

Proverbs 24-10-02b

We're ready to pick up here in Proverbs chapter 14, and we see a profound emphasis on truthfulness as a part of living in the wisdom and favor of God. The fear of the Lord, there is strong confidence. His children will have a place of refuge.

In your New King James, there's a capital H there that this is God's children, but in my view, this is a lowercase h, the one who fears the Lord. This is a condensation, it's a bit of ellipsis, the one who fears the Lord, his children. This is blessing by association.

This is the blessing of the household. Remember Onesiphorus that Paul was talking about in second Timothy, and he prays for grace on the household because of the faithfulness and the service and the dedication of Onesiphorus. This is the idea here.

There is blessing on the household. There can be one believer in a marriage or in a family, and the umbrella of God's protection and grace will extend over the entire household. Blessing by association is a real genuine promise from God.

And this again is a benefit that extends beyond ourselves. It's not just sort of a selfish interest in not being judged and not coming under condemnation and not receiving the disfavor of God, but to receive personal blessing. But we recognize that God will bless others who are around us, sometimes through us, sometimes in ways that are unique to them.

But we entrust them to God's care. We place them under God's protection. We trust that God will work in their lives for their benefit and for His glory.

And we don't always have to directly try to be a blessing or find a way to bless them. We can certainly watch for opportunities prayerfully, looking for the guidance and the power of God. But we focus on the fear of the Lord only cultivated in our own soul.

I can't inject the fear of the Lord into any other person. I can share it as it affects me, as my understanding of the word of God enlarges it and enhances it and reflects it. But you can't can or bottle your faith, your enthusiasm for Jesus Christ, your love for God the Father, your sense of peace and enjoyment in the Holy Spirit, in the word of God.

It is almost impossible. Sometimes with your spouse, and especially where there is a shared enthusiasm and with other close believers in our fellowship, we can recognize in others what we experience ourselves. But someone who's not really interested, who is nominal or superficial or occasional in their nod to God sort of Christianity, you just can't convey the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge in Christ Jesus.

And the peace that passes understanding, if someone hasn't experienced it for themselves, you can't get it to them. You can't shove it into their hands and tip their head back and force it down their throat. You can lead a horse to water, et cetera.

So that's what we're seeing in this section of Proverbs chapter 14. In the fear of the Lord, there is strong confidence. And the one who fears the Lord, his children will have a place of refuge.

And sometimes, notice that it doesn't say they will have prosperity, they will have blessing, they will have hilarity, they will have abundance. It says they will have a place of refuge. Sometimes, God will use hardship, adversity, hitting bottom.

And if you are one who fears the Lord and your offspring are the prodigal who have gone away and spent their inheritance on riotous living, they will return because they know that you represent and that you live in a place of refuge. And refuge is where you go when you need shelter, when things are going badly. And we sometimes, unfortunately, have to wait for those in our periphery to hit hard times before they renew their interest in what it is that constitutes our hope.

And they will ask us a reason for the hope that is in us, or they will return to a recognition of it if they know it already. But it sometimes takes hardship before people will seek refuge. You remember when we memorized Psalm 91, dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and abiding in His shadow.

He is my refuge, my fortress. We are delivered from the snare of the fowler and the perilous pestilence. There's deliverance, there's shelter, there's protection.

We experience it. You can't always grab somebody and drag them into it with you, but our children will find refuge if they choose to look for it by our example of dedication to the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life.

Notice it is not a cup of the water of life that we drink, it's a fountain. What do you know about a fountain? How many people drink from a fountain? It's generally way more than one. It's a fountain of life.

And as we embrace and cultivate and represent and prioritize the fear of the Lord, it is going to be a fountain of life. This is another picture, another example of blessing by association to those around us. Come to the water and drink into it.

Let him who is thirsty, Jesus appeals in the singular. Let him who is thirsty come to the waters and drink. Out of his belly will flow rivers, plural, of living water.

