

Proverbs 24-10-23b

We're ready to pick up our study here. We're now in chapter 15 and looking at the helpful truths that God the Father speaks to us to give us an understanding heart where wisdom will come to rest. As you come to verse four, you see that there is a recurring theme of speech, of what comes from the tongue.

And having seen the tongue of the wise in verse two, using knowledge rightly, we see it again here in verse four. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life. In fact, the word is, is not even present.

This is poetic Hebrew. So you can write this a wholesome tongue, comma, a tree of life. They're placed side by side for their similar benefits, partaking of eternal things, conferring blessing and health and wonderful opportunities.

A wholesome tongue, a tree of life. But perverseness in it breaks the spirit. Perverseness in the tongue breaks the spirit.

And this has an echo in verse 13. And once again, by looking at the symmetries and the structural breakdown here, verse 13 is suggested to us as a companion to verse four. So look at verse 13.

A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart, the spirit is broken. By sorrow of heart, the spirit is broken. This is similar to what is said in verse four.

The perversity breaks the spirit. So in Proverbs 15, 13, this idea of being broken is something that is broken by striking. You strike it somehow and it breaks.

The rod of iron with which the Lord Jesus will rule and it breaks in pieces the potter's vessel. This is that kind of breaking. And similarly, when we're in verse four, you have an idea of that which is bruised, is fractured, crashes, ruins, or shatters.

So this is not the same word in each case, but the concept is similar. And so it is complimentary. There are different ways in which a thing can be broken.

And so in verse four, a wholesome tongue confers life, vitality, health, wellness, blessing, beauty. But perversity in the tongue is the opposite. And the opposite is destruction.

This word translated breaks the spirit is translated 21 times in the Old Testament as destruction or destroys. It's translated as crashing, affliction, vexation, variously it's breaking, fracturing, crushing, breaching, ruining, shattering. The very opposite of what the tree of life does.

There is building up and there is tearing down. So we know that this is happening to the

spirit, the Ruach, the inner person, the life. Ruach is often translated life.

And perverse speech, if we practice it, if we allow it to become a pattern or a habit in the same way that there is health and blessing that spreads and extends beyond ourselves, so does the ruinous, fracturous destruction that comes from a perverse tongue. It ruins us and the hearers. We saw this in 2 Timothy just this past Sunday that striving to no profit about words is contributing to ruin, to destruction.

When you go to the complimentary verse here in verse 13, this merry heart reminds us, just as we've seen so far tonight, that speech originates in the heart. And if we cultivate a cheerful heart, remember our verse, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are noble, pure, lovely, of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

We choose what we think about. We can shove aside negative thoughts. We can shove aside a critical spirit and cultivate a cheerful heart.

This will fix our conversation. A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance. And it's hard to argue to no profit with a cheerful person.

If nothing else, you get humor out of it. You can disagree strongly, but I love to see people disagree that have a sense of humor. One of the problems, and I will betray my leanings in case you didn't already know them, but one of the notable things about people that are on the far left in the political spectrum and on the liberal side of social things, they are some of the most humorless people.

They're angry, they're bitter, they're just expletive-ridden, they can't understand, they're impatient, they are supercilious, they belittle others, and they're just no fun. These people are no fun. Regardless of the merits of your position, at least have a cheerful heart.

You ought to be upbeat. If you really believe your stuff is working and it's good, then you ought to be happy. A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.

Countenance is what other people see. The merry heart is on the inside, and in the same way that when you have the light of the Lord inside you, it's going to shine out. You can't put that under a bushel and contain it.

The divine presence, the power of the Holy Spirit with the word of God, with wisdom at rest in our hearts, it is going to emanate. You cannot put a human lid on divine energy. It's going to come forth.

And if we cultivate a merry heart, a happy heart, a positive, hopeful, looking forward to the future heart, despite whatever our afflictions may be, I may be persecuted on the outside, but my heart is happy on the inside. This affects the countenance. And it has

been scientifically proven that if you force yourself to smile and you do it often enough and long enough, it will lift your spirits.

