

Proverbs 24-01-17b

We pick up our study in Proverbs chapter 13, resuming at verse 12, and here is where the size of the chiasm is going to change. And in the first two, we had two verses as an inbound, a verse at the center, and then two verses on the outbound side of the chiasm. And that occurred twice, verses two through six, verses seven through 11.

Now, this next chiasm is going to extend from verse 12 down through verse 19. There are going to be three verses leading in, two verses in the middle, and three verses exiting. So this is the Goliath chiasm.

It's larger, taller. I say that because also one of the things our family's been doing is investigating evidence of giants, archeological evidence, and how does it compare or contrast with what the Bible has to say? Where are they found? Did they build the mounds here in North America? Giant spearheads comparable to those described in association with Ishbi-Banab and Goliath, and things that are found near Gath and so on. Tel-Gath, they have found some great big scales that go with armor just like Goliath.

And they have also found a cache of similar scales. And they said, well, this must've been a pile of several coats of mail because there's way too many scales. Well, not if the guy was a giant.

So anyway, it's really interesting. You can dig this stuff up if you look a little bit. Anyway, this is a big chiasm.

That's the point. So my suggestion is once again, if you don't mind marking your Bible with a pencil, circle verses 15 and 16. This is the center.

This is the heart and point of the chiasm. And your rabbit ears, your TV antenna legs are gonna start at the top of that circle and extend to the corners of verse 12, the number 12. And then over to the right-hand side, my line is hope deferred makes the.

That's my first line. So that's where my line terminates. So I've got a giant V that extends from the beginning of verse 12 down to the center of the circle around 15 and 16, and then goes back up to the opposite corner.

Then I have my circled verses. Then I'm gonna start at the bottom at six o'clock on that circle. And I'm going down to the bottom corners of verse 19.

And that's going to be my outbound chiasm area. So this chiasm verses 12 through 19. And again, it's fun to find a chiasm, but I'm more interested in what does it do for me? How does it help me? Well, first of all, let's notice the inbound portion, verse 12.

And we saw that hope deferred. And this is, we saw this last time, that this is kind of hope that you have to drag along, that you've got to manually exert effort to bring

across the finish line. This is Jacob wrestling with an angel.

I will not let you go until you bless me. Israel, not accepting the terms of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own. I will make a righteousness that I find acceptable and I'll do it in my own strength.

This is legalism. This is the letter of the law rather than the spirit and so on. Well, and if your expectation is that by your own efforts, you're going to accomplish prosperity, peace, happiness, joy, and so on.

So it's not hope deferred making the heart sick, but hope that you have to manufacture and implement by in your own strength is going to sicken and weaken your heart. It's never going to satisfy and fulfill your heart. And remember, we saw the fulfillment and the fruition in the first chiasm, that the fruit of the lips.

And this is where righteousness is going to fulfill and vindicate our lives. In the second chiasm, we saw the light that righteousness brings and the joy and rejoicing, the fulfillment. These are the ways that it comes.

This third chiasm begins with, if you're going to put your hope in something else, and I think I quoted this in last time, but in this connection, it always comes to my mind. My hope, our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame.

I wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

And you know how hard it is to do anything in the sand? Have you ever been running on the beach, especially the dry sand, not the wet stuff? This is why you see a lot of people splashing right at the edge of the water, because the water kind of glues the sand together and it's firmer. You know this if you've run on a beach. But running in the sand, talk about effort.

And you can't get up any speed. So much effort is wasted. So much effort is wasted in that.

Well, so hope that you have to drag, that you have to push, that you've got to move along yourself is just going to weaken your heart. But desire that comes. And just like we saw, remember in the first session, we were talking about how the lamp of the wicked is gonna be put out, and there is an unspecified outside agent that does that.

And it's not hard to figure out who that agent is. The same thing here. The desire comes as a tree of life.

Who created, who planted, who provided the tree of life? That's God's grace, that's God's

power, that's God's provision. And that desire, desire that comes is what God provides, the tree of life. And that fulfillment isn't just, oh, I wanted a new car and I got one.

