

Proverbs 24-10-30a

Greetings fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church, enthusiasts for the Word of God, those who are enjoying the forward progress of human history because God is in His heaven and we are fully illuminated by His glory and His grace. The world may be headed for Hades in a hand basket, but we are held securely in God's hands and we're going to see this theme in our passage tonight. Surprisingly, there are large sections of Proverbs where you don't find the Lord listed or referred to directly.

We understand that He superintends, that these are His concepts, but He's going to be quite apparent in this last half of Proverbs chapter 15. And I like that because our security, our future hope, our existing salvation, everything we have now, both our blessings and our challenges, everything we look forward to in the future depends on the unchanging character, the immeasurable love of our Heavenly Father expressed most fully in bodily form through the Lord Jesus Christ. And to see Him directly referenced and at work in the affairs of men is a comfort and an encouragement, especially in trying days such as we all face at present.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we will dive in. Father, we are so grateful for another time of fellowship to be encouraged and built up by contact with fellow believers who share an appreciation for the Lord Jesus and enthusiasm for our calling. The opportunities that you've given us to redeem the time, our days do not simply pass to be lost in history with no permanent impact.

We are not like those opening verses of the Ecclesiastes where things are simply vanity and our efforts and our experiences pass into the wind to disappear. We are able to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. We are able to grow in grace and knowledge to be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And the work that you do in us moves forward in time into eternity. And we are so grateful for this facet of our salvation to be delivered from vanity, to be delivered from that which is temporary and ephemeral and ethereal, and to be laid like a foundation on solid rock and have the opportunity to build upon it. We pray that as we look at these verses of scripture together tonight, that your Holy Spirit will bless them to each of our hearts, help us to remember them, bring them to our minds as opportunities for application arise.

We know that when we learn, you will bring very soon afterward opportunities to make that application and to live in the light of these wonderful truths. And we pray that that will take place, that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus and represent Him on earth to draw others through that reflected light to you. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to pick up in the middle of chapter 15. We have been over the first portion a couple of times and each additional pass, we can refine and deepen our

understanding, but at the risk of moving too quickly, I'm going to move forward.

We're going to begin tonight in verse 11. We have a reference to the Lord here, and we're going to see that in the last half of this chapter, references to the Lord are prominent and effective. All of the other themes are related to this central concept that God is in his heaven.

He is the one who superintends. So as you begin here, and in verse 11, this is going to be a center of a triplet, and it actually reaches back into verse 10. So we have verse 10, 11, and 12.

These three verses are a unit. So I'll start at verse 10. Verse 11 is the heart.

It's the center. And there is a verse, a doublet, a double, a two line distich, if you will, on each side of it. But in verse 10, it says, harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way.

He who hates correction will die. There is an implied reference to the Lord there. Obviously, that correction and discipline is ultimately sourced in God.

Even if it comes through a human agency, a parent or an employer or a commanding officer or whoever it might be, harsh discipline and correction are ultimately sourced in God. Paul refers to this in Romans, and Peter and others refer to the fact that human government does not bear the sword in vain. We are to honor those who have authority because that authority in government, the king or whoever it may be, it derives from God.

So harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way. This was codified in Israel in the law of Moses. There were penalties.

There were consequences for those who malfunctioned, who disobeyed. So if you forsake the way, harsh discipline. Now think about this.

This is a biblical principle. It is so utterly lost in modern education, in modern ideas and postmodern ideas especially of child training. It began in the modern day with Dr. Spock back in the early 60s, and it has continued forward and gotten worse.

You would not believe unless you have had exposure to the current public school system and the state of education of children how far from this principle human ideas of child non-training have strayed. The Bible says, if you stray, if you err, if you disobey, if you rebel, if you forsake the way, you should receive harsh discipline. Now, this discipline should be administered in fairness.

It should be administered unemotionally, not in anger, not in impulsiveness. It should be measured. It should be calculated.

It should be done for believers prayerfully, skillfully, at the right level. God has light

correction for minor infractions and heavy discipline, heavy judgment, heavy correction for more grievous offenses. And human justice, human correction should be the same.

But make no mistake, you are not doing a child a favor by giving them a pass and saying, I just, I love them too much to make them feel bad about their kicking and biting and throwing and disobeying and being impudent and rebellious. I just, I don't want to be harsh. I'm afraid they won't love me if I don't overlook this and just try to use all carrot and no stick.

