

Proverbs 24-01-24a

Greetings, welcome to Wednesday evening Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're in the book of Proverbs. We're looking at the last section of chapter 13, moving into chapter 14 tonight.

We will need to move with alacrity. There's a lot to cover and it is so interesting. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and then we'll begin.

Father, how grateful we are for another opportunity to draw from the well of the water of life and restore and nourish our souls at the oasis of your work. We're grateful for the fellowship of believers who share an enthusiasm and a recognition of how important and how wonderful it is to take in these truths, have them work their supernatural work in our souls, be in the hands of the Holy Spirit to guide us, to give us power for overcoming temptation and the world, the flesh and the devil in order to live a life that reflects your glory and prepares us for function and service now and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this together, that the Holy Spirit will find us teachable and plant these seeds deep in the soil of our souls so that they are memorable and useful to us in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's review very quickly where we are.

We saw last time by the use of the wonderful number two red pencil that, by the way, is a marines.com pencil, even better, that you can detect and mark a structure here in this section of Proverbs that is useful for bringing out the intent of this collection of truths. So we saw that there was a beautiful chiasmic structure beginning at verse two and extending through verse six with its center at verse four. If you used your pencil last time, you should have verse four circled and there's an inbound V heading toward it and there's an upside down V coming out from it.

Then the next one begins in verse seven with its center at verse nine and the close at verse 11. We looked in detail at the meaning of those and how the structure enables us to put verse with verse, line upon line and precept upon precept to illustrate and expand and define and sharpen the point of these seemingly just aphoristic expressions. They become more than aphorisms.

They're more than just little trite sayings. They complement and supplement each other and give us the divine truth that turns the corner into application. I can live in a different way.

I can think in a different way. I can speak more carefully. I can think more personally and effectively about my goals and my values and my priorities.

We saw the next one in verses 12 through 19. This is what we looked at in the second

session last time and this one expanded a little bit. It's a larger grouping.

The on-ramp is three verses and the off-ramp is also three verses and there are two verses at the center. So 12, 13, and 14 are inbound talking about hope that has to be manually dragged across the finish line in verse 12 and ending all the way down in verse 19 with a desire accomplished that is sweet to the soul but fools find it an abomination to depart from evil. So 12 and 19 are the outside bracket.

You move inward and find verses 15 and 16 at the center. It doesn't mean it's the only valuable truth but it's the central and organizing truth that links this entire section together and that is good understanding gains favor or an understanding of good. This is what Paul talks about in Romans 12 to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can understand what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Understanding the good, we have to have it. We can't do without it. You can't have a useful, meaningful, productive, and enjoyable fruitful life if we don't understand what is good.

You can't have good priorities or good values or good goals if you don't know what good is. So understanding the good, that's what these verses are unfolding for us, are detailing for us, are identifying and calling out and making clear. This gives us a high definition picture of this is what's good and by way of contrast here's what's not.

So important and this beautiful chiasm in 12 through 19, you can spend a lot of time looking at this and you can also, and I'm not going to do this in the interest of time and moving forward, but I have begun to see that these chiasms are these sections that are defined by the chiastic structure are not just independent little little bricks. When I was laying floor, and those of you that have laid floor and I know who you are, you have to pay attention especially if you're on the cheaper side and you're using things that are not individual and unique and there's no two the same. So you open up a package of tile or a package of wood grain facsimile that's actually a very durable kind of vinyl flooring or whatever, but as you're laying it you pay attention to the ones that are around.

Eventually in these packages you will find two or three that are identical. They've got the same little knot hole and the same little picture of a crack and so on and if you put two of those side by side it just screams out this is fake, this is a printout, this isn't real. And so the art is to scatter the ones that are the same and turn them 180 so that well that knot doesn't look the same to my eye because it's seen from the opposite angle.

And you pay attention to where one end meets another and there are times when you enjoy the contrast you want it to look like pieces of wood that have been cut and so here's a close grain and here's an open grain. Other times you want it to try to look more continuous and so you'll try to match the grain and get it to blend and not look like it's it's so choppy. And in these structural units that are embedded in Proverbs they are

linked.

