

Proverbs 24-12-04b

We're ready now to resume our study here in Proverbs chapter 15. We have seen verses 18 and 19 which are the concluding verses in the section that began here in an earlier part and we're starting a new section here and the way we know this is there is a marker, a wise son, a wise son. You're remembering that these Proverbs were addressed to my son.

We had an extended introduction in chapters 1 through 9 and my son if that won't receive my words and so on and so then we saw that there was a section that began in chapter 10 verse 1, a wise son makes a glad father but a foolish son is the grief of his mother and that ended that preliminary section with the crafty harlot and the personification of wisdom and all of those exhortations to pay attention to the guidance and counsel of the father and the mother. This is the structure by which children are to be trained. Not a public school system.

Isn't it interesting that God did not institute public school for Israel? Didn't say the sons of Levi will gather little children and take them to class and inculcate them. It's a family responsibility. The training of children is to be done by parents, Old Testament and new.

A father rules well his own household and ensures that his children are not reprobate. They are not disobedient. They are rebellious.

It is not the church's responsibility. It is not society's responsibility. It is the family that God has delegated authority to the father and mother through the Lord Jesus Christ for the raising of children.

So in chapter 10 verse 1 we saw the section of Proverbs proper really begin. These aphorisms that are two-line statements and so on. Then we saw this in chapter 11 and chapter 12 and then beginning in chapter 13 we had a new section beginning.

And that was chapter 13 verse 1. A wise son heeds his father's instruction but a scoffer does not listen to or heed rebuke. It's tough sometimes to countenance correction for someone to point out where we are falling short, failing by either commission or omission. And when it is pointed out it takes humility to be correctable.

One of the definitions of humility is teachability. The arrogant can't be told anything, can't be taught anything. They've got it all figured out.

They know best. They know better. They've got the bona fides and the qualifications and the experience and you can't tell them anything.

They want to tell you something and they do not listen to rebuke. So in Proverbs 13 verse 1 a wise son heeds his father's instruction. A scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

And scoffing is in that panoply, in that collection of attributes of the angry, those that lack self-control, those that sow dissension and contention, the arrogant, the foolish, the wayward, the

perverse, and so on. Well now here this would have been a good place for a chapter division right after verse 19 because once again we have a section heading a wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother. So the next 14 Proverbs here, this is 1520 through 1533, are going to contrast the righteous and the wicked and there's going to be a heavy emphasis on the Lord as judge, the one who rewards and the one who punishes.

You're going to see this especially in verses 25 through 30. In earlier Proverbs there has only been an occasional allusion to the Lord. We've noted these as we have encountered them in chapters 10 through 15a, if you will.

But there is going to be a very strong emphasis on the role of the Lord in judging and then dispensing either reward or discipline in verses 25 through 30. So this is going to be the meat in the middle of the sandwich, if you will, from verses 20 through 24, which is the lead in to that central section and then verses 31 through 33, which is the lead out. In radio we say you have an intro and you have an outro to the main core and that's what we're going to have in this next section.

So we are now going to be looking at Proverbs 15 20 through 33. So it begins, as I said, with this observation that a wise son causes his father to rejoice. And one of the ways we know that verses 20 through 24 are a unit is three of the four verses here are about joy.

Rejoice is a continuing joy, a joy that extends beyond a momentary event. So joy, rejoice, these are almost interchangeable terms. And we're going to see in verse 20, in verse 21, and in verse 23, direct references to joy.

That is going to be interrupted in verse 22. And we'll see that when we get there. And it is remarkable because it doesn't contain a reference to joy in in a very clearly demarked section or demarcated section.

So verse 20, a wise son makes a father glad he is the joy of his father, he causes his father to rejoice. And a godly father in particular, is going to be gratified and take great pleasure in watching his son develop a godly life to walk circumspectly to heed these pieces of wisdom that are contained and communicated in the Proverbs. But a fool despises his mother, his mother, of course, will always love him.

But there is a deep grief, it's hard to imagine a greater grief, except the bereavement of a child, that to see a child walk in a wayward manner, to go a foolish direction. What does it mean to be foolish, to be a foolish man to be a foolish person? The man here, of course, is put for any offspring, this could be a son or a daughter. It can also be someone in the spiritual realm that you care about and have served in a fatherly role the way Paul did for Timothy, a mentor in a sense, a father in Christ, a spiritual guide.