I just want to encourage positive behavior. If they are doing bad things, I'm just going to be very passive and stoic and immovable. And I'll wait until they do something good.

Then I'll give them a piece of candy for the good thing. And hopefully they're, they will be motivated by positive reinforcement, but I will give no negative consequences for negative behavior. Aside from the fact that experience will quickly prove this to be ridiculous and ineffective.

It is unbiblical. Look at what the Bible says. And this is just one representative passage.

Get your new treasury of scripture knowledge and look up all of the parallel passages. God implements consequences for disobedience, rebellion, departing from the way, forsaking his law. There are consequences and no discipline seems enjoyable at the time that it is administered, but it afterward yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

If you want peace and you want righteousness, you will be measured and you will be skillful in the proper administration of consequences in your sphere of authority. If you're a parent, it's your children. If you're an employer, it's your employees.

If you're an officer or a non-commissioned officer in the handling of those troops who are under your charge. But whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and he scourges every son whom he receives. God disciplines his children.

This is an example for us. It doesn't make us God and we have to be careful that we don't use verses like that as an excuse to be abusive or to carry things too far. But this is part of a balanced and healthy Christian life, is to recognize both when we receive correction and if we administer correction, it is necessary, it is godly, and it is biblical.

That's why this triplet, verse 10, 11, and 12 are of a piece. Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way. What way? This is the way that God has defined as the right way, the way of righteousness.

We do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful. Our delight is in the law of the Lord and we reflect on it. We think about it.

We bring it to mind and check to see if we are conforming ourselves to it day and night. If we do so, we'll be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Remember this from Psalm 1. So now verse 11 at the center, Sheol and Abaddon, translated hell and destruction here, are before the Lord.

How much more the hearts of the sons of men. Of all of the things that you could say are before the Lord in terms of his knowledge and his observation, why would the proverb writer choose these two? He doesn't say heaven and hell. He doesn't say war and peace.

He doesn't say the earth and the sea. He doesn't say the sky and the ground. He specifically chooses Sheol and Abaddon.

Sheol was thought to be the resting place of the dead. There was far less revelation about what happens after death in the Old Testament days. People just knew you're not here.

You have gone to Sheol. It is a place where God will administer consequences, death and the grave. These were far more mysterious in Old Testament days.

There was not a lot of divine revelation about them. But David writes in the Psalms, you will not leave my soul in Sheol. I will rise.

David believed in the resurrection. And whatever happens at the point that you depart this life, that was Sheol. It was conceptual.

It wasn't so much geographical as conceptual. This is where my soul goes. I am no longer participating in this life, Sheol.

But that was thought to be the destination of those who died, good and bad. You remember the descriptions that we understand from the king of Tyre in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. It talks about how when the king of Tyre falls in death, the kings that are in Sheol will rise up to meet him and rebuke him and so on.

So it wasn't just a destination for believers. We like to think that in New Testament times, they thought paradise. Today you will be with me in paradise.

It wasn't thought to be a shared location for the believing and unbelieving dead. It was more refined by Jesus day. But Sheol in almost all contexts is the place where human beings, human souls, go to await judgment after death.

That's the Old Testament concept in its simplest form. Abaddon is associated more with spirits that are not human, with fallen angels, with the pit, with the source of Satan's minions, if you will, Abaddon. And so when you have these two referenced together, they are not synonyms.

They are two separate places. They are not a part of this life. You can't buy a ticket and

get on a bus and go to Abaddon or to Sheol.

They're not a part of this material world or our time. They are in the realm of the spiritual, of that which is unreachable in this physical universe. But Sheol, you think of human souls.

Abaddon, you think of spirits and in particular the fallen, the evil. You don't expect Michael and Gabriel to be coming from Abaddon. This is the realm of Satan and those who have rebelled with him in heaven.

And even in secular or non-Hebrew ancient world beliefs, there were synonyms for this Abaddon that was the realm of the unclean or the negative, those who would come for harm and who you would try to appease or fend off or pray for deliverance and defense from. So when it says here that Sheol and Abaddon are before the Lord, this raises the Lord Jesus as you find in the New Testament, particularly when Paul says that God has raised him above every name that is named, that the Lord Jesus is above things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth. And God's reign and God's superiority is above both anything human, including what happens after death and anything angelic or demonic, including that which is not well understood, that which is mysterious and therefore can instill fear or dread or concern.