I wanted a new washing machine or a new lawnmower and I got one. I wanted new clothes and I got them. I wanted something, I wanted a person, I wanted a relationship.

This is something God provides. And God's fulfillment of desire is a tree of life. It is intrinsically full of that which lasts, that which partakes of the divine and the eternal, that divine light and presence and opportunity and potential, tree of life.

Worst thing that ever happened to mankind was being driven out of the garden lest he stretch forth his hand and take from the tree of life in an illicit and unqualified way. You're not qualified. I believe that had the fallen Adam stretched forth his hand and taken of the tree of life, it would have been like Uzzah touching the ark.

I think the defiled and the fallen coming in contact with that divine, powerful life of God in the tree, I think it wasn't to deprive Adam, I think it was to preserve Adam. In his fallen and corrupted state, losing the garment of light, clothed in skins, no longer qualified to reach out his hand and partake. And if he had touched it, I think in that second he would have surely died.

He ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that started the death process. There's a lot you could say about death as a process, about the appearance of the Lord Jesus as a process, whether it's his first advent at birth, culminating at the cross and the resurrection and ascension, or his second coming starting at the rapture, culminating at the Mount of Olives and the inception of the kingdom. Things are summarized in a single word, treated as a single event when they actually stretch out over time.

Adam and Eve's death began on a day, but that started the day of death. In the day you eat thereof, that's the day of your death. And that day stretched for several hundred years.

Nevertheless, it was inevitable. And God says, lest he stretched forth his hand and take from the tree of life, he had to be removed from the garden and something awful wouldn't have happened, would have happened had he been allowed to do that. So here, this desire comes.

It doesn't say when he fulfills his own desire or when he achieves his desire or when he works and obtains his desire. It says this desire will come. It's a tree of life.

Adam didn't have to plant the tree of life. Adam didn't have to tend the tree of life. Adam didn't have to water, fertilize, cultivate, weed.

The tree of life was just there totally, completely provided by God. That fulfillment that comes from God, that blessing, that inheritance, that reward and future opportunity

infinitely surpasses this hope that requires human effort to get it anywhere. That's how this chiasm begins.

Look at the bottom. I said, this is 12 to 19. So if you look at the bottom legs there, 19, what is it talking about? A desire, a desire accomplished is sweet to the soul but an abomination to fools to depart from evil.

They are so enamored with evil. They are so high and approving and positive about evil. They think that this evil structure, evil purpose, evil standards, evil actions, evil goals, for them to depart from it is as odious to them as abominations are to God.

It's an abomination to them to not do evil. Do you see this around us today? Do you not see that people talk about calling good evil and evil good. When you call evil good, then to not do evil is an abomination to you.

That good stuff over there, that's an abomination. That's an abomination to say that certain kinds of relationship behavior are adultery or perversion or fornication to label it. To say that the taking of a life under certain circumstances is evil.

Well, that's just an abomination. How dare you? I will fight you to the Supreme Court to prevent you saying that what I wanna do, that I'm gonna redefine people as tissue. I'm gonna redefine, you know, this I'm talking about abortion and that to try to respect and preserve a creative process that God has got underway and to interfere in any way with somebody wanting to completely interrupt and stop and slice apart that process.

To them, it's an abomination. To us, it is respect for God and for God's creative process and God's ability to work things together for good. You say, well, but this is bad.

You know, this child is coming in at a bad time in a bad circumstance to bad people even or as a result of bad behavior. You don't penalize the child for that. Penalize the people that perpetrated the bad.

These same people who say, you know, it's ridiculous to say that Jesus can die for the sins of others, but they're willing to let an unborn baby die for the sins of others. That wrong can be paid for with this unborn child. We'll snuff that out and that will fix the problem.

And you can have a separate conversation about pregnancies due to rape and incest. What I say is let God be the judge. If God thinks that that process was so heinous that that child should not come into this world, it's not the child's fault.

So if it's incest and genuine incest and it's too closely related, God will abort that process. I say, when God is bringing life into the world, leave God alone. Don't walk up as he's forming Adam out of the dust of the ground and start kicking the dirt apart and saying, no, that doesn't look right.