There's a connection between the countenance and the heart. It's supposed to flow from the heart to the countenance. But science has shown that people that just force a smile and that it has an effect, because of that link, it'll kind of leak back the other direction.

And at least for a time, it will ease the heart. How much better to have the power of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit and the truth of God's word illuminate and energize our heart. And that is going to flow out to the countenance.

It's going to bless us and it is going to bless others. And if we leave sorrow present, we can weep with those who weep. We can sorrow, but we grieve not as those who have no hope.

And sorrow has a place. There is a time for joy. There is a time for sorrow, just as there is a time for everything under heaven.

But extended sorrow, long periods of sorrow, will break our spirit. And this is still ruach, it breaks the life. It will ruin the life.

And we have to, it's the Lord Jesus, one of his titles is a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. But when you look at the Lord Jesus in his earthly ministry, when you look at him seated at the right hand of the father, the Lord Jesus was a man of sorrows on occasions that called for sorrow. John chapter 11, Jesus wept.

Jesus on the brow of the hill, looking over Jerusalem, wept over the city. And that was a time of sorrow, but he was not habitually sorrowful. He was not characterized by sorrow.

Sorrow of that nature will break the spirit. And it is by blows. The word of the Lord is like a fire and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

When you're breaking rocks with a hammer, you have to hit it more than once. You have to hit it and then hit the pieces and then keep hitting and hitting with repeated blows. And that's the verb that is used here in this second part.

Too much sorrow is like a hammer blow and a hammer blow and a hammer blow, and it will crush and break the spirit. And this links back to verse four. So a wholesome tongue and a merry heart go together.

And this is what we want to cultivate. This is what we want to ask God in his grace to strengthen us. Remember 2 Timothy chapter two, the first verse says, Timothy, my son, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Be strengthened. Keep your spirit in one piece. Don't let sorrow hammer it and crack it apart.

This heart will be a place where wisdom resides from back in 1433. And this will yield a wholesome tongue. We will be blessed.

We will be comforted and encouraged. We'll be strengthened with might in the inner man. And then we will be a blessing to others with a wholesome tongue, using knowledge rightly and a tree of life.

People that come near will find blessing, restoration, uplift, divine presence. That's verse four. So it looks back to verses one and two, that soft answer that comes from a wholesome tongue.

And it also looks forward to verse 13. Now we come to verse five. A fool despises his father's instruction.

Remember chapter four that we looked at in the first session? My son, heed your father's instruction. I was once a son and I listened to my father's instruction. Now I'm the father and you're the son.

And it's all a picture of the heavenly father. A fool despises his father's instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent. To have an understanding heart where wisdom comes to rest, we have to be correctable.

None of us starts out wise. We don't start out with understanding. We don't start out being prudent.

These things have to be implanted in us by God's grace, by God's power. And it comes to us through the father's instruction. These pages of scripture are our heavenly father's instruction.

And to disregard it and despise is a little bit strong here. When it says to despise the father's instruction, this is a word that is translated to spurn. To not give something its due.

To not respect it. So you treat it as useless. Not helpful.

Don't need that. I've got a better thing. I've got a better way.

This word is occasionally translated blaspheme. To speak lightly of a thing. So a fool doesn't respect and give honor to his father's instruction.

But he who receives correction, and this is the word shamar, and it means to be a watchman, to keep watch over a thing. If you're going to keep watch, you have to be looking at something. If you're a sentry and you're assigned a part of the border of a post or a base, well, you've got to be looking at it.

This is what's not happening at some of our borders. Not just the Southern, but also the

Northern. It's not being monitored.

It's not being guarded. This is watch with good results. You can watch people cross the border and do nothing.

That's not really being a watchman. A watchman sounds the alarm. A watchman does something about it.

And so to receive correction, this is to be watchful, to be searching for that correction. And when you find it, you hang onto it. Shamar, it means to keep, to be beware, be watchful.

It is even translated to save or to preserve. So what are we going to do with instruction we receive from the word? How many times in scripture, we've talked about James, you look in it like a mirror. If you walk away and forget what you saw, what was the point of even looking? So he who receives correction is prudent.

