

Proverbs 24-12-11a

Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is Wednesday, the 11th of December, 2024, my grandmother Ginger's 110th birthday or thereabouts, celebrating in glory, of course. But we continue tonight our study in the Book of Proverbs, resuming in chapter 15, verse 24.

This is a very pertinent and practical section for us. It gives us a lot of grist for the mill, a lot of direct and applicable guidance in terms of how we interact with the world, the pursuit of wisdom, and the joy that attaches to it because of the presence of the Lord in our lives. And this section is going to conclude with several references to the Lord, somewhat unusual in Proverbs to have this, but it is at the core of why things happen the way they do.

People are mystified by cause and effect in the world in many cases, but the Proverbs collection is clear that these observations and these truths are true because they derive their execution and their implementation from God himself. Let's ask God's blessing on our time in fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for this time of fellowship, another opportunity to look into the truth of your Word and be edified and given the light and the power to fulfill your plan and purpose in our lives.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister these things to our hearts in an effective and meaningful way so that we will be fruitful, we will be joyful, we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. This section, as you remember, a good place for the chapter break would have been chapter 15 verse 20.

This reiterates and reintroduces a concept that we saw back in chapter 10 verse 1 and we find it here in verse 20 about the wise son, the effect on the father and on the mother. It is pertinent, it is something notable or significant. If you keep your finger here and turn back to chapter 10 verse 1, you should be able to detect two differences.

The first phrase is virtually identical, a wise son makes a glad father in 10.1, a wise son makes a father glad in verse 20. That's just a variation in the English, but you should see two differences in the second phrase. Do you notice in chapter 10 verse 1, the second line, a foolish son is the grief of his mother and here a foolish man despises his mother.

Two differences, do you see what they are? What's the first difference in the second line, the effect on the mother? We have the word son, which is ben, the E-N, son of David, son of her. Ben means son, we don't have son here in chapter 15 verse 20, it is man, Adam. There are no wasted words, there are no differences merely for stylistic variation in scripture, everything is susceptible to being important for us.

So notice that when someone becomes foolish, this is almost like a demotion. He was a foolish son that brought grief to his mother earlier, now he is a foolish man who despises his mother. And you can see that there is a separation between the child and the mother.

It starts out a foolish child and the mother grieves, but now it is a foolish man and he has an attitude, her attitude is one of grief in 10.1, his attitude is one of lack of respect, lack of consideration. Lack of desire to be reconciled and to have an intimate relationship, he despises his mother. And from the point of view of the parents, instead of being a son, he's a person.

Adam is man in the generic sense. So this is so sad, it is the opposite of joy, it is opposite of gladness. This is what happens and this reinforces and reiterates the contrast in the results of what we choose.

We can choose to seek and pursue righteousness and a life that pleases God, that puts God first, that puts the people of God first, that honors our father and mother because it is the will of God, or we can be those who pursue their own way. And we've seen this contrast over and over, beginning in the introduction to Proverbs and certainly a theme that has visited time and again, starting in chapter 10 and coming all the way here to chapter 15. And because of this in verse 21, we saw that folly is joy to those destitute of discernment.

You may have seen this past week that there was an insurance corporation CEO who was gunned down in the street in cold blood, shot in the back by a disgruntled individual, which is bad enough. But this individual has been celebrated, has been applauded, there are t-shirts, there are lookalike contests, there are discussions back and forth where people are saying, well, it's about time somebody stuck it to the insurance company. That is a lack of discernment.

It is folly to advocate violence, but this is merely the outcome of the toleration of violence that we've seen in recent years with riots in cities where people, because of their political beliefs, because of their social dissatisfaction and unhappiness, they feel oppressed, they feel that there's injustice, they feel that they're not getting a fair shake, and that because of a perceived injustice, violence is okay. Violence is permissible. Violence may be the only way to draw someone's attention to an issue.

Far cry from the oft-quoted Martin Luther King, who promoted a non-violent resistance. And whatever else you want to say about Martin Luther King, he did not advocate violence. He was often met with violence by small-minded and ignorant people, but he never promoted, advocated, or argued in favor of a violent response.

But now, if you're sufficiently unhappy, violence is okay. And with the mainstream media and others applauding and supporting and vindicating people who caused billions of dollars of damage, destroyed family-owned and minority-owned businesses by the hundreds, caused loss of life in the thousands, those 439 riots that took place a couple of years ago in the name of BLM and so on, and this was not decried, it wasn't condemned, certainly not sufficiently. And now there is this mindset that, well, if you're angry enough and you act out, they don't even call it lash out or commit violence or perpetrate a crime, now it's just, well, they're acting out.