Remember people that studied these, I think it began as sort of a textbook in the royal household. I think that the princes, I think David and Solomon engineered these to be a homeschool textbook for the young men growing up. I don't think it necessarily worked out that way.

I think it was a great plan but you look at David's sons and if they were instructed in this they did not take it to heart. But the information was there, the opportunity was there and then you have Solomon and you have Rehoboam and you have the others and this collection was available and I think it was then distributed either partially or entirely to the rest of the nation and eventually copied by the scribes and included in the Old Testament canon. But the intent of it is instructional.

My son, receive my words, hide my commandments with you as we saw back in chapter two. It is instructional therefore any piece of instruction, those of us who have been instructors professionally, the whole goal is that it be memorable. I think it is great when we cover something in Bible class and we can remember it later.

How does the power of God come into the life of the believer? What is the triad of Christian virtues? What is the love chapter? What is the faith chapter? What is the hope chapter? What is 1 Peter about? To remember these things and master the material that God has given us as our guidance is so important. So I say that to say that these chiasms are not just randomly assembled so that well we have observed now that this is not a, what would you call it, a bingo cage with the random numbers and you just pull one out and stick in your thumb and pull out a plum, that there is organization and structure but these larger units are also tied to one another so that there is a sequence and you can move from one to the next. A lot of us have used memory aids and preparing for examinations and such and you know in the navigation navy world even red nuns have odd black cans and this is a way of remembering what kind of buoys you are going to encounter in inland waterways which side they are going to be on.

The red ones are going to be evenly numbered and they are going to be shaped a bit like a cone, that is the nun shape, even red nuns and then odd numbered black cans look like floating 55 gallon drums, those are going to be on the other side and they will either be on the starboard or the port depending on if you are entering or exiting and so on. It is a wonderful memory and I remember to this day and I have not used an inland waterway in a long time, every good buoy does fine for music. So these little catch phrases and vocabulary similarities will tie these together and I wish I had time to point them out.

You can see some of them even in the English because they are conceptual as well as vocabulary. When you look at them in Hebrew it is just a thing of beauty. We don't really have time to agonize over that, but you can see the concept.

For example we saw the first and second chiasms in chapter 13, 2-6 is the first one and 7-11 is the second one. So look at verses 6 and 7 which is the seam between the first and the second unit and notice there is a conceptual link at the end of the first one. Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

So you can either be preserved and guarded via righteousness or you can be overthrown if you are pursuing wickedness. Then in verse 7 which begins the next unit you would think well this could be entirely different. There is one who makes himself rich yet has nothing.

And this in the plus minus minus plus symmetry. Remember we were looking at what is a positive statement and what is a negative statement. So verse 6 is positive negative.

Righteousness guards the way of the blameless and the negative side is wickedness overthrowing the sinner. So plus minus. Then in verse 7, one who makes himself rich yet has nothing.

That is a bad thing. You don't want to end up with nothing despite all of your efforts. You make yourself rich but you end up with nothing.

And then the one who makes himself poor and ends up with great riches. You can't give it away so fast that you don't accumulate more. That is the positive.

And so that is the seam and you can look at the concepts involved there because what is wickedness as it is understood in verse 6? Well we saw the wealth and poverty associated with wisdom illustrated in verse 7. What is this wealth? Is it just material gain or is it something more? Is it virtue? Is it understanding? Is it a close walk with God and being a blessing to others and being blessed? And the more you are blessed and the more you distribute that blessing and try to serve as a conduit for blessing, the more blessing comes. And you can't give it away before you end up with an abundance yourself. Where if you're out for personal gain and you're looking out for number one, you end up with nothing.

All of the efforts at self-gratification and putting yourself at the top of the goals, values, and priorities, me, myself, and I, at the end of the day, at the end of the day of life, you have nothing. So a similar thing, I'm pointing this out for this reason. A, there's fruitful reflection and meditation and cogitation about these truths and we are invited to slow down and look at them and think about them as they pertain in our own lives.

Secondly, this is how Proverbs works. You can do this. It is designed to be accessible.

God doesn't give his word so that it can be under the stewardship of a few highfalutin people who have the magic key to unlock it. Once you see how this works, you can unlock this. You can look at it for yourself.