This goes with verse 12 in the Symmetry. And you have the same ideas here, verse five and verse 12. A scoffer does not love one who corrects him.

So this despising instruction, this treating it lightly, disrespecting it, putting it off, is the scoffer who does not love the one who corrects him. So we've moved from how do you treat the correction? You despise the instruction. If you despise the instruction, that reflects what you think about the instructor.

You can't love the father and despise his instruction. And that's what verse 12 tells us. A scoffer does not love the one who is correcting him.

He's looking past the correction and he's not loving the one who loves him enough to try to give him correction. Nor will he go to the wise. He'll find ways to avoid being exposed to wisdom.

Instead of wisdom coming to rest in the heart of one who has understanding, this person is going to consciously or unconsciously avoid being exposed to wisdom because with wisdom comes correction. And you despise the instruction and you hate the one providing it. And so you're not going to go to them.

This puts distance between a believer and the father, whether they know it or not. Lord, Lord, in your name, we did these things. But when the Lord Jesus says, I never knew you, you would not come into the presence of wisdom or the wise.

You are uninterested in the mind of Christ. Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, Philippians chapter two. So we get more than double the value by linking these verses the way the text with its symmetry does.

And so verse five goes with verse 12. And also in the center, and again, this is something

commended by the structure here in between verse five and verse 12 is verse 10. What I've done in my Bible with a pencil, it's up to you, but next to the verse number, verse five, I just have slash 10 slash 12.

So that when I read verse five, I'll immediately go read verse 10 and then read verse 12. So when you read these together, verse five, and they're thematically and grammatically, syntactically related, similar concepts, similar words, similar ideas. So a fool despises his father's instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent.

That's verse five. Verse 10, harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way. He who hates correction will die.

That's the opposite of the tree of life, by the way, that we saw in verse 12. Instead of the wholesome tongue that is a tree of life, you depart from the wise, you scorn the instructor, you spurn the instruction, and being someone in verse 10 who forsakes the way and hates correction, it's the opposite of the tree of life. You die, you die operationally, you die in terms of fruit.

You die in terms of being woven in a positive way into God's plan. Now at best, we're gonna be an example of how to not do it. And that goes with verse 12.

A scoffer does not love the one who corrects him, nor will he go to the wise. Notice how this interacts with verse 10. Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way.

If you don't go to the wise and you forsake the way of the wise, the way of wisdom, this is the way of death. It seems right to the fool, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. So we have three different perspectives here on how we should treat correction.

Our instinct, our human nature is to push it away. If it is pointed out that something's not right, there was a failure, there was no mission, however unintentional, our immediate reaction is deflect defend, push back. Well, you didn't do something right either or whatever.

And sadly in the progressive movement, people are finding fault with God when God finds fault with them. And they're saying, well, the God of the Old Testament, that's not the kind of God I can worship. I can't worship a God that sends Israelites in to kill babies.

In the same way that there are people now who say, I can't support a nation that is killing women and children in Gaza or in South Lebanon or wherever else. I just can't support them because they're doing that. Well, the act itself is not sufficient for condemnation.

What is the rationale? What is the purpose? If God sends the Israelites in to kill women and children and animals and completely purge all vestiges of the former inhabitants, this is a righteous and holy God doing so. What that tells us at a minimum is that the act

itself is not intrinsically evil. What is the purpose? What is the motive? What is the goal? That's what determines whether taking a human life is a good thing or a bad thing.

David can say, blessed be the Lord who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight. He's talking about killing people. And David is blessing the Lord for making him a good soldier and a capable general to defeat the enemies of the Lord who need killing.

Capital punishment is prescribed in God's word, Old Testament and new for crimes of sufficient severity. It's prescribed. So the taking of a human life without context and without knowing what the purpose is, you can't say it's intrinsically evil or it's intrinsically wrong.