I don't like the way that's turning out. I don't like how this is coming into the world. So I'm gonna kick this apart and stop God's process.

Leave it to God as an example. But people say that departing from evil, not allowing people to continue in evil, which they define as good, well, it's an abomination. What is good and noble and just and right and lovely and of good report, they define as abomination.

So we live in such an age and there have been earlier times. Sacrifice to Molech so that the crops will come in better. I got plenty of kids.

I'll pop a baby in the Molech oven and see if I don't get a better outcome with my flocks and herds and my barley harvest and so on. And if you interrupt them and say, that's wrong, you're taking human life in the interest of material gain, they will treat that as an abomination. How dare you? Everybody's doing this.

This is a commonplace. Everybody knows this is the way to prosper. And it's abominable to me that you should even suggest that I'm doing wrong.

So that is the other side of this chiasm. A desire accomplishes sweet to the soul. So now look at the relationship.

Dragging a hope along by human effort ends up being the kind of evil that if you deflect or try to deflect people from it, they think it's an abomination. It's an abomination that I not stop this, that I'm not continue to drag this along by my own efforts. How dare you question me? How dare you say that I'm transgressing a standard that is a divine standard? That's an abomination to me that you should tell me I need to depart from this.

Well, what does that correspond to? That helps us understand this quote unquote hope deferred isn't talking about hope deferred at all. It's talking about people deciding what is righteous according to their own lights and their own understanding and pushing with their own efforts and dragging with their own energy to make it happen. And if you try to deflect them or talk them out of it or tell them this is wrong, that to them is just an abomination.

But genuine desire, the desire that comports with God's will, God's plan, God's purpose, and God's divine power. The contrast here is between human energy and the power of God. How does the power of God come into our lives? You know how.

So that is the contrast here. And so that tree of life, that energy and power from God that confers righteousness, life, health, light, joy, fruit of the spirit, fruitfulness, the fruit of the lips that we saw in the first chiasm, the riches of wisdom that we saw in that and the light and joy in the second chiasm is here put in these terms. So notice you have tree of life and that which is sweet to the soul, sweet to the nefesh, which is also the appetite,

the throat, the breath.

Nefesh is a multipurpose word here and it is woven through these chiasms to tie them together and say, these are all different ways of talking about the same things, turning it in a different light, approaching it from a different angle. So 12 and 19, are you gonna try to accomplish goals and desires, satisfy appetites in your own strength or are you gonna look to the power and the grace and the provision that comes from God like a tree of life? Look at the next inner set of verses. This is gonna be 13 and 18.

13 says, he who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded. So you've got two outcomes here. You either have destruction, loss, or you have reward, approval.

In verse 18, poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction. This is a synonymous comparison, very similar. Poverty and shame.

This is the loss that is talked about in verse 13, destruction, poverty and shame to those who disdain correction. He who regards rebuke will be honored. He who fears the commandment will be rewarded.

But slightly different contexts. Reward can transcend time and move into the eternal future where the honor, you can be honored in time, you can also be honored in eternity. God honors those who honor him, those who don't honor him, he lightly esteems.

And so you have this very strong correspondence between 13 and 18. Come one more level in to verses 14 and 17. The law of the wise is a fountain of life.

Now, what does this mean, the law of the wise? This is guidance. This is the setting of standards and expectations. The law of the wise, this is what they communicate.

And they say, these are the rules. If I am a wise ruler, if I'm a wise authority, if I am somebody who is gonna be in charge of something, if I am offering good counsel, I say, this is how you do it. Drive this way in slick conditions, steer into a turn, don't slam on your brakes, et cetera.

The law of the wise, this is the counsel, the guidance, the rules, the wisdom that the wise impart is a fountain of life. Notice how our incoming V here, these lines that connect these verses together, you've got the tree of life in verse 12, you've got the fountain of life in verse 14. They're connected, they go together, this is intentional.

They are sewn together with this structure. And then the opposite, and the concomitant here is we have a relatively rare synonymous two line verse, synonymous distich, they told us in Hebrew class. The law of the wise is a fountain of life to turn one away from the snares of death.