You can be a man or a woman and you have this opportunity to attempt to be an influence in the direction of divine wisdom, to speak it, to represent it, to live it out. And there is a grief

when that exhortation, that encouragement, that parental or influential presence doesn't bear fruit. The mother is going to love the child regardless, but this going off in the direction of foolishness and the foolishness is anything that doesn't reflect divine wisdom.

It isn't just foolish investments or foolish social decisions or foolish choice of career path. This is foolish, meaning rejection of divine wisdom, rejection of divine truth, rejection of scripture, rejection in our age of the Christian life, of the influence of the Holy Spirit, the strength that is in Christ Jesus, the word that is a lamp to our light and the light to our path. Throw that all over.

I've got a whole different view. And this inevitably creates a deep and abiding grief on the part of those who love someone but cannot divert them from this foolish course. So this is not addressed to the father or the mother.

It is simply a description of what happens. And it doesn't have a remedy. It doesn't have a prescription.

It is simply an observation. It is a reality in life that there will be those who choose the foolish way. And there is going to be a legitimate grief for those who are a legitimate joy in watching someone follow the way of wisdom.

John, in his epistles, says, I have no greater joy than to see that my children walk in truth. And he's talking about the believers over whom he is the pastor, shepherd, and teacher. And what a wonderful gratification and blessing to see that God has used John, for example, in a way that is a benefit to these who are walking in truth.

He doesn't say those of you that are walking, according to my advice, says you're walking in truth, you're walking in the scripture, and there is a joy and rejoicing in his heart. So this then brings you to verse 21, another reference to joy. And it says, Folly is joy to the one destitute of discernment.

Notice, this is inevitably contrasting because it directly follows verse 20. What is a genuine and legitimate joy? To celebrate God's truth and God's wisdom being followed and evidencing its fruit and its strength and reflecting the glory of God. And those who are wise are joyful at seeing the next generation come up and observe, practice and benefit from that wisdom.

There is a different kind of joy, a fleeting, transient, and completely non eternal joy that characterizes those who are destitute of discernment. The father in the preceding verse is discerning, and he recognizes that even if a son is practicing an unconventional life, maybe he's running counter to the wisdom of the world, and he hasn't chosen to make a lot of money or to pursue a career that is rife with opportunities for advancement and high pay and benefits and the measures of success that the world employs. But he has discernment, and he says, you know, everywhere it counts, I rejoice because you are a wise son, you're a wise child.

And that wisdom is worth more than all of the world's emoluments. But to those who are destitute of discernment, they rejoice because, oh, my child became a doctor or a lawyer, or

they're making their first million before they're 30, and they married someone who's beautiful and socially acceptable, and their marriage may be headed for the rocks. But at the moment, this folly creates a kind of joy.

So your parents being happy about your path isn't the measure, is it? If you have a wise set of parents, and they are happy, that's a good clue. But if you've got foolish parents, then their joy in your decisions is meaningless, because folly is joy to those destitute of discernment. But a man of understanding walks uprightly.

If you don't have the ability to tell the difference between good and bad, between what is genuinely pleasing in God's sight and what is worthless, you're naturally going to be pulled in the direction of the worthless. It's symptomatic. Lack of a relationship with God, lack of appreciation for divine truth, you're not going to fail forward.

You're not going to fail upward. You're not going to be drawn closer to God. Quite the opposite.

So this literally in Hebrew says, a man of discernment makes his going straight. We saw in a previous proverb where it said, with these wrathful and contentious men, do not go. The way of going is blocked by thorns and thistles.

A man of discernment makes his going straight. It's a straight path. It's the shortest distance between two points.

He makes a conscious choice to walk in the path, which is morally right. Psalm 1, 1 and following. You don't stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful.

Well, now you come to verses 22 and 23. Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors, they are established. Now we saw a previous proverb talking about the counsel.

In the multitude of counselors, there is safety. Proverbs 24, verse six. And in my view, when it says multitude, this is the same word that is used for greatness, for the multiplied wisdom that you find in a worthy counselor.