This is going to benefit others. If it's flowing out from you, you're not trying to get a bucket and capture it back. You're not trying to go find an above ground swimming pool you can sit in so that you hoard the water.

It is flowing out to benefit others. That is the idea here. It's a fountain of life.

And notice it says to turn one away. It says to turn away from the snares of death. Those

who come to the water are not going in the direction of the snares that lead to death.

This is directional. What direction are you heading? Are you seeking for, looking out for, and finding the water of life from the fountain of living water? Or are you walking off in some other way inevitably to be ensnared with the things that lead to death? And this is not just physical death, of course. This is spiritual death.

You're unfruitful, unproductive. You're going to be that vine that gets pruned away so that others can bear more fruit. Singulars and plurals make a difference.

You remember in John 15, when Jesus says, I am the vine, you are the branches. I am the vine, ye, plural. You, plural, are the branches, plural.

You all abide in me. If any branch is not bearing, my father will prune it so that the rest of it can be more productive. I don't know about you, but the idea of being pruned out of the vine by the father does not appeal to me in any way, shape, or form.

I don't think that's a good thing. There's no way you can make that good, that the father is going to prune your connection. Be aware that there are others in our periphery who initially appear to be in the vine in the same way that the seed in the shallow soil can spring up and it initially looks like it's going to grow and be productive.

But when the sunshine comes and it has no root and it withers and dies, it looked like it was going to be and do, but when the pressure came, it withered and died. In the same way, you can have fellow branches in the vine that appear to be green and growing and productive. Remember in the wordless book when you were a kid, if you were like me, each page, the black is for sin, red's for the blood of Christ, white is sanctification, and the cover is green.

Green means I'm growing. Green means I'm growing. Well, if the father looks at the vine of the Lord Jesus and those who are abiding in him, and people are assuming that they abide, but they are not productive, the father will prune them.

I'm not sure of the specifics of that, but whatever it is, I don't want it to happen to me or to anyone I know or love. We have got to be people of truth. If you abide in the vine, you abide in the truth.

There's just no way around it. Say fountain of life to turn away from the snares of death. You keep your eye on the fountain.

You drink from the fountain, stay near the fountain. Remember there's another great verse, Beulah Land, I'm drinking from the fountain that never shall run dry. I'm feasting on the manna from a bountiful supply.

Drinking from the fountain. If you're dwelling at the fountain, if you've pitched your tent

by the oasis, and you're eating the manna and drinking that living water, how can you possibly be ensnared in that which leads to death? I've got the water, I've got the manna. The manna is God's truth, God's wisdom, God's spiritual nourishment for us.

So this is the essential truth that begins this great chiasm. So now you come down to verse 28. In a multitude of people is a king's honor, but in the lack of people is the downfall of a prince.

We just need more people. We've got to grow the church. If we have more people, that's gonna be the pastor's honor or the church's honor, or it's Jesus's honor.

These words in Hebrew, and I won't agonize you with a word study, but this is the word rav, rav, R-A-V. Remember the guy that came in Hezekiah's day and said, the Assyrians are gonna roll you up like a carpet. We've defeated all of these other people.

His name was the Rav Shaka. Remember that? Shaka is prince and Rav isn't. There's a lot of him.

He's enormously fat, or there's many of him. He's got a twin or triplets or whatever. It's the great.

Rav Shaka is the great leader, the great general, the great prince. Rav means great. So what does this verse mean? It is not the numerosity, it's not the number, it's not the plentitude of people.

It is the greatness, scratch out multitude. This is Rav. This is greatness.

In the greatness of people is a king's honor. It is an honor to be the leader, to be the father, to be the one who superintends an organization, a collection of great people. It's not like, well, if we just had more, I would be greater.

Generally, the more you have, the worse it gets. You collect sin natures and concentrate them in big cities. And what happens to your big cities? They become concentrations of evil.

They become sore spots in your nation. There's too many people in too small a space. It always goes downward.

No, this is the greatness. In the greatness of people is a king's honor. Think about the Lord Jesus.