God is above that. Sheol and Abaddon, whether it is human or angelic, righteous or unrighteous, good or bad, believer, unbeliever, unfallen or fallen, it is before the Lord. And because it is before him, he is pictured as the king on the throne.

And these things are under his purview, under his control. They can be judged. They can be granted life.

They can be consigned to oblivion. He is in charge. Sheol and Abaddon, anything you can think of, however powerful, however scary, however you think of it, it is before the Lord.

How much more so the hearts of the sons of men. If God can judge the contents of Sheol and those who are consigned or dwell in Abaddon, how much more so the hearts of men who are alive on this earth, living in the material world, where we can see cause and effect, provision and judgment, God's blessing or God's cursing. If the ethereal and more powerful spiritual world is before the Lord, how much more so this subset, this more easily managed reality.

So it's an a fortiori argument. If God can control that, which is most powerful and is beyond human contact, comprehension or control, how much more so this world. That is the center of this triplet.

And what is the application? Even before we finish this set of six lines, what is the application? If God before us, who can be against us? Why should I fear what man can do unto me? God has got a grip on these large, amazingly more complex, deep and

mysterious areas, Sheol and Abaddon. If I love God, if I fear the Lord, if I am endeavoring to love God, if I am striving to live a life that is pleasing to Him, I am more secure than anything in the universe or beyond the universe. If God before us, who can be against us? The love of God blankets us, enfolds us.

Why should I fear mere men? Why should I fear how an election is going to turn out or what new policies will be implemented or how much my taxes or my prices, my expenses will go up, or my privileges and my opportunities will diminish. Why should I fear that? The only reason that would instill undue concern, I can certainly watch, I can be aware, I can plan, I can strategize, I can try to negotiate circumstances that may be increasingly negative. But what is more real to me? My heavenly father and his absolute sovereign control over things well beyond this measly life? Or am I more influenced and affected by these circumstances and by what people are doing? It's a choice we make.

We look at the heart of this triplet here. Sheol and Abaddon are before the Lord, how much more so the hearts of men? I want my heart to be approved in his sight. We have a wonderful parallel in our 2 Timothy study, 2.15. Be diligent, bend every effort to present ourselves approved to God.

Let's say that we do that and we are approved to God. What's the worry? If God approves of me, all things work together for good. He will make a demonstration of preserving me the way he did the Israelites in Goshen during the plagues on Egypt.

Remember how the Egyptians, all kinds of horrible things, lice, frogs, darkness, hail, and in Goshen, none of those things. The angel of death and the firstborn in every home dying mysteriously right up from the throne room in Egypt to the lowest of the servants, but not for those that had the blood on the doorpost. We think about our own life and our own soul.

Have I trusted the promise of God? Have I availed myself of the power of the sacrifice of my own Passover? The great Christ, our Passover, is his blood on the doorposts of my home. And I am a fearless and confident representative of the risen Lord Jesus in my life. We obviously are aware.

We plan, we negotiate, we handle what comes up, but not in fear, not in worry, not in more attention paid to circumstances and people, their opinions, their policies, their effects. If you are more worried about the election than you are about how did God evaluate my life this day, we need a shift. We need repentance.

We need a change of mind. And we need to be strengthened as 2 Timothy 2.1 says, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We need to be strong enough to brush aside mere circumstances and mere people and focus on the eternal powerful reality that our heavenly father is the ruler of all.

Nothing escapes his notice. Nothing penetrates his defenses on the wall of fire that he places around us. If he allows anything in, it is for our good and his glory.

There is no cause for fear. There is no reason for worry. In fact, we ought to be kind of excited that we have a ringside seat for the laying of the foundation for the time of the end.

I don't know how close we are, but I can tell you this, things are aligning in ways that they never before have done because this is the first time in all of human history that these movements and these influences and these developments are global. We've never had global communication as it exists today ever. And if you want to think about concepts we've observed for a long time, what is the revived Roman empire? What are the Tentos? Is it the European Union or whatever? Who's in, who's out? How many nations are there? Conceptually, don't forget to look at BRIC, B-R-I-C.

And this is Brazil and Russia and India and China. Read up on that a little bit. And those who want to join right now, now I'm not saying that BRIC is the Tento Confederacy, but right now there's nine nations and there's a 10th one trying to join.

So it's fun to look at, but we look with almost amusement. We look with excitement. God is superintending.