It isn't how many there are, like you can take an average of their advice. Usually the larger a committee is, the more stultified and unmoving they are. It is the greatness of counsel.

It only takes one person presenting wise counsel to make a difference. So you need counsel, but you don't need endless numbers. We saw this back in Proverbs 11, 14, where there is no counsel, the people fall.

But in the multitude, or I would say in the greatness of counselors, there is safety. And that is reiterated to a great extent in Proverbs 24, verse six. In Proverbs 20, verse 18, plans are grounded, established, made firm by counsel.

And by wise counsel, you can wage war. You've got to have wisdom in putting things on the line, taking risk, endangering yourself or others. You need counsel, not just any counsel or not

an average of a multitude of counselors.

You need wise counsel. That's Proverbs 20, verse 18. Solomon alludes to this in Ecclesiastes chapter eight, verse six, for every matter, there is a time and judgment.

When there are different matters, there may be a different time and a different form of counsel, a different analysis, different conclusions, different judgment. But the misery of man will increase greatly, especially where there is no counsel and there is poor judgment. So a plan has a better chance of succeeding.

And what does it mean to succeed? Is it the human measure of success? Oh, I took them to a support group, and now they are no longer exhibiting that bad behavior. Well, the human measure is there was a bad practice or a bad habit or a bad behavior. The support group has somehow ameliorated that practice, habit or behavior, that destructive pattern.

But is God glorified in any way? Is the plan and purpose of God furthered? Is the glory of the Lord in Jesus Christ advanced or reflected? Is there a testimony? Is there a witness? Has the power of God come into the life of believers through this process? If all you did was cure a bad habit, that may be a human measure of success, but is it God's measure of success? If it is the wisdom of men, cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, but his heart has departed from the Lord. He's going to be like a shrub in the desert. He's not going to see good when it comes, genuine divine good.

It isn't enough to satisfy a human standard of improvement or of success. The only measure that counts is God's measure. So what does it mean to succeed? What does it mean to advance? This is in the eyes of God.

And this is the direction we are moving here in this section of Proverbs 15, where we're going to see that focus on the Lord in the center section. So where there is no counsel, plans are frustrated. The plans go awry.

But in the greatness of counselors, they are established. What kind of counsel is great? What kind of counsel is worthy? Wise counsel is God's wisdom. You don't go to a really super financial planner and decide to make investments and buy certain stocks and invest in certain securities and, oh, look, my balance has increased.

That's success. No. God's wisdom.

God's standard of measure. Well, then in verse 23, in the answer or the utterance of his mouth, a person has joy. People enjoy expressing their opinion, arguing for their point of view, dispensing their understanding of how things are and how they should be and what could fix them.

There is joy. In other words, we tend to love the sound of our own voice. We enjoy speaking.

Right? If you've got a captive audience, hold forth. That's what this is saying. A man enjoys the answer or the utterance of his mouth.

Somebody asks a question, it's like asking a fire station for a drink. I enjoy dispensing my viewpoint. But you notice the word and there? This is just a wow in Hebrew.

It can be now, but, then, afterwards. This is totally interpretive here. I would translate this, but.

A man enjoys hearing himself speak. But a word in due season. That's genuinely good.

When you can speak at the right time with the right content and partake of God's divine good, that is an entirely different thing. Rattling to hear yourself talk is one thing. But remember in another proverb, a word fitly spoken, apples of gold, pictures of silver.

This is the word of wisdom. This is that godly counsel that can make a difference. A stitch in time saves nine.

And this requires discernment and discretion and self-control on our part. How do you know that you are speaking a word in due season? What season shows itself to be due? When do we speak? I would submit to you that the word fitly spoken, the word in due season, is a response to a query, a question, from a seeking heart. From someone who, perhaps, has reached the end of their own resources.

They realize the limitations of their own understanding. They see the results of doing it their way. And they are looking.

Remember what Peter says, be ready to give an answer to those who ask. A reason for your hope. To promiscuously, preemptively, proactively dispense our wisdom is often casting pearls before swine.

And when Jesus says they will turn, you remember what that means. They were headed in another direction. They're not coming to you and asking.