When he comes to establish the glorious throne of his kingdom, who's going to be in that kingdom? Is he going to resurrect every single Israelite and every Old Testament saint and cram them all in there because in the multitude of the people in his kingdom, he's going to be honored? Who is going to be qualified? Who is going to pass under the rod and live in that horizontally striped, tribal allotted land of Israel? Who is going to dwell in

Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom? For that matter, who is going to dwell in the new Jerusalem in the kingdom of the father that follows it? Well, the bigger, the better. Let them all in, go to the highways and byways, compel them all to come into the new Jerusalem. That's not what happens, is it? This is exclusive to those who qualify themselves by faithfulness and love and obedience.

It is the greatness of the people who are allowed in. The closer you are to Jerusalem and Mount Zion in the millennial kingdom, the more perfect the environment. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.

The lion will lay down with the kid and the wolf. Remember, it's not the lion and the lamb. There's a different combination there.

The child will play, snakes won't hurt anyone. There's going to be plentitude, peacefulness. And the closer you are to the throne of the sons of David and Jesus Christ in the millennium, the better off you are.

The qualified people, the great spiritual heroes, the Hebrews chapter 11 people, that's who's going to be in there. It is the greatness. So if you want to anticipate walking with the Lord Jesus in white, ruling with him on his throne, being ready for service and function in the kingdoms, plural, that are to come, it isn't a matter of, well, let's just evangelize a whole bunch of people.

And the more of us there are, we'll all be in there with Jesus. Everybody will be happy over there. What are we after? I want to cultivate truthfulness, strength of character, wisdom, all of the things that we saw in the first 10 chapters of Proverbs.

My son, receive my words, hide my commandments with you. Incline your ear, apply your heart, lift up your voice, cry out so that you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. That section of Proverbs chapter two, those first several verses, that's the key.

That makes great people, spiritually great. So in the greatness of people is a King's honor. This is true in any context.

If you have great people in this country, they will be smart enough to elect good leadership, local, state and above. But in the lack of people, this is the word that means deficit, paucity. There is a vacuum here that should be filled, but it's not.

There is an emptiness. There is a shallowness. Who's walking by the, there's three ponds on this property.

The southmost one is between the house down the hill and us. And from lack of rain and high temperatures, you can walk across, it's not more than ankle deep. Even the little lily pad looking things are starting to shrivel and die because there's not enough water in

there.

There is a lack of what is normally a pond that supports frogs, fish, and so on. Well, what is there a lack of? The same thing that there is a plentitude of in the first line, character, greatness, depth, qualitative treasury of God's wisdom, God's truth. There's an absence of truth.

The righteous man fails not to be found. You can't find 10 righteous in Sodom. And the deficit, this is the moral deficit, the spiritual deficit of people is the downfall of a prince.

Why does it change from king to prince? The prince is the one who hopes to succeed the king, who is next in line, who is looking to the future. The king is currently ruling. And when his people are great, he is covered in glory and honor because he's presiding over a worthy group of people.

But if the generation that follows lacks truth, lacks wisdom, lacks understanding, lacks good sense in the spiritual realm, the prince is never going to make it to the throne. The kingdom is going to disappear before he can enjoy any of its benefits or lead it anywhere. And it doesn't matter how good the prince is, if the people are deficient, that's what a deficit is, you are deficient, the prince is going to fall.

There's nothing to preside over. There's no substance. There's no future.

And the prince is always looking to the future. This is why, by the way, the Lord Jesus is called the prince of peace because there will be wars and rumors of war until the future, when the prince of peace becomes the king of glory. Prince looks forward.

So this means that we want to not only strive to be people of truth and people of wisdom, but we want to associate. We want to become a people. We want to find others of like mind and cultivate fellowship and mutual upbuilding.

And in this age, the function of our spiritual gifts, the fellowship, brothers and sisters in Christ, cultivate it, value it, preserve it, cultivate it to be a people. It's one thing to be a person, to be individually blessed and to be a blessing to those in your immediate periphery. But the more of us there are who are of like mind, who share that enthusiasm, that understanding, and that motivation, that momentum, this is going to be something that brings honor to the king.