Satan can't do anything that God does not allow. Look at the life of Job. You can go so far and no farther.

I will allow you to do your best. And I will demonstrate that the righteousness that comes by faith will prevail. That's the message of the book of Job in a nutshell.

Do your worst, Satan. And my people who are called by my name, who will confess their sins and acknowledge their God in heaven, I will hear from heaven. I will forgive their sins and I will cleanse their land and I will grant them double blessing.

Anything that Job lost, God doubled it because he was faithful. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. That's what God is looking for.

That's the reason God allows hardship How can he create a situation to demonstrate why some will be greatest in the kingdom and others will be least unless we have an opportunity to show the strength and the depth of our confidence in God, our belief in his promises, our absolute assurance that what God has said he will do. You can't do that in prosperity. You can only do it in adversity.

So Sheol and Abaddon, these were scary foreboding concepts in the ancient world. And in Proverbs, it says, these are before the Lord. He is above, they are below, they come to him and he will judge, he will control, he will consign, he will eventually eliminate.

There's a day coming where there will be no Sheol. Death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire and they will exist no more. How much more so the hearts of the sons of men? God controls all of these things that are beyond our comprehension.

What should I be concerned about? What can I control? I can control my own heart and my heart is before the Lord. I want to present myself approved to him. Embracing a particular policy or a candidate or a philosophy or an approach or an opinion doesn't impress God.

What is my heart made of? What is the confidence and the foundation on which my life rests? That moves you now into verse 12, which is the third verse in this triplet. A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, nor will he go to the wise. Those who make light of, those who don't pay sufficient attention to God's sovereign purview, God's righteous demand, God's offer of life through faith are scoffers.

And what is the fate of a scoffer? Well, he does not love one who corrects him. There are believers who refuse and it is rife. It is plentiful.

It is almost ubiquitous in the Christian world today that there are vast portions of scripture that are dismissed and waved away. Why? Because people don't like correction. They're scoffing at correction, the correction of scripture.

I don't like that correction. And so I'm going to, they used to have a term a couple hundred years ago, a scoff law. He's a scoff law.

He waves away the law with a careless gesture. I don't care about the law. And there are those who don't honestly devote themselves to being pleasing in God's sight.

They want to be pleasing in their own sight and use selected scriptures as an excuse. Unless you are reading and keeping up with Christian literature, Christian videos, Christian influencers, Christian podcasters and speakers, you don't know the vast extent to which this viewpoint has made inroads into what calls itself Christianity today. It is everywhere and it is in your face.

If you say that scripture forbids certain evil lifestyles and things that God calls an abomination, you will be scoffed into separated silence. You will be demeaned and diminished and called out as unchristian when you are the Christian and the people doing the scoffing are the ones who ought to be looking at their own conformity to the word of God. It is more than your life is worth.

I find it an illustration of this kind of thing that there are people who may believe in the policies and in the history that has been established by one or another candidate in the past, but they don't want to tell people that's who they're going to vote for. They don't want to put a sign in their yard. I don't put signs in my yard either and nobody would see it if I did.

But I've never been, even when we lived in the city, but to be bashful and to try to avoid the question, well, who are you going to vote for? And to, you believe it, but you don't want to be seen as believing it. This is the kind of reaction that formal Christianity has cultivated amongst God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians. We believe that the word of God has something to say about evil lifestyles in the Old Testament law in Romans chapter one.

The last half of that chapter, the Bible is clear about what is and isn't vile and evil and an abomination in God's sight and something that ought to be viewed as such and called out as such when the issue is raised in our personal periphery, but they've succeeded in making us bashful. Well, I'll just remain silent. I'll go along to get along, even when asked.

We are not called to go jump on someone proactively, but if we are asked directly, well, what do you think about that? We should be ready to give an answer based on scripture and not be embarrassed or allow people to shame us because we understand correctly what the Bible teaches and what God calls good and what God calls evil. Who is going to communicate it? If not Bible church, educated, well-informed, thoughtful, faithful, narrow road-walking Christians. If we don't speak up when we are asked directly, I'm not saying picket, I'm not saying demonstrate, I'm not saying go try to change society proactively, but we shouldn't be bashful and we shouldn't be shy.

If somebody says, well, Sam, what do you think? Well, it isn't so much what I think, I would reply, it is what the Bible teaches. And here's what the Bible says. And if you have an issue with this, take it to God because it's his word.

