

Proverbs 24-09-18b

Let's resume looking at Proverbs chapter 14, we are down to verse 10 with a very poignant expression of truth. The heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger does not share its joy. As we go on in this section, and this is going to extend through verse 14, the house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the ways or the way of death. Even in laughter, the heart may sorrow and the end of mirth may be grief. The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.

Now that you know how to kind of watch for clues about structure, did you see some repeated terms in that section? This also links back in verse 11 all the way back to verse 1 of the chapter, which tells us that there is a cycling of themes here about the house or the household, about the role of speech, about the nature of the heart, and so on. But let's begin here and first of all notice that the word heart begins verse 10 and recurs again down in verse 14. So this tentatively is going to be a bracket to watch for here.

But you also have the heart in verse 13, so you have excluding verse 12 you have the heart, the house, the heart, and the heart. So we often think that home is where the heart is. It's kind of one of those sayings that has a great deal of truth in it and where your loved ones are, where you have your personal emotional investment and your spiritual investment.

We like to think that a family of fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and daughters and sons, this is a home. So there is a spiritual house. We just saw this past Sunday the statement that we are the house of the Lord if, and then there is a condition, not all believers are part of the house.

Moses was faithful in all his house. The Lord Jesus is faithful in his house, whose house we are if we continue in faith and obedience and so on. So there is a spiritual household, a household of faith, and there is a material or actual household that comprises our family, as many of them as are sticking with us.

There are many fractured houses and households in this day, both spiritual and familial, and it is just the ongoing presence of sin in the world, in our hearts, in our homes, and the activity of the wicked one, our opponent. But let's take a look at this. I put a little squiggly line where each new section begins in Proverbs, and so I've got a line, a wavy line between verse 9 and 10, and then between the end of verse 14 and beginning of verse 15.

And we'll read this again. The heart knows its own bitterness, and there is a depth of bitterness that we can experience in our heart that is almost impossible to communicate to others. It is a place that is, for the believer, known only to ourselves and the Lord.

We can tell people there's a problem. We can express those things about which we are bitter, but it reminds me of what they used to say. I still don't know if this is true or not, but I have heard it said that we can't actually remember pain.

We can remember being in pain, but we can't remember the actual experience of pain. When you think about a broken bone or a bad tooth or a nasty gouge, bruise, cut, fall, you remember being in pain, and you remember that that pain is different than other kinds. But when you think back, if you think of something you've seen, you can actually have a slideshow, and that image will return to your mind.

And what you saw can return. If you heard a thing, you can remember a sound or a piece of music, and it's almost as though the radio is playing in your head. But pain, we can remember a description.

It was sharp. It was dull. It was severe.

It was mild. But we don't call up pain as we remember it. And in that sense, there is bitterness, both past and present, that leaves a spiritual taste or an emotional taste in our mouth.

But it is almost impossible to communicate that to someone else. The closest you can come is to have a similar experience, and someone else has empathy or sympathy because they have been through something similar. Their heart knows their own bitterness.

Your heart knows yours, and in some cases, there is a comparison there. But ultimately, what this tells us is there is a level of bitterness, there is a depth of bitterness that the heart knows for itself, and the only other person who can really enter into this is the Lord Himself. It is a bitterness that we take to Him, that He knows, that He has the solution for.

He has the ability to comfort. Even if we're not delivered out of it, we have sustaining grace and strength through it. But there is a bitterness that appeal to other human beings isn't going to reach.

It's not going to meet it. It isn't going to give us ability to carry through. It is a bitterness.

I think this is the bitterness that the Lord Jesus felt in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was facing the prospect of drinking the cup of God's judgment on sin. And His disciples came there and watched with Him, but they could not sustain their empathy or their understanding of what He was about to go through. They just couldn't enter into it.

And the second line here, the heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger does not share its joy. Now this is different because there is joy that is shareable, but not with a stranger. Who shares our joy? These are our intimate family, our intimate acquaintances,

those who are closest and we have the deepest relationships with.

We can share joy in a way that we can't share bitterness and perhaps shouldn't share bitterness. There are some things that ought to remain in our own heart and be between us and the Lord, but there is a joy that we can share and expand and extend in the horizontal realm with those who know us and whom we know. And it is a far better thing to share joy than to try to share bitterness.

And there's a lot going on there in verse 10. This is followed by the house of the wicked, which will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There are a couple of things you notice right away.