The swine are leaving. And you're saying, but I've got these pearls. And when you cast the pearls before swine, they turn and tear you to pieces.

If they're leaving, let them go. A word in due season is a word that is appreciated. A word that is being sought.

A word that will be met with humility, with consideration, with a thoughtful time of reflection. That's due season. Words that are ignored, words that are met with, that can't be right, with argumentation, with contention, with strife, that wasn't a word fitly spoken.

And if you speak a word, and you immediately get defense and reaction, it is time to stop. It is time to seek peace. It is time to avoid controversy.

So, if you can tell that somebody is speaking because they enjoy the sound of their own voice, and they are in the output mode and not in the input mode. Computers make this so clear. You have input devices like the mouse.

You put information into the computer in that way. The screen and a printer are output devices. If you try to bang on your printer to get the computer to do something, you're totally wasting your time because that's an output device.

It is putting stuff out from the computer. It's not sending it back in. And if someone is in conversation with us, and they are printing, and they are displaying, and they're not in an input mode, why input? That is not going to be a word in due season.

It is not a word fitly spoken. People have to be looking, genuinely looking for input. Not, I want to hear what you say because I'm ripe for an argument.

I want to cross swords. I want to tilt windmills. So, tell me what you believe, and I'm going to shoot you down.

You're not going to respond with a fitly spoken word, with a word in due season. How practical are these observations? How helpful is it for us to avoid wasting time, wasting words, and ultimately dividing relationships when it is our goal and our hope that we can be those who unify, those who are agents of peace and of bringing people together? At best, we should live peaceably, not create, cause, or exacerbate strife and contention. If other people want to contend and divide, fine.

If they are angry people, if they are divisive and contentious, we need to create a distance between ourselves and them. Do not go with them and so on. So, a word in time, a word fitly spoken in its time, it's the right time, the right place.

And in many cases, this may even be a word of correction or a word of criticism. This is what Paul is talking to Timothy about in 2 Timothy chapter 2. So, you come to verse 24. The way of life winds upward for the wise that he may turn away from Sheol below.

The way of life winds upward for the wise. If it's an upward way, what are you getting away from? Valleys, pits, pitfalls. If you think about the word pitfall, it brings to mind falling into a pit.

If the blind lead the blind, what happens? They both fall into the ditch. So, the path of life is upward for the wise. You see how beautifully these proverbial statements inform and color and provide context for each other.

The greatness of counsel, it's going to be permeated with wisdom. It is going to be spoken at the right time, under the right conditions. It is going to promote peace and not contention.

Even when wisdom dictates that our path is rough and steep, it is leading away from destruction. And if we are heading on the upward way, it's a climb. It may require effort.

But what are we distancing ourselves from? Sheol, the abode of the dead. It is always everywhere in scripture, Sheol, Hades, it's down. Jerusalem with the presence of God is always up.

Do you want to climb the slopes of Zion or do you want to descend into the valley of Hinnom, into Sheol? A long and happy life is the promise for those who walk in wisdom, you go back to Proverbs 3, verse 16. Length of days is in the right hand of wisdom. Length of days is in her right hand and in her left hand, riches and honor, genuine riches, divine honor that persists, can't be taken, does not fade away.

Moth and rust don't corrupt, thieves don't break in and steal. Length of days, riches and honor, but it can be a climb. Doing the right thing, separating from contention, separating from those who are on the fool's path is difficult, but it is not just advised, it is required, it is commanded of us.

Well, this brings us now to the center section that focuses on the Lord. What a wonderful section. And this is what we will look at next time, verses 25 through 29.

Beautiful section, sandwiched between these that we have seen in verse 22 through 24. And again, in verses 31 through 33. So we'll pick up at that point next time, but let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we are so grateful that we have this powerful instruction from your word. And in the hands of your spirit, we are enabled to live a supernatural life, to travel an exceptional path that distances us from the ways of the world, from sorrow, from destruction, from death itself. We pray that as we reflect on these words of scripture, that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister them to our hearts, help us to see clearly what is required of us, give us the strength to execute that purpose, to fulfill that plan in our own lives so that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus and be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.