It's a fountain of life, so it nourishes, it slakes thirst, oh, let him who is thirsty come to the waters and drink. The one who comes to me out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. It is a fountain of life.

What flows between the rows of the tree of life in the new Jerusalem? The river of life that comes from a fountain of life at the throne of God. You have the water of life from the fountain of life flowing between the trees of life in that future kingdom. Life, fruitfulness, nourishment, restoration, cleansing, benefit, turns one away from the snares of death.

14 corresponds with 17. A wicked messenger falls into trouble. A wicked messenger, if he's a wicked messenger, again, this is metonymy of the adjunct.

If the guy happens to hand you a Bible, the fact that he's wicked doesn't matter, the message is good, right? A wicked messenger means a messenger of wickedness. His message is wicked. He's a wicked messenger because he's bringing a wicked message, a false message, a deceitful message, a destructive message, a distracting message.

It isn't his intrinsic wickedness that is the issue. It is his function as a messenger. What he brings delivers wickedness.

It's association. This is the poetic use of these figures. It's not literal.

Well, he's a bad guy. He committed a wickedness. Well, how does that affect the message? Well, he has corrupted the message.

He has fouled the message by contact and his message is gonna be wicked. So this contrasts with the law of the wise. The law of the wise, this is gonna be fruitful and good and transmit and engender righteousness.

This message has the opposite effect. So the wicked messenger falls into trouble. And remember that the law of the wise is a fountain of life.

This is water rising up like a fountain. The wicked messenger, this results in that which falls. It's not rising, it's falling.

It's not ascending, it's descending. It's not rising into the light and into freshness. It's descending into the dank pools of unhealthy water into trouble.

But a faithful ambassador brings health. Faithful ambassador. An ambassador brings tidings.

An ambassador is a representative of his sending government or his sending country, his sending king. And you can see the direct connection between the law of the wise, which turns away the snares of death. Ambassadors are diplomats.

They negotiate, they broker peace, they end wars. They bring gifts and try to cement friendships and treaties. That's what an ambassador does.

And these are the positive things that come from communicating, representing, and transmitting the good word, the law of the wise, as opposed to the wicked message that sows discord, that sows distrust, that says you can't trust your allies. They're working behind your back. You can't trust your friends.

They've got ulterior motives. You can't trust those near you. They're talking behind your back.

They're fomenting strife and discord. This is one of the primary sins that is condemned throughout the New Testament among believers, to not be an agent of unity, but an agent of strife and discord and division. Universally condemned, condemned over and over in all kinds of different terms and ways.

So do you see this chiasm? Once you line it out, it's just an obviosity. It's like, wow, how did I not see this when I read it? Well, I've been reading it for weeks and I just saw it this past week. But this is why I plead with all of us to spend time.

And I think drawing these little lines and making these little circles will help us because we want to move from observation to interpretation and then to application. Seeing this structure, great observation. Hearing about it in Bible class, great observation.

We need to now take this on board. All right, so are there wise ambassadors and messengers? Is there the law of the wise being offered to me, being communicated to me, being suggested to me? Is somebody speaking the truth to me in love? How am I responding to that? I need to be watching for it. This is the fountain of life.

I don't get direct revelation from heaven. It comes by God's provision. God has provided messengers.

God has provided scripture. God has provided His Holy Spirit. But I need to be watching for the law of the wise.

That is the fountain of my life. Now, do I find myself thirsty? Do I find myself beaten down? Am I losing energy? Is my spiritual life limp and weak? I need to go to the fountain of life. Where is the fountain of life? Well, look at this passage.

It tells us what it is and what it isn't. Am I spending too much time listening to wicked messengers? Am I watching too much slanted news? In any direction, even when it's slanted in the direction I like, the attitudes and the vituperation and the bitterness and the anger that can creep into even people who are right. We can be right in a wrong way.

We can be right in a mocking and derisive way toward those with whom we disagree. And that poison can get into the blood and seep into other areas. We have to be wise as serpents and know what's going on and be observing, but we've got to be harmless as doves.

