidic king on the throne.

But the root, the netzer is still there. And as long as you've got the root, that thing can come back. Many of you all know about the redbud tree I dug up for my mom when I was very small, didn't know much about trees and dug it up in the woods on someone else's property and brought it up here and planted it at the South end of the house.

And it did really well for many years, but all of a sudden it withered up and died. And I thought, well, I was hoping that thing would last a little longer. My dad cut the dead stuff off.

Well, it came back up from the roots and now it's in the process of expiring a second time, but I wouldn't shortchange that tree. Something may come up from those roots yet. If you've got good roots, stuff can recover.

So the root of the righteous, and we have to be ready that there may be storms or maybe seasons and times where the winds blow and a lot of stuff gets knocked away. There is an economic theory that says, you know, downturns, economic downturns are sometimes good because a lot of the dead wood in your infrastructure gets cleared away, snap off the dead branches. What's healthy will bend, will survive, and will grow even stronger.

Jesus said in John chapter 15, I'm the vine, you are the branches. If you're bearing fruit, my father will prune you so that you will bear more fruit. And sometimes pruning isn't our favorite thing, but if it ends up with us being more fruitful and we understand its purpose, momentary light affliction, eternal weight of glory, I'll trust his judgment.

If I need to be pruned, prune away. It's kind of like going to the dentist. Some of my favorite people are dentists, but sometimes it's a bit of an ordeal, but you go through it like ladies go through childbirth because the end result is a wonderful thing.

And that's what this is talking about. The root of the righteous cannot be moved. You may knock a lot off above the surface of the ground, but that root is always gonna be there.

There is a permanence that extends from this life all the way into the eternal future. That's why it pays, if you will, to look for the good, to look for righteousness, look for that which God will favor and bless. Well, that is the introduction to this 14 verse section.

We've seen these first three verses. We'll take our break. When we come back, we'll look at these two sections on words and deeds in verses four through 12.

See that when we come back.