I'm, it reminds me, I've been watching videos about people who, you know, live off the land and have revived the old skills or continue to practice the old skills of how do you hunt? How do you clean an animal? How do you preserve meat? How do you build a shelter with your bare hands? How do you survive off the land? How do you identify plants and so on? And the, the beauty of that is, and we're going to see it in our passage tonight, you can learn by observing someone who does it and they show you, well, look, here's how you start this process. Here's how you make sure that you don't defile the meat with stuff that's inside the animal. Here's how it preserves and doesn't spoil.

Here's how you can get that. Watch some people boiling down salt water from the ocean to get salt to rub on their deer meat, to preserve it with salt. If you don't have salt, you don't want to buy salt.

You can go to a salt water source and boil it down, make yourself a little rocket stove and harvest salt from a natural source from the sea. And it's really cool. Well, I would have known in concept how to do that, but to see somebody do it, to have somebody essentially show me how to do it, equips me with skills and with knowledge that I can potentially use.

Maybe not now, but in the future, that's what Proverbs is doing for us. It is showing us, here's how this information is organized and here is how you can access it. And if the guy showing you gets hit by a beer truck, well, you can move on.

It's always a beer truck, by the way. It will be my epitaph. Here lies Sam, hit by a beer truck, because I've said it so many times.

But there are times when we are separated, times when we're alone, times when we're by the brook Cherith, times where we are in the wilderness and we don't necessarily have access to somebody presenting a Bible class. If you've got your Bible, even if you've got your memory verses, you can go in and excavate. You can extract the nourishment, the spiritual food that is necessary and we can all feed ourselves.

And it's essential to learn to do this. God has not raised us up to be dependent. We can be encouraged, blessed, lifted up, supported, knit together in love and all the rest of it.

But we also need to be independent so that we can be spiritually self-sustaining and we know where to go to get the nourishment. But once we get it, how do we process it? How do we use it? Well, looking at how scripture communicates these truths to us is a wonderful piece of knowledge because it enables each of us to go in and feed ourselves. It's a wonderful thing to have somebody prepare a meal, but we all need to be able to cook for ourselves from time to time.

This is what you learn when you're married, especially when you're the husband and your wife does the lion's share of the cooking. If she's gone and my wife's going to be

gone here before long for a period of time, well, am I just going to starve because I don't have access to her? No, I can feed myself. I prefer somebody who cooks better than me and the meals are better and more complete, more nourishment, more tasty, and it's more fun to eat with, but I can feed myself.

So this is the goal. I'm belaboring this a little bit because I know sometimes they can seem like, well, why are we going through all this structure? Because this is how you open the can to get the food. The structure is the can.

I'm giving you can opener so you can open it for yourself. And this is it. Watch for scripture, interpreting scripture in the near context, context, context, context.

Look for that which is similar and you begin to discover these. There is no book I can find anywhere that points out these chiasmic structures. And after looking at them for several weeks, they are so bleeding obvious.

I don't know how they've been missed. I don't know why somebody hasn't pointed them out. Some of the foremost Hebrew scholars in the nation, I'm reading their commentaries and they've got a lot of wonderful things to say about the language, but they don't see these.

And when you see it, you're going to say, my goodness, that's so obvious. But this is like showing you a raccoon track versus a possum track versus a mountain lion track versus a squirrel track versus a dog track. Once you see the pattern, you can tell what is passing this way for yourself.

So look at the next intersection. We looked at the joint there between verse six and seven, and we've covered these chiasms in detail. You can find the same thing if you look at verses 11 and 12.

This is where these next two structural units are stitched together, where they abut, where they join. And you say, well, we've got a new subject starting in verse 12, because that's where my new chiasm begins. But look at 11 and 12 and how these, they hinge, they're attached.

So in verse 11, wealth gained by dishonesty. And this is how we figured out that the riches and the poverty up in verse seven were actually wisdom. Wealth gained by dishonesty will diminish, but he who gathers by labor will increase.

And this is the time that it takes to learn the truths that God wants us to live by. It takes time. It takes reflection.