You come to verse 29. He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts foolishness, promotes it, encourages it, brings more of it about. When you exalt a thing, you're promoting, you're expanding, you're making it more visible and more influential.

Now, you may remember that we have a reference to wrath and anger in chapter 15, verse one. So you can put a little star next to wrath here and wrath in verse 29. Slow to

wrath, great understanding.

So what's the application here? If I have triggers to my anger, if I can be set off by developments in the news or shortcomings in people around me, if there are situations, conversations, or circumstances that generate anger, you know, the little Japanese gal that goes around redecorating and decluttering people's houses. She has a program. I haven't seen it in a long time, but her catchphrase is, why are you keeping this? Only keep it if it sparks joy.

She's got a Japanese accent. So she says, does it spark joy? Well, we want to have the love, joy, and peace that come from the Holy Spirit. And we want to move away from not just wrath and try not to be angry, but anger always has a spark.

It has a cause. There is something that sets it off. So if watching too much of the news gets your temperature up and your blood boiling, don't just say, I've got to be able to watch the news without getting so angry.

Don't watch so much news. If there is a person, and when you spend very much time with them, you begin to get angry, spend less time. We have to look at the root causes of anger and separate from that which sparks it.

And we have to look at the things that engender and promote love and joy and peace. Blessed are those who pursue peace, who make peace, who are peacemakers. That thing, blessed are peacemakers.

People say, oh, you should go be a negotiator and try to bring warring parties together. That isn't what it's talking about. And if you remember when we did Matthew chapter five, this is poieo and irene.

Irene is peace, poieo is to do. Blessed are those who practice peace, who are peaceful as they do. They're peace doers.

What they do is peaceful. They spark peace instead of sparking anger. And they dwell in peace instead of dwelling in anger.

So being slow to wrath has great understanding. So if I have an anger problem, what do I need to do? I need to cultivate great understanding. If I focus on great understanding, this is going to give me perspective that throws cold water on my wrath.

And the more divine perspective, the more I pursue, represent, cultivate, speak, live truth and have an understanding of that truth, my anger is going to diminish because I will have objectivity instead of subjectivity. I won't keep my eyes on people and circumstances and myself and the insults that have been dealt to me and how dare they and how can this be. Objectivity, anger moves away.

You may have righteous indignation, but that is a wrath of a different sort. Slow to wrath, great understanding. He who is impulsive exalts folly.

You're promoting it, you're exemplifying it. You're the spokesmodel for folly. If you impulsively, and if you do not have impulse control, if you don't have self-control, if you look at the fruit of the spirit chiastically, the first and greatest is love and its compliment on the other side is self-control.

Love, self-control. Can't have one without the other. You come to verse 30.

A sound heart is life to the body. Envy is rottenness to the bones. We understand immediately by this set of lines that this is employing metaphor or figure.

This isn't wonderful cardiac health because you work out, you run, you do the treadmill, you get your steps on your Fitbit or your watch. A sound heart is life to the body. This is a sound spiritual heart founded on a solid ground, on the rock, on the truth.

This is life to the body. There is a connection between our spiritual priorities and our physical health and this has been demonstrated scientifically. You lower your stress, you don't have a lot of poisons circulating in your body that are generated when cortisol and things like that, when you have unspiritual thinking, it actually corrodes your physical health but it isn't the key to physical health being, well, I'm just gonna have to be spiritually minded.

People attempt this with yoga and meditation and other things. The body is also metaphorical and this is something you learn from Dr. Pentecost in things to come when he talks about figurative language. If something starts out figuratively, you need to take the whole thing figuratively as much as possible.

So if the sound heart is a figure for healthy spiritual life, the sound body is also figurative for your effect on the world around you. It's what you do with your body. It is your presence.

It is your contact with others. What you say and what you do and how you interact with the world, it's visible because we have a physical body. We're made of matter.