I need context. If this life is going to be taken, why? So in this context, if there is a word of correction to be spoken, is it being spoken in love? Is it being spoken for edification? Or is it a harsh word that is going to stir up wrath and anger? Why is a word of correction being spoken? And what is my response? Am I willing to receive correction? Do I have the humility to entertain the thought that this correction might help me improve? Cultivate a heart that receives instruction and therefore wisdom comes to rest there and finds its home there? Or am I going to be defensive and deflect and not be correctable? So much of what the word of God does is to reprove and correct and instruct us, meaning we need to change. All is not well.

And to deflect and to push away correction is to say, I'm good. Everything I'm doing is fine. I don't need correction.

I don't need instruction in righteousness. I certainly don't need rebuke. We have to be sensitive and cultivate humility, teachability.

Humility is the willingness to listen to something that isn't necessarily a tasty morsel for us. That's how these verses fit together. So despising a father's instruction in verse five goes with harsh discipline for those who forsake the way and hating correction.

That's the way of death, to hate correction. And then verse 12, scoffing. And you wind up not loving someone because they're trying to offer correction and you start avoiding and finding ways to not be exposed to that.

That brings us now to verse six. And we're going to find that there are two other verses that inform verse six. In the house of the righteous, there is much treasure, but in the revenue of the wicked is trouble.

In the house of the righteous, there is much treasure. How did that happen? We've seen over and over again in Proverbs that treasure is very often a metaphorical reference to wisdom, the true treasure, the riches that transcend this world and transcend this time and this body. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, not on earth where moths and rust corrupt thieves break into steel, treasure in heaven.

What is that treasure? It is the wisdom. It is the experience of God's grace and God's glory reflected in our lives that we will carry forward. So in the house of the righteous, there is much treasure.

You can be poor as a church mouse and still have treasure. What is your house? Is it your physical abode, your physical dwelling? If you're righteous, are you going to have fancy furniture and a new car in the driveway? In the house of the righteous is much treasure. This is part of the theme of wisdom that is being spoken and helpful correction that is being delivered.

But the revenue of the wicked, there is trouble. This goes with verse 11 in the symmetry here. Sheol and Abaddon, hell and destruction are before the Lord.

Hell and destruction are before the Lord. How much more the hearts of the sons of men. So the house is really the heart.

This is the heart where wisdom can rest and be at home because we have understanding. But in the revenue of the wicked is trouble. This is the traffic.

This is the transactions. This is having truck with them, having interactions and endeavoring to go along to get along with the wicked. And the hearts of the sons of men are before the Lord.

And the trouble that you see in verse six is coming as the Lord discerns what is in the hearts of those who are righteous and those who are wicked. The revenue, this is the traffic of the heart. This is conversation.

This is contact. This is relationship being unequally yoked in some cases. In the house of the righteous, there's much treasure.

The hearts of men are before the Lord. And this then links to verse 15. All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.

In the house of the righteous, there is much treasure, verse six. He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast. And you say, wait a minute, didn't I just see a merry heart a bit earlier? I sure did.

Up in verse 13. A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance. And he who is of a merry heart in verse 15 has a continual feast.

In the same way that this treasure for the righteous in verse six is spiritual treasure, the feast is a spiritual feast. And the house is the spiritual house of the heart. These are poetic allusions to the realities that transcend the material.

So all the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast. If you say, well, I'm afflicted and I can't do anything about the afflictions or the

sources of those afflictions, if you give up and play the victim and say, well, I'm afflicted and all of my days are evil and it's not my fault, I'm oppressed. I'm, prejudiced people are keeping me down.

I can't get a break. Hateful people are despising me and treating me ill. All the days of the afflicted are evil.

If we view ourselves as afflicted, if I define myself as afflicted, if all I do is look at my afflictions and that's what defines me, my days are going to be evil. What is the contrast? What is linked to this as the other alternative? Instead of being afflicted, be of a merry heart. Now to be of a merry heart, you've got to find something to be merry about, right? If you look at your afflictions, there's nothing mirthful about that.

There's nothing joyful and oh yeah, please sir, may I have another? Hit me again, crack my spirit with another hammer blow. So what do we have to do to cultivate a merry heart? We take our eyes off of affliction and we put them on blessings. We cultivate understanding and the presence of wisdom.