Any subject that you master, you have to dwell on. You have to get your hands on it and understand it and practice it and work it, make it go. You learn a formula.

It's been very interesting to me here with the recent ice storms and the relationship you learn in physics between pressure and temperature and volume, so that when you compress something, you decrease the volume. The pressure and the temperature will go up. And this is why tires slide on ice.

The pressure of the car raises the temperature where the tires contact the ice and that pressure compresses it, which heats it, which melts it, which creates water on ice, which makes slickness. And it is useful once you learn these relationships to see how they work themselves out in real life. So this idea of hope that is a false hope, it's a deceitful hope, it's a hope based on your own efforts, and I'm going to do this and it's all going to be great, reminds you of the rich man with his houses and barns.

And he goes to bed that night saying, tomorrow I'm going to build more barns. I'm going to gather more grain. And God speaks from heaven and says, fool, do you not know that this night your soul will be required of you? And this hope you have for greater increase and more substance is a foolish hope.

And it's a hope that you're making happen. It's your agenda. It's your effort.

It's your machinations. It's your trades and deals. And you haven't entered into that genuine desire that comes from a heart that is aimed at relationship with God.

And that's what you have as you compare 11 and 12. So we went down and saw down through verse 19 and we pick up tonight in verse 20. But again, you can see 19 comparing with 12.

How can you not? In fact, in my Thompson chain reference Bible, it doesn't see the chiasm, but if you have a Thompson and you look next to verse 12, it says PP, parallel passage, 12, 19. And Thompson couldn't help but see that 12 and 19 are linked. They go together.

They are parallels. Well, that's the mark. That's the outside link of your chiasm.

And you work your way in and guess what? 13 and 18 are linked and 14 and 17 are linked and 15 and 16 are right at the center. Prudence and good understanding and so on. We covered those last time.

So we pick up tonight at verse 20 where, and we need to really to see this accurately. You need to fix this translation in my opinion, just a little bit. I think I have it so thoroughly marked out.

I'm not sure I can read my original. He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. That's not really what this says.

And you might have to write it in the margin or find room to, but he who walks that that's

not it. It is to walk. It's the infinitive to walk, to walk with the wise is wise.

And even is we're supplying to walk with the wise wise. That's what it says. But the companion of fools will be destroyed.

The word companion here can be translated companion, but its root is so fruitful to think about because it's basically the, the shepherd, the row. And it's, it's an O E infix there, which means it's, it's sort of a gerund. It's a, it's an I N G word and the one shepherding.

And this, this doesn't mean shepherd in the formal, obvious sense. The idea here is if, if you are a companion in this sense, you have chosen to accompany this is by your own choice. You weren't, you're not the sheep.

You're the shepherd. You're not the thing that was corralled. You have chosen to make this association.

This word is used a couple of other places here in Proverbs to talk about the companionship with others. And in the other two contexts, it is negative. So you can see it in associating with gluttons in Proverbs 28, verse seven, whoever keeps the law is a discerning son and keeps is the idea of keeping the law, the way you would keep sheep, keeping the flock.

And so the law is something that you want to associate with. You want to guard it. You want to protect it.

You want to, to, to supervise it. And you are the one deciding to make this association. I choose to master the elements of the law.

I want to take those on board. I'm going to captain my ship and, and master my fate with these principles and, and statutes. So whoever keeps the law is a discerning son.

And this is like weeding out that, which is not good to associate with your flock. You're discerning. And you say, these are the principles that I prioritize.

These are the ones that govern the others. And these, these are the main things Jesus ultimately summarizes this by saying, you know, if you want to discern the law in keeping it, it's the law of love. You can sum up the law, love the Lord, your God, and love your neighbor.

And that's discernment. This is how I organize. And this is how I shepherd these things that I'm learning.

So in 28, seven, again, a Proverbs, whoever keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons shames his father. Now the gluttons didn't tackle this guy and drag him to the table and force him to partake of the feast he has chosen instead of choosing to imbibe and to consume and to be the shepherd of in the sense of taking in

enfolding and surrounding the principles and the statutes and the commandments of the law, the principles by which God wants us to live. He is instead chosen to associate.