The wicked, he's got a house, he's got a pile, he's got a mansion, he's got a building that is of substance. This is on a foundation. This is a house either built on sand or built on a rock, but it's substantial.

But because of wickedness, that house is going to be overthrown. You think about Jesus looking at the temple in Jerusalem and they say, look at this temple. It was 46 years in the building.

Isn't it magnificent with its gilding and its polished exterior and its beautiful columns and all the rest. And Jesus said, this thing is going to be thrown down so there will not be one stone left upon another. And as substantial as it seemed, you almost get the idea they would have been better off with the tabernacle, the tent in which God's presence initially revealed his glory.

The house of the wicked will be overthrown. No matter how solid and well built, heavy and grounded they think it is. And it's because of wickedness.

The condition here for the house being overthrown is it belongs to someone who is wicked. And there is nothing you can build if you're wicked that God cannot and will not overthrow. And it will be gone.

You're going to be Ozymandias with your trunkless legs of stone sticking up out of the vast sands of the desert. But look at the second line. Notice that's a negative and then here's the positive.

But the tent of the upright will flourish. It's just a tent. You think of that New Testament passage, Abraham dwelt in tents because he was waiting for a city.

And it's not a tent city. It's not homeless people pitching tents on the sidewalk. He was waiting for a city whose founder and builder is God.

And Abraham's tents flourished and his faith leverages his tents and his nomadic Bedouin lifestyle into a city, a capital city, where his distant descendant, the Lord Jesus,

is going to rule along with the descendants of David. And God can take what seems impermanent, what seems flimsy, what seems susceptible, and cause it to flourish, where what human beings and the human eye would think is permanent and substantial is going to be overthrown. Well, that leads in now to the central idea.

And you can see that this central idea sums up what leads in and what follows. So there is a bitterness, and in many cases this is self-induced misery. Bitterness comes from our feeling of victimhood.

We don't like to trace things back to our own decisions or our own lack of attention. And there is a bitterness and a kicking of oneself, or a lashing out and a bitterness at others when we choose to shift the blame. And that leads to this house of the wicked being overthrown.

We're looking at the negative sides of these. Verse 10 is negative and then positive. Verse 11 is negative and then positive.

And then we have kind of a positive idea here, but it's subtle. There's a way that seems right. This looks good.

Everything looks like two thumbs up, let's go. But its end is the way of death, and that's negative. So as we've seen in the past, you can often find the center of these symmetrical units by looking at the reversal of the negative-positive, negative-positive, and then positive-negative.

So, you find then this notion, and there's criticism of this verse that there's something wrong with it because the word way occurs twice and it seems redundant. But that tells us that the emphasis here is on the way. The way seems right, but it is a way of death.

And so you have something that leads to death seeming to be right, seeming to be straight. The word here for right, it looks like a straight path. And in many cases, the easy way is not the best way.

The easy way is the way of death. The more difficult, and I've often considered this when I was facing an option of doing A or B, or perhaps A, B, and C. And often when I'm not real sure which way I ought to go, it is a biblical principle that often the better way is the harder way. It's the more difficult way.

It's the self-sacrificial way. It's the way that doesn't appeal to me because it's not going to be easy. And very often, the better way is the harder way.

And you have that sort of reflected here. This straight way in front of a man is going to be a way that leads to death. And we'd like to be able to see what's ahead and have it be predictable.

We don't want the way that takes a left turn around a corner where we can't see, where it leads through the valley of the shadow. And I don't know what's in there, and I don't know if I'm going to come out on the other side. But that is our central idea here in verse 12.

There is a way that is straight before a man. And because it's straight, it seems right. But the end is the way of death.

The destination is not going to be life. It's not going to be fruitfulness. It's not going to be productivity.

It isn't going to be joy and benefit. And this begins to reflect what we saw. Is it going to be bitterness of heart, a deep bitterness that you can't even share? So when you get to verse 13, even in laughter, the heart may sorrow.

And someone can have an abiding burden in the heart. And of course, there are moments of levity. You're not just constantly dragging your anchor everywhere, and you're the rain on everyone's parade, and you're the gloom and doom in every association.

People will lighten up. They will laugh. They will enjoy a moment.

But that joy doesn't take away the underlying loss or burden or sorrow. And you can't think, well, everything must be okay because I just saw them laugh. Even in laughter, the heart may sorrow.

And the end of mirth, grief. This cuts a couple of different ways. First of all, if you think, well, if I can just entertain myself, if I can find something lighthearted and find a way to laugh, that will solve my problem.