People can see us, they can hear us, they can observe, they can listen. So a sound heart is life to the body. Our physical existence, our work life, our social life, our relationship interactions will be infused with life.

Have you ever noticed God gave the command to the plants to reproduce? And it's amazing. Plants will reproduce in places you didn't think possible. I was looking at a crack between two bricks.

It was just a little collection of sand and here is this plant just coming out of this

impossible to live place. God said, be fruitful and multiply to the plants and they do. You can't keep the plants from growing.

You get a load of gravel. If you're not careful, the grass will grow up between the gravel and overcome it because the plants are obedient. God told them multiply and they do.

And there is life in the word of God. And if we have a sound heart that is infused with God's truth and God's life, that life is going to emanate forth like the water of life, like the fountain of life. This is another figure for the beneficial, uplifting, energizing, spiritually advantageous effect that we will have on people with our body.

It's not a recipe for better physical health per se, although it does have that effect. This is primarily what people experience when they come into your periphery. They may be strangers, they may be casual acquaintances, may be friends, may be relatives, may be close, personal and intimate relations, whatever it is, there is life when your heart is sound.

So we want the sound heart. This is kind of obvious. How do you get the sound heart? Well, what has this book been telling us ever since chapter one? The truth of God is life to your bones, it's health to your navel.

All of these are talking about the divine inspired supernatural power that gets into us and then comes out of us that is beyond mortality, beyond the momentary. So we start thinking about, well, how can I make this happen? We've got to stop the headlong, rushing through circumstances and the distractions and the deflections of the information age and the fast paced life that has been thrust upon us. Do you think about how people used to live on farms and in the agrarian agricultural world, pre-industrial? This has been thousands of years of human activity.

It's only in these last, say 200 years, really less, where industry and technology have compressed and eroded the ability to have peace, to take time, to reflect, to have an extended conversation instead of, oh, look at the time. I've got to be somewhere. I've got to do something.

This life is designed to rob us of our spiritual heritage and we want to recover it. So be slow to wrath. Don't be impulsive.

Cultivate a sound heart. It is life, both immediately in our physical being, but by extension, everything we do and affect with our physical existence. Envy.

What is envy? Well, what's our quick definition of subjectivity? A sound heart is objective. A sound heart partakes of God's truth, God's perspective, divine viewpoint, we sometimes call it. What is envy? Envy is looking at someone else and saying, well, why can't I? Why don't we? And it is rottenness to the bones.

It not only creates cortisol and stress and free radicals and whatever else in your actual physical body, but you are detrimental and toxic to those around you. You are the virus. You are the bacteria.

You are the infectious transmitter of spiritually deadening influence. When you occupy yourself with others, you are going to negatively affect others. It's a law of scripture.

Impulsiveness and envy in verse 29 and in verse 30. Looking over the fence, why can't I? Why didn't God do this for me? It's self-centered. It is arrogant.

It is inadequate. And it is subjective. He who oppresses the poor, verse 31, reproaches his maker.

One of the things that is missed in the modern day and in progressive Christianity and a lot of the Sermon on the Mount, be a Jesus person, kingdom now thinking, is any poor person is in view in passages like this. This is the rich man and Lazarus. This is the poor that you see and that you know and that you can immediately benefit.

This is the poor in Israel that are spoken of time and again in the law of Moses. Leave the corners of the field ungleaned for the poor and the widow and the orphan of your own nation. Israel never at any time from the time they left Egypt until the time they went out in the Babylonian captivity, never had a ministry to the poor people amongst the Amorites or the Edomites or the Moabites or the Philistines or the Hittites or anybody else in the area, the Hivites, the Girgashites.

They never sent envoys and ambassadors of charity with food to feed the poor of other peoples, other cultures, other nations. Who are the poor in scripture? They're your people. In Israel, they are your fellow Israelites.

In the church, they are your brothers and sisters in Christ, your neighbors. Remember love in those concentric circles. If you're in contact with somebody, they're across the fence, they're down the block, you know them, you have contact with them and they're needy.