We've got to be careful about what we let past the eye gate and the ear gate and what becomes the fruit of our lips. And we hear others mocking and making personal attacks and getting into people's private lives and talking about shooting the messenger instead of paying attention to, if this person is a politician, if they're aspiring to or fulfilling some office of government, it is the actions that count. I don't care what this guy does in his private life.

I don't care what he may have done at some distant time in the past. How is he doing the job? I am not electing him to be a beacon of moral beatitude. I'm not electing him to run around and be a social justice warrior.

How does he do the job? Anybody can make me a sandwich at a sandwich shop. I don't delve into their private life. I've had any number of sandwiches and pot bellies made by an entire crew of lesbians.

I don't care. They make a great sandwich. It's nutritious.

It's tasty. They do it quickly. They charge a fair price.

I don't care about their private life because I am not there to render moral judgment when I'm after a sandwich. If I'm electing somebody to office in a representative democracy, I should be focused on how is the job done? Are you qualified to do the job? Have you demonstrated proficiency? And do you have a track record of success in doing the job? And focus on that. And all of this mudslinging and bitterness and vindictive hatred, backbiting, gossiping, judging, maligning is poison that will get into our system if we don't discipline ourselves.

That's what this is talking about. This is me and my TV set. This is me and my phone.

This is me and Facebook. This is me and Instagram. Me and name your social media outlet.

Be careful, cuidado. Why? Remember in Israel, coming in contact with that which is dead confers defilement. I don't sanctify what I touch.

What I touch defiles me. So I need to be careful around that which is dead, that which is corrupt, that which is oozing some kind of bad liquid. Touch not the unclean thing.

It doesn't say look not at the unclean thing. I can observe it. I can categorize it.

I can identify it. Don't touch it. Don't get involved.

Don't be in contact with it in the way that will defile and disqualify. You're disqualified. You can't approach God if you're defiled.

You're unclean until evening. You've got to take steps to get cleansed. You've got to be measured and observed and declared clean to come back into the camp if you've been driven out for corruption, for defilement, for leprosy, or whatever it might be.

That's what this is talking about. Is this applicable? Is this something I can use to measure myself? Absolutely. So look at this long chiasm.

We've seen the way in and we've seen the way out. What is at the center? Verses 15 and 16. Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard.

Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool exposes folly, lays open folly. What do you see here on the positive side? Good understanding is associated with favor. Prudence leads to knowledgeable actions.

I know what I'm doing and I know what I'm doing is prudent. Verse 16, every prudent man acts with knowledge. Prudence on the inside, having thought about it, having analyzed it, having plotted a careful course, I'm going to act in light of my knowledge.

I'm going to behave in light of what I know. Aren't there times when we know something, but we behave differently anyway? Think about the holidays and all of those sweets, all of those confections, all of those boxes of candy you unwrap. Here's the cherry cordial wicked sugar bomb delicious.

I get a box of those every year. My grandmother Ginger used to send them, my mom sends them. I love those.

There is nothing more tasty than these cherry liqueur, little pieces of fruit inside this white gooey liquid sugar coated in dark chocolate. Oh, I know those things are going to spike my blood sugar and cause me to gain weight. But what do I do when I get a box of them? I eat them, I eat them all.

So this is a relatively harmless example. I'm not going to die from making an exception from time to time. I'm not a legalist.

I'm not staking my righteousness on whether or not I eat chocolate cherry cordial confections, but it is a useful illustration for when we see that something is like Eve looking at the fruit on the tree and we talk ourselves into a habit and a pattern of making an exception in that case. Danger, Will Robinson, warning. There are things that we can do on occasion that should not ever become a pattern.

And this is talking about patterns of life. If we despise this word, we will be destroyed. But if we act with knowledge, we're going to gain favor.

We're going to have good understanding. Good understanding and prudence go together. Verses 15 and 16 go together.

Good understanding. This is how we gain favor. This is enabling us to act prudently with knowledge.

The alternative is to have a hard way and it is characterized by unfaithfulness. You don't even have to necessarily parse the exact association of these words. Just look at the association itself.

Unfaithfulness is a way, it's a pattern. This is where I'm getting the idea of pattern. It's a way.