This brings the presence of God. This is something to be excited about. Old Testament believers as a rule did not enjoy the personal presence of the father and the son and the spirit.

It was occasional. It was exceptional that God would fill someone with power as he does Samson with the jawbone and David and others at special times. We have the daily privilege of the presence of God to soak ourselves in the truth of his word and the bright hope for the future.

And this momentary light affliction is working for us. It is actually being used by God to create the eternal weight of glory. Without the affliction, we don't get the eternal weight.

So if a little affliction gives me a lot of eternal glory, then I can withstand and I can endure and I can, by God's grace and being strengthened with might in the inner man, parlay my affliction into eternal glory and that's something to be happy about. It's a choice. This is the point.

You don't just accidentally have a merry heart in verse 10, nor do you have the merry heart in verse 15 accidentally or propitiously with some random circumstance suddenly gives me a merry heart. I choose a merry heart. I cultivate.

Wait, what is the second element in the fruit of the spirit? Right after love, what do you get? As a product of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the spirit is love. Say it out loud.

Joy. Joy gives a merry heart, right? This is supernatural joy. This is joy from the Holy Spirit.

I choose it. I cultivate it. I want it.

I prioritize it. I am not going to let sorrow break my spirit. I'm not gonna let perversity break my spirit, that which is perverse in the world, that which is perverse in people.

You see that in verse four. You see that in verse 13. That stuff breaks the spirit.

A merry heart, we're going to see, doeth good like a medicine. It will heal the fractured heart, but I have to know where to get a merry heart. I can't just sit around looking at my watch, waiting for the merry heart to arrive via UPS or FedEx or USPS or any of the innumerable other people that bring us a package almost daily.

I have to know where to get it. And that's back up in verse 33. Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding.

It's the same heart where wisdom rests that is merry. It's all the heart. This theme of the heart weaves through over and over again.

You can put an H in the margin of your Bible with a pencil and circle it. Every time you see a reference to the heart and the heart just keeps returning, resurfacing, turned in different aspects, looked at from different perspectives. So in the house of the righteous, there is treasure.

And this is the kind of treasure that enlivens the heart, that gives you joy. There are things that we have, when we look at them, they bring us joy because of the person that gave them to us or the experience we had when we found it or created it or acquired it. And this is why people have knickknacks and tchotchkes and souvenirs and little presents that they've gotten from people that are dear to them.

It isn't the object itself. It's what that object represents. And when you look at it, you're cheered.

Oh, I remember when I unwrapped that. I remember when we found that. And it brings a returning and recurring joy.

In the house of the righteous, there is much treasure. There's a lot to look at that will give you a merry heart. This is the kind of treasure that energizes and enlivens.

It's a tree of life. It infuses us with life. Go to the treasure.

If you keep looking at the affliction, it's gonna break your spirit. It's gonna hurt your heart. Set it aside, open up the vault, go in and flip on the bright lights and look at the treasure.

That's a merry heart. So you have this in the references to the heart here, especially in verse 14. The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge.

Another heart reference. So what is our conclusion? Spend time in this section of Proverbs and look at the way these verses connect together and shine a light on each other. I want a heart, and it begins in verse 33.

I want wisdom to come to rest in my heart. So what do I know about the heart? Well, I know that perversity will break it in verse four. I know that a merry heart will give me a cheerful countenance, which blesses me and others, but sorrow of the heart breaks the spirit.

If I've got a broken spirit, I've got to figure out why. And I need to get that merry heart that is healing and outward looking. Well, that's all the time we have for tonight.

We'll pick up here in the middle of chapter 15 next time. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful that you have provided this truth from your word that is medicine for our hearts.

It is strength. It is the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is the truth, and the power of that truth as it resides in us is mighty for the bringing down of towers of the enemy.

It is strengthening. It is enabling. It infuses us with hope for today and for the future.

We pray that as we reflect on it, God the Holy Spirit will help us to see where it applies in our own thinking, in our own lives, and that we can move forward in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name, amen.