If I can appeal to entertainment or appeal to clever friends, or I'll watch a comedy, or I'll find some source of levity somewhere to pull me out of my doldrums, momentary laughter, momentary stimulation, momentary distraction isn't the way to solve a deep and abiding problem. And it is a deceit to think that it will. And it's foolish to think that it will.

Even in laughter, there's still sorrow in your heart. And mirth, at its end, notice you have the word for end here. The end of a straight path is a way of death.

And here, the end of mirth is grief. The mirth, in some ways, just accentuates the grief and makes it even harder to bear. When you return to it, it's worse than when you left it.

And then verse 14, the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above. And you have a text note in your New King James, which is appropriate. And I have moved the word himself up to the end of verse 14.

A good man will be satisfied from above himself. Notice *satisfied* is in italics. It helps clarify the idea.

But you have people who are going to be filled. There's a backslider that's going to be filled. And there's a good man who will be filled.

One is filled with his own ways. The other is filled from above himself. So what is the source of the filling? If you're full of yourself, this is a way of death.

If you're filled from above, that's eternal. That's divine. That partakes of God's power.

But notice how meaningful this section is when you take it as a unit. We're talking about the heart. We're talking about how to cope with grief and sorrow.

Do you want to try mirth and laughter? The end is going to return to darkness. Do you want to go flying down a straight path because it seems quick and easy? That is going to end up being a way that can lead to death. And everything here is kind of negative until you get to a good man.

And a good person is going to look for fulfillment and satisfaction from above himself. Not within himself. Not around himself.

Entertain me. Make me laugh. Stimulate me.

Distract me. Take my mind off of it. This isn't a permanent answer.

And most importantly, it is not a God-glorifying answer. Even if it worked, you would give credit to a clever comedy. You would give credit to a person who successfully distracted you.

Where does our appreciation aim? What should we glorify? What should we praise? A clever piece of entertainment. A witty joke. A great distraction.

I'm going to go to the amusement park. And that will lighten my mood and take away my bitterness. Even if it worked, you could take a pill that would relieve the depth of your bitterness.

Dull you to the pain. Inure you to the grief. But if we are here to come to an understanding of God.

To reflect His glory. To learn the things that will enable us to fulfill useful functions. And glorifying and meaningful service to God now and in the ages to come.

How is that contributing to the goal? Well, it isn't. It is deflecting us into uselessness, fruitlessness, and the ways of death. We will be those who come to the door and say, Lord, Lord, in your name.

And He's going to say, I never knew you. You didn't come to know me. If any man would come after me, Jesus says, let him take up his cross and follow me.

To know the joy of fulfilling God's plan and purpose. To realize that our momentary light affliction is working an eternal weight of glory. This is to enter into the thinking of the Lord Jesus.

To understand His heart and His thoughts. His dedication to the Father and His love for us. We can enter into that love and dedication to the Father.

And love and service to one another. But it is a way that often involves hardship. It involves affliction.

But it is a momentary light affliction. When compared to the eternal weight of glory that it secures for us. And that it allows us to enter into.

Even in the Old Testament, these truths were communicated and were evident and manifest. If it's an easy straight way, you need to look close. Because the ends thereof might be the ways of death.

But if we have a heart that knows its own bitterness. And there is a kind of joy in the Lord. There is a peace that passes understanding.

There is a contentment and a solid understanding. That is a kind of joy that strangers, certainly strangers to the household of faith, will never understand. And those who are strangers to the Lord, it's impossible for them to even enter into it.

They will never understand us. And they will ask us a reason for the hope that is in us. And unless they pursue that hope for themselves, they can never enter into it.

It is unique to the child of God. It is unique to the body of Christ. And we can understand that joy in the family.

But outsiders and strangers will never figure it out. They just won't get it. They can't get it.

It's like describing the color green to a blind person. There's just no way to communicate that. Well, that brings us now to the next section here.

And notice again in verse 14, before I go to the next section, the correspondence here, because we're now in V center and another V. So verse 14 is going to correspond to verse 11, the house of the wicked. And you have the backslider in heart. House of the wicked will be overthrown.

The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways. And that is to be overthrown. It's like trying to create a perpetual motion machine that has no outside energy, isn't infused

and fueled from outside.

It tries to feed on itself. The laws of physics prevent that and forbid it. There is no such thing as a self-sustaining engine of any kind.

We have to have power from the outside. So the house of the wicked will be overthrown. The backslider in heart, he's going to be filled with his own ways.