Do we, Psalm 1.1, blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, becomes a part of the habitual practice. The way is habitual, it's lifestyle. The way of the unfaithful, you're going to get crushed.

You're going to be literally between a rock and a hard place. Prudence enables us and motivates us to act with knowledge. The knowledge we're gaining and gleaning from looking at these verses in Proverbs.

It's only a fool that would ignore this. And you're not going to be able to hide that foolishness. The results of it are going to be evident and manifest.

Evident and manifest now. And even if you manage to conceal and hide it now, it is, everything is visible and open to him with whom we have to do. And that which is whispered in secret is going to be shouted from the housetops.

There is a coming judgment. It does not pay to pursue the way of a fool. That folly is going to be exposed sooner or later.

Be sure your sin will find you out. Be sure your association and your pattern of behavior, if you let that thing continue, folly is going to emerge and you're sacrificing all of the positives in this chiasm. Well, that's two thirds of chapter 13.

There is one more chiasm. And as you might expect, the final chiasm is constructed exactly like the one we just looked at. Your homework for this coming week is begin at verse 21, make your circle around verses 23 and 24.

You've got your V that goes through the first three verses. You've got your upside down V that goes through the last three verses. And you will see why I am extending this chapter down through verse two of what your Bible has printed as chapter 14.

Take a look at it, soak in it, spend some time looking at it. Look at the correspondences on the outside, the next layer inside, the next layer inside. And how does that relate to what is in the center? Even these chiasms we've already covered, you will see that there

are direct implications in the important stuff that is in the center of the circle.

It relates. And to investigate how does this relate? Why is this the center of this chiasm? It's not a new thought, it is a summary and a culmination and an application. And then ask the question, so what? How should I then live? Let me examine my life, my circumstances, my conversations, my work life, my study life, my spiritual life, my conversation life, my intake life.

What is it I allow through the gates into my soul? What is my level of exposure? And what is that exposure potentially doing to me? Am I limiting it? Am I controlling it? Am I regulating it? Am I ensuring that I am not changed by that input instead of the good message, the law of the wise, the way of the Lord? What is it that is actually conditioning and defining me? Because we are impressionable. We are changeable. This is why the subliminal messages have been used in advertising ever since forever, and especially with the advent of television, visual cues, things you don't even notice.

I'll give you one example in closing. If you haven't seen it multiple times during the holidays, I'm sure you can find it archived on YouTube. But John Travolta is dressed as Santa Claus and walking down the sidewalk, and his feet are doing the same thing John Travolta did in that scene from Saturday Night Fever.

And it's a direct link back. And you say, hey, that's John. And he lifts up his foot to see if a shoe would look good on him, just like he did in the movie.

He goes, he talks to people. The gal, he talks to this gal that was in the movie. You had to look close, but she's older now, but she starred with him in that movie.

Then he comes and he does a quick few steps on the dance floor and says, what's in your wallet? Great commercial. I enjoyed it. I watched it multiple times.

It was a lot of fun. Great tongue-in-cheek homage and reuse of familiar tropes. However, go back and watch that commercial.

And this time, ignore John and look in the background for the subliminal. And they're actually not so subliminal, but go back and try to not look at John and look at everything else. And you'll be surprised at the number of messages that are encoded and embedded in that fun little commercial.

I'm not knocking the commercial. It's a thing of beauty. That ought to get some kind of a prize.

But go back and look at the background. If you get a chance, it's fun. But this is what I'm talking about.

To the extent that we expose ourselves and we think that we're rising above it, we think

we're not being defiled by it, cuidado. Watch out, be warned, be watchful, be alert. Let no one deceive you.

That's what these chiasms are talking about. They're so great. I am loving going through these and spending time with them and letting them soak in and seeing how they apply in my own life.

And they are making a big difference for me. And I hope they will for you as well. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the power of your word. It is truly a tree of life and a fountain of life for us. We pray that in the hands of your Holy Spirit, the intent and the purpose for which you have communicated these truths to us will be accomplished so that we can grow in grace and knowledge.

We can be thoroughly equipped for every good work and we will be prepared for service and function now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.