He's not exactly a shepherd of gluttons, but he's voluntarily going there. And, and the gluttons are his, his, his boys, his flock, his companions. And that's of course, a negative kind of companionship.

You have the same thing, a chapter later in Proverbs 29, verse three, whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice and notice both of these in choosing companions. This has an effect on the father son relationship. That's how it's pictured in 28, seven, whoever keeps the law is a discerning son.

This brings the father into view, brings the parents into view. And ultimately in the metaphorical sense brings by use of the metaphor brings God into view. And you have this idea of authority we've been seeing in Timothy.

If you're a discerning son, you're responding to the authoritative wisdom and guidance of the parents, the father in particular, as you choose what you are going to keep and what you are going to have under you, what you are going to attempt to, to control for benefit. You, you shepherd in the principles of the law for benefit, the way a shepherd will shepherd a flock for benefit. There's got to be a profit somewhere, wool, milk in this case of goats and so on.

Same thing here in 29, verse three, whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, but a companion, a row of harlots wastes wealth, wastes wealth, whatever you inherited. Remember the prodigal story, the prodigal in his prodigality, he wasted his inheritance in riotous living. Is that a good son? No, but the idea of sonship and source and inheritance is in view.

Well, this is sort of the noun form, the O E I N G turning a verb into a noun use in Proverbs. You also have it used as a verb in Proverbs 22, 24. Don't keep company.

Don't try to be friends with a hot tempered person, a hothead. Verse 24 of 22, Proverbs 22, 24, make no friendship with an angry man, make no companionship. This is the verbal form.

Don't make yourself the companion of an angry man and with a furious man, do not go. And notice this is a decision we make about with whom to spend our time, with whom to associate, with whom to cultivate relationship and invest effort and so on. And there's great wisdom here.

Don't be a companion of gluttons who are self-indulgent. Don't be a companion of harlots. This is a decision that we make, a companionship choice, a friendship choice, a relationship choice.

And this is critical to understand when we come back to our passage, because that's what's going to be talked about here is that we make this choice consciously. It's us. This isn't shoved upon us.

It's not inevitable. It's not necessarily by birth or inevitability. It's something we choose.

So our associations are the choices we make in the people we spend time with and develop relationships with. They matter. The New Testament version of this from Paul, bad company corrupts good morals.

But this is throughout for both good and ill. Companionship is something we need to look at. Where am I spending my time? And in the modern internet connected world, this extends to what do I read? What do I follow? What do I associate myself with on my little rectangular screen? So you remember this back from chapter one, my son, if sinners entice you don't consent.

If they say, come with us, let us swallow people alive. We'll find precious possessions. We'll fill our houses with spoil.

We'll gratify ourselves, cast in your lot among us. My son do not walk in that way. That was chapter one, verses 10 through 19.

We're going to see it in chapter 16, verse 29, a violent man entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good. You maintain this guy as a neighbor. You, you, you encourage the association.

You're going to be led in a way that is not good. Proverbs 22, 24 and 25, make no friendship with an angry man. And with a furious man, do not go.

We saw that earlier, but here's, here's the apotheosis. Lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul. If you stick around with hotheads and with people who can't control their temper, you will learn his ways and set a trap for your own soul.

You will be ensnared. You will be debilitated. You will be caught and captured and not in a good way.

On the positive side, you think about Ruth and Naomi in Ruth chapter one, verse 16, where Ruth says, entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you, where you go, I will go, where you lodge, I'll lodge, your people, my people, your God, my God. And that is an association worth cultivating and continuing. Second Kings chapter two, verse four.

This is another healthy association. Remember when Elijah keeps telling Elisha, get away, I'm leaving. I'm, I've got some stuff to do.

And Elisha says, no, I'm sticking with you. And you get to a second Kings chapter two,

verse four. Elijah says, Elisha, stay here.

The Lord has sent me on to Jericho. And Elisha says, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. This is the man of God, the prophet giving him a direct command.

And Elisha says, no way, not going to do it. I'm staying with you. And to know when there is a principle that is of the Lord and when the Lord's messenger has it screwed up, you got to be pretty far along.

And Elisha was that far along. And he knew to disregard, he could say, well, Elijah's the prophet. I guess I had to do what he says.