Well, his own ways are what kind of ways? It's the way of death. And you're going to be filled with death. You're going to be filled with emptiness.

It doesn't satisfy. It doesn't partake of eternity. It doesn't enter into divine life, divine power, or the divine future, the divine hope.

And you're going to be filled with this soggy cardboard where you needed actual nutritious substance. And that tells us that verse 10 and verse 13 correspond. And you notice that the sorrow and the bitterness correspond.

The heart sorrows even as it laughs because it knows its own bitterness underneath. And that momentary distraction doesn't solve the problem or fill the emptiness. And the end of mirth, mirth always ends.

You can't sustain mirth. People just can't be hilarious all the time. You can't get through the day on endless comedy, endless hilarity.

And grief, bitterness, and sorrow are all linked in this section. What a wonderful thing that a good man receives the antidote, the cure, the solution, the salve, the balm from Gilead that soothes the sin sick soul, that relieves bitterness and grief and sorrow and replaces it with something from above, from above ourselves. It's supernatural, and the stranger can never enter into it.

So now in verse 15, we're going to have another two-verse entrance, a central idea, and then another two verses symmetrical with it. So as you read this section, you realize you're going to have five verses. The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.

A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident. Here in the center, a quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated. This fool who rages and is self-confident, we saw earlier, and if you remember, that the companionship with those who are quick-tempered is a bad road back in chapter 13.

And over and over again, these themes cycle through. Quick-tempered man acts foolishly. A man of wicked intentions is hated.

So that's a minus minus, where our entrance, you had a minus and a plus in verse 15. Simple believes every word, that's a negative. But the prudent considers well his steps,

that's a positive.

A wise man fears and departs from evil, that's a positive. A fool rages and is self-confident, that's a negative. Then you end up with negative negative in verse 17.

You come to verse 18, the simple inherit folly, that's a negative. But the prudent are crowned with knowledge, that's a positive. The evil will bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

So depending on how you take it, those are both negative and positive in a single statement. The evil will bow before the good, I would consider that to be a positive. The wicked will bow at the gates of the righteous, so that's another positive.

So what are we looking at here? We've moved from the heart and the house to the way. This is when you're out of the house, when you're engaging in converse with the world. The simple believes every word he hears, but the prudent considers well his steps.

Notice the difference between believing what you hear and paying attention to where you walk. This is outside the house, this is outside the heart now. If you're simple, you believe whatever you're told.

And typically this is what's happening with our mainstream media in a lot of cases. People who are simple, they don't want to consider, they don't want to dwell, and they don't want to consider what the outcome is going to be. Because your steps are based on what you believe.

If you believe the bridge is out a mile down this road, you're not going to waste your time walking a mile down that road to find that the bridge is out. If you believe that this is a difficult way, but it is the better way, then you're going to consider your steps because of your belief. So if you believe every word, you're not taking into consideration either the source or the outcome.

You hear it, okay fine, I believe it. If you're prudent, you're going to consider what will my steps take me to. Is this going to be a way that leads to death? It seems simple, it seems straight, this harks back to the previous unit.

And these units are not discrete, they tie together, they flow with each other. So the steps are going to be those steps that go down a way. Is it a difficult way or is it a simplistic and straight way? So you have the simple and prudent in verse 15.

Here you have the wise and the foolish in verse 16. A wise man fears and departs from evil. The evil may not seem dangerous, but if you identify it as evil, you're going to fear the outcome.

You don't necessarily fear the evil, but what does it lead to? I'm going to depart from this

evil because I know where it's going to lead. A fool rages. A fool is going to spout off... Remember Simon Peter on the night of Jesus' arrest? Jesus says, you're all going to leave me.

Peter says, though all should leave you, I'll never leave. And he rages, he takes offense that Jesus would imply that he might abandon him and deny him. A fool rages and is confident in himself.

In the previous unit, we had being filled by oneself. Your self-confidence. I have confidence in myself, my ability, my experience, my strength, my resolve, my commitment.

I can lick this. I can beat it in my own strength. I can decide not to indulge a bad habit.

I can decide to depart from a bad thing. I'll do it myself. And there is rage at the suggestion that maybe we need help.

That humility would suggest that God's strength and God's people surrounding us might be the solution. And this rage and quick-tempered attitude. Quick-tempered man acts foolishly.

Man of wicked intentions is hated. You say, oh, people are going to dislike him. Remember, hate in the Bible is a path of loss.

Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. Esau, because of his decisions, misses out on the blessing. And this is going to be us.