If they need to borrow something, give them that and more. If they need your cloak, if they need your coat, add the cloak. If they need you to help, one mile, go to.

But you are in personal contact. It doesn't say develop a charity that will station people at crossroads and when somebody is carrying a load, they'll take it two miles for them. This is personal, individual attention to those that you know and that you can be a representative of Jesus Christ in being compassionate, being caring, meeting a need.

This isn't abstract, nameless, anonymous charity. If on the other hand, there is someone in your immediate periphery that has a need and you have the means and the opportunity, but you do not have the motive and instead of genuine charity, instead of

helping the poor on your doorstep, again, think of the rich man with Lazarus, by neglect, he is oppressing him. Neglect can be as serious as active oppression.

If you take advantage, oh, well, you know, we've had a hurricane, there's a shortage of plywood. So these poor people suddenly impoverished, losing everything, I'm gonna charge \$150 a sheet for plywood because they're gonna need it to board up their broken windows. These people are needy and you are taking advantage, you're profiteering.

And this can happen in the spiritual realm, it can happen in the social realm, it can happen in a lot of subtle ways as well as economic ways. He who oppresses the poor reproaches his maker. You're telling God your commands to help the poor are unwise and unhelpful, they don't benefit me, I've got a better plan, I know how I can get ahead and you indict God as giving unwise counsel and unwise commands and faulty instruction to his own people.

No, that's not the way to go, I have a better plan, I have a better idea. You're rebuking God, you're reproaching God. Remember when Peter told the Lord Jesus, Jesus says, I'm gonna go to Jerusalem, be crucified and far be it from you, Lord, get thee behind me, Satan.

Peter was reproaching Jesus for anticipating his central work on the cross. We don't wanna be in that position. He who honors the poor has mercy on the needy.

And once again, this hymn, they've capitalized it in your New King James, this is an individual poor person. He who oppresses the poor reproaches his maker, but he who honors the poor has mercy on the needy. This is my understanding, if you think the King James translators have a better idea, you can leave that capital H. But to take care of the needy and the poor, you need to honor them, you don't condescend to them, you don't do it in sort of a pitying superior manner.

Genuinely poor people need to be honored and cared for with respect, maintain their dignity. You don't always give them everything. And if they want to try to recompense, you allow them to do that because that honors them.

You don't treat them as a helpless, hapless victim, incapable of doing anything for themselves. Even the poor should be honored. And many times the best way to honor the poor is to let them do as much as they can for themselves and don't swamp them with charity.

This is why in Israel, the corners of the field, they didn't say of every harvest, when you gather and thresh and grind, set aside flour for the poor. That was not charity in Israel. That was not honoring the poor in Israel.

What were they to do? Leave the corners of the field, let them come and do for themselves. There is dignity, there is honor in doing as much as you are able to do. And

that's the idea here.

Well, we're only partway through this beautiful chiastic structure and we're out of time for tonight, but you can see that if you slow down and consider and assume that God has an actual spiritually valuable message in each one of these Proverbs, you saw what happened when we just read through them. It just, it's water off the duck's back. We've got to slow down and remember that this is divinely inspired truth.

And all we have to do is slow down and look at it and it will speak. The Holy Spirit will breathe life and fire into it. It is the hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces, but we have to respect the word.

That enables us to respect each other and to be people of truth, people of wisdom, people that reflect the glory of God and people that are qualified to serve now and in the ages to come. So that is our goal. That's why we're going to take our time to make sure we give it our best shot at understanding, interpreting, and applying these wonderful passages of scripture.

But we'll close for tonight in a word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful for the manna from heaven that nourishes our souls, enables us, gives us vision to see both in the present and in the future what is currently applicable and what prepares us for an eternal future with the Lord Jesus, hopefully qualified to stand in your presence and be approved as workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. We pray that the Holy Spirit will minister these things to each of our hearts in a way that is effective and makes a difference in the days to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.