It's not the man. It's the message. And Elisha has learned the Lord's will and knows that at this point, one of the reasons Elijah's being retired is he's, he's not doing what he's supposed to anymore.

Remember he gets that threefold commission and he manages to find Elisha, but he doesn't do the rest of it. Anyway, that's a good association and good associations should be maintained and cultivated at all costs. And, uh, the classic chapter long example of this is second Chronicles chapter 24.

In the first half of that chapter versus one through 16, second Chronicles 24, one through 16, Joash seven years old, when he becomes king, he reigns 40 years in Jerusalem. And you have Jehoiada the priest. And as long as Jehoiada is there to be the wise and worthy and spiritual mentor for Joash, he does great.

But when you get to verse 17, after the death of Jehoiada, the leaders of Judah come and bow down. And the king listens to them and they leave the house of the Lord God of their fathers and served wooden images and idols. Wrath comes on Judah at because of their trespass, God sends prophets to bring them back to the Lord testified against them, but they would not listen.

Joash listened to Jehoiada, but he wouldn't listen to these subsequent prophets of God. And so 17 through 27 of that same chapter is, you know, the downside of the hill up, up, up with Jehoiada, Jehoiada dies. And this is why we can't be dependent to an unhealthy extent.

It is a wonderful thing to have a source and a spring of water, but if the spring should dry up, you better know where to go to get more water, or you better have saved up your own water upon which you can subsist until God provides from another source. So we can be looking to an association or a relationship, but we cannot be defined by it and dependent on it so that if it goes away, we're hopeless, helpless, and useless. Our dependence needs to be upon God.

And if God gives us one source and that evaporates, he'll bring another, but we may have to have a period of time where we're by the brook jareth, watching it slowly dwindle, but wait on the Lord, be of good cheer. He will strengthen your heart. But 2 Chronicles 24, if there was ever a passage that teaches us the importance of maturing into self-reliance, all of us benefit by association, forsake not the assembly.

There is good that comes from that which every joint supplies and the whole body edifies itself and builds itself up in love, Ephesians chapter four. But there are times when we're on our own and we've got to have the resources stored away. Psalm 11, bad association.

You remember that? One of our memory verses. Psalm 106.35, when the people of God mingle with the Gentiles and learn their works, we can be in the world, but we should not be of the world. Psalm 119.63, I am a companion of all those who fear you and of those who keep your precepts.

It is a true observation that birds of a feather flock together. Well, forsake not the flocking of yourselves together with believers of like mind, find a way to do it. We, a lot of us are scattered to the winds, but we have found a way to do it and God has provided and God has blessed.

I think we have a wonderful resource and provision and blessing from God in our fellowship. It isn't just one person distributing to everybody else. It is everyone blessing everyone, everyone praying for everyone, everyone encouraging, thinking about lifting up, watching for opportunities for that beneficial fellowship.

That's God's design. And so important to look out for our associations and trim out, cut off gently or not so gently, those associations that are not beneficial and are not a blessing and are not bearing fruit aren't resulting in progress. You know, you can't have a sack race if somebody's facing the opposite way.

You can both have a leg in the burlap bag, but you got to be running in the same direction or all you're going to do is trip each other and end up in the mud. Our associations need to be making progress. First Corinthians five, six, and seven.

Do you not know a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven so that you can be a new lump since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Second Corinthians six, 14 through 18.

Do not be unequally yoked together with the faithless. What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? What part has a believer with an unbeliever? And this is really, you know, we think in terms of is he saved or is he lost? This is faithful versus faithless. Faithful versus faithless.

It's not limited to salvation status. This can be between people who are really or

allegedly saved, but your salvation isn't working itself out. You're indistinguishable from an unbeliever.

So in practical terms, if you are faithless, it's little different than being lost. And you should not be unequally yoked with the faithless, Paul says. What agreement has God with idols? You are the temple of the living God.

As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. Notice this is plural. I will dwell in them in a group of the faithful.

I will walk among them. I will be their God. They shall be my people.

This is what we want. Well, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see how this is developed in the next structural section, which is verses 20 through chapter 14, verse two.