If we have wicked intentions, ultimately things will fall apart. God's hatred will manifest itself in loss of blessing, loss of opportunity, loss of provision, loss of protection, loss of all of the things that are a part of our birthright and our heritage. Then in verse 18, the simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Notice how in this unit, instead of looking inward at the heart, it is looking outward and onward to what the future holds. What is going to happen in the future? The simple are going to inherit folly. The prudent will be crowned with knowledge.

A crown implies authority and opportunity, usefulness and function. You're going to be used by God for productive and glorious things. Being prudent.

The evil will bow before the good and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. Notice this is future. The wicked aren't bowing at my gates.

They're not, even if we are good, we don't see the prevailing of goodness right now. This is future. This is looking ahead.

Understanding our way, that we saw way back in verse 8, is to recognize, and that's

where you have the word prudent. The prudent, his wisdom is to understand his way. The evil are going to bow before the good.

The wicked will bow at the gates of the righteous. The prudent are going to be crowned with knowledge. Be patient.

Be faithful. Our hope has to be real. Our expectation has to matter.

Have you ever noticed that there are some people who are believers, and when you talk with them, you can't get very many paragraphs into the conversation before you realize that the Lord Jesus is real to them. The effect of prayer is real. The superintending grace of God in heaven is real.

And it's a factor in mundane things of life. I know the Lord is looking out for me. I'm not real sure how this is going to come out, but they can't help it.

It's a part of their thinking. It is a part of their way. And they know that sometimes the way is difficult, and the way leads through the valley of shadow.

But the reality of God's presence, His provision, His protection, His grace, and the future reward for those who will persist, who will recognize that the affliction is momentary and light compared to the eternal weight of glory, that's what this unit concludes with. Do you want to inherit folly? Or do you want to inherit a crown of knowledge? This knowledge that we're learning now, the things that we are practicing and being inculcated with from God's Word and by God's Spirit, this we do take with us. That crown of knowledge goes forward.

And these hard-won lessons that we learn, these truths that become real and pertinent for us now, go with us. Why? Because we are going to use them. As I've said recently, it's the karate kid.

Wax on, wax off. It's tedious and it doesn't make sense now. It's tiring.

It's a hot day. But we don't have to understand, as long as we know this is God's plan for us, this is God's purpose for us, it is going to be so valuable. It is going to be a part of our crown of knowledge in the future.

What is it that makes that truth real? Faith. I trust that God knows what He's doing. I trust that there is a reason and purpose in this that may not ever be vindicated in this life, but it is going to be in the next.

And in the next, these evil people that are giving me a hard time and obstructing my way, attacking me, belittling me, people of perversity, people of selfishness, people who are full of themselves, people living in their mansions while I'm just trying to keep my tent up, they will bow before the good. And the wicked, notice, the righteous are going to

have gates. Not just a house, but gates.

This is an estate. This is a property. Tents don't have gates, do they? An estate has a gate.

Beautiful walls, wonderful drive, mansion with pillars and columns and comforts and wonderful rooms where you can entertain others. The wicked are going to bow at the gates of the righteous. The righteous who currently dwell in tents.

The more you think about this and revolve it through your mind, the stronger and more clear our opportunity for faith and patience becomes. Wonderful scriptures here in the Proverbs, and I'm really thrilled to be able to return to it. Well, we're going to close here at verse 19.

We'll pick up at verse 20 where we have yet another five-verse section. If you want to experiment and see if your ability to observe is starting to sharpen a bit, you can look at verses 20 through 24 as a unit. You can look at verses 25 through 29 together as a unit.

You'll see at the center is the thematic element. You've got a two-verse intro, a two-verse outro. Is it a V or is it an X? It's fun to look and see the correspondences and how Scripture interprets Scripture.

And one verse and one set of phrases illuminates another. And God has put this treasure just beneath the surface for us to find. And the joy of discovery is a big part of that joy that is inherent to our faith and our understanding that God really is in His heaven, and He has this manna to feed our souls with.

And we've got plenty more upcoming in the latter part of this chapter. But we'll close for tonight in a word of prayer. Father, thank You that You do nourish and refresh our souls with the ministry of Your Word to our spirits by Your Holy Spirit.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that we will see clearly how they make a difference in how we invest our time, how we expend our energy and undertake our efforts and accomplish our tasks, how we speak with one another, with whom we associate and with whom we decide to maintain a distance and a separation, always looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at Your right hand. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.