I didn't make it up. I didn't draw extrapolated, interpolated conclusions. It is clear as day on the page.

And so I believe the Bible and this is what the Bible says. So if you have an issue with my belief, don't question my belief, figure out where I'm wrong understanding the Bible and make it a biblical issue. Make it a God's standards issue, not, well, you're a bad person because you believe differently than me.

Nobody should call people names for believing differently or voting differently. There's really name calling doesn't accomplish anything. Get on the ground of truth.

Get on the ground of scripture. Thus saith the Lord. Be a Berean, search the scriptures and see if these things are so.

And if they are, I'm going with God's word because I want to present myself approved to him, a workman not ashamed because I rightly stack the concepts and the truths, the doctrines, principles, and promises of his word. And I care about what he thinks a whole lot more than I care about what you think. And you should do the same.

I encourage you to go before the Lord. If you're a believer, if you're talking to a believer, I would encourage you to do as I have done and prayerfully address yourself to God's word and ask him for light, ask him for understanding, ask him for wisdom. James says, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of the Lord.

And only if you think that you are the source and fountain of all wisdom and you don't need any more, would you not pray that prayer? Who would not ask God for more wisdom? Have we got enough? Obviously not. So this is our challenge. Look at this triplet.

These three verses go together and they shed light. They take a full orb concept with God presiding over everything, including the abode of the human dead and the abode of the fallen spirits. He is the judge of our hearts.

We need to be confident in presenting ourselves, our hearts approved to him. Why? Because when harsh discipline comes, we respond. Any parent knows sometimes we have had to implement harsh discipline.

Why? It's not enjoyable. In fact, it is one of the most difficult tests of love for your children that you will inflict a harsh penalty on wrongdoing. It isn't fun.

It's not a happy day. But if you really love your children, you will do what God does with those that he loves. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

Whom the child that a parent loves, they chasten. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. If you don't want them to grow up and cultivate and encourage and proliferate that foolishness, the rod of correction is needed to drive it far from them.

But it has to be done skillfully. It has to be done prayerfully. It has to be done in a measured, prayerful fashion.

So a scoffer does not love the one who corrects him. Notice, if the Lord loves us and corrects us, if the word of God is profitable for correction, if we don't respond to it, we don't love him. And all of those promises that are contingent upon love, the one who has my words and keeps them, Jesus says, John 14, 15, he's the one who loves me if he has my words.

Because inevitably, if we have his words, they are going to correct us. They are going to instruct us in righteousness. And if we have his words and keep them, we love him.

And he will come and make his home. He and the Father will come and abide with us. What more could you possibly want? What's better than that? Are you going to lose out in some fashion when God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all three residing with you, in you, around you? Try to think of one bad outcome from the Trinitarian God dwelling in your midst.

Tell me a bad outcome from that. Hell and destruction are before the Lord. He's on our side.

He wants to make his home with us. Anything going to come into the throne room and mess up God's plan and purpose? I don't think so. So think about these verses, write them down, read them in the morning.

If I get harsh discipline, if I get correction, I want to figure out what it's for. I want to correct the issue so that it will accomplish its purpose and God can draw near to me in love, in blessing, in positive outcome. If harsh correction comes, it's because I need it.

To repudiate it is to say, God doesn't know what he's doing. My standard is better than his. Well, what's going to happen? The scoffer does not love the one who corrects him.

You don't love God and God cannot manifest and express love to us, nor will he go to the wise. And you will find that those who don't respond to instruction, don't respond to correction, they will separate themselves from wisdom. They will go to other news sources.

They will go to news sources that only say what they want to hear and don't correct their understanding. This is regardless of whether it's world events, political events, I will go to somebody who says what I want to hear. It won't correct misapprehensions, misunderstandings, outright lies that have been perpetrated.

If you don't sample viewpoints from all sides, you're going to fail to be corrected in misapprehensions. Did somebody really say a thing? Well, if you only listen to one very prejudiced side, you'll believe that they did and you will act accordingly and you will be wrong. That's just a secular example of a spiritual truth.

We need to go to the source of the word of God for correction and when we hear it, we need to respond and be corrected. Hearing it doesn't correct us. Responding to it corrects us.

Well, we will pick up here after this wonderful triplet on God's judgment and God's correction at verse 13 when we come back from the break.