No, it is wrong, and it is foolish, and you have a conscience that is seared with a hot iron if you cannot tell the difference between what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is

wrong. In this country, it used to be understood that shooting someone in the back was the most cowardly, dastardly, and vicious crime someone could commit. If you're going to try to take someone's life, at least look them in the eyes.

Not this guy, but he's, in some circles, he's a hero. People are calling for his vindication and his extradition and asking the outgoing president to pardon him because he's done a good thing. Remember, perilous times will come.

Men will call good evil. You've seen some examples of that in the recent news, people trying to protect other people from a drug-deranged, violent person, and they are the ones who get arrested and narrowly avoid being sent to prison for suppressing someone who was trying to do violence and harm to women and children on the subway. It's virtually miraculous that after a corrupt arm of law enforcement tried to get him not only prosecuted but convicted and broke the law in sending the issue back to the jury after they had deadlocked and created a mistrial.

It's heinous, but these are the perilous times. People are calling good evil, and they are calling evil good. Never more openly and obviously than now.

It is unconscionable. It begs description. It is hard to understand or to enter into how people can look at a situation that is so obviously and clearly defined in terms of what is right and what is wrong and draw the opposite conclusion.

But folly is joy, and there is a perverse self-satisfaction and sense of personal righteousness and wisdom because you create your own standard and judge yourself by it and find others who are similarly perverse and the notion that there is safety in numbers and that if other people think it, it must be okay. And this is an increasingly evident feature of our postmodern society. You don't have a wise son making his father glad, following in the right, proper, and traditional understanding of right and wrong, even basic ethics, much less morality, much less spirituality, and people that run afoul of all of those things.

And anytime they don't get their way, they're quick to hurl epithets and accusations of bigotry and racism. And anything that doesn't go my way, well, it's racism. They accuse people that are the same color as them of racism.

And they say, well, you're not really one of us. You're on the other side. And so you're a racist, even though you're the same race as what you're arguing against.

Folly is joy, destitute of discernment. We can't go out and fix the people that are on the lunatic fringe that are drawing these conclusions. But Scripture says we need to observe and then turn our clearness of discernment and the sharpness of our gaze on ourselves.

And having done the last half of Romans chapter one, we then need to look at Romans chapter two. Are we doing the same thing? Discernment requires humility, a desire to cultivate a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith like we've seen in first Timothy. And we should be warned.

We should be alarmed when we see the people who are made of the very same clay as we are. They live in the very same country. They've been exposed to much of the same information and opportunity as we.

And if they can be this foolish and this wrongheaded, it is not impossible that there are areas of our life where we can inadvertently and unknowingly be doing the same. This is why, as I point out almost every Bible class, that we have to pray the Psalm 51 prayer and ask for discernment. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me.

Show me my hidden faults. That is a prayer that requires humility. And we have to have a desire to not become one of these people even as we are looking at them in shock and disgust.

This foolishness on the part of someone who leaves wisdom, leaves the path of righteousness, and starts defining it for themselves will disrupt intimate relationships. It can destroy marriages. You can end up putting someone in the position of being unequally yoked with the faithless.

You can divide a household, as Jesus said, those who want to follow the Lord and those who don't. It is a sword that will divide households, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons. This will turn someone from a son or a daughter into an adam, just a person.

And they find your faith and your hope silly. And whatever they may say and however they may smile, the Bible says that those who pursue this path will end up despising those of us who are endeavoring to live our lives to please God. It is inevitable.

And we need to walk uprightly. A man of understanding will not leave the path of uprightness trying to follow and bring back the prodigal on their way to the hog trough. A man of understanding continues to walk uprightly despite what the foolish man who started out as your son, your intimate friend, your close companion, whatever initial close relationship is represented here by being a son, they're now a person and they move outside the one another love category.

They may move outside the neighbor love category into the other, possibly even the enemy side. And the conditions and the expressions of love, as you know, are quite different in those peripheral rings than they are up close. We don't treat people the same.

We don't allow them into the inner sanctum inside the defenses that God puts around our soul and around our marriage and around our family. We have to continue to walk uprightly and we separate from that which drags us in the wrong direction. So those whose folly is joy to them, those who despise people who are endeavoring to live a life of faith to please God, they are going to have to enjoy their falling alone because we of understanding will walk uprightly.

Verse 22, without counsel plans go awry. Without counsel plans go awry. They are thwarted is another way to translate this.

The thwarting of plans, if you translate this literally from Hebrew, the thwarting of plans is without counsel. There's no counsel there and without wise guidance, without experience, without spiritual understanding, your plans are going to be thwarted. They will not move forward because the blessing of God is not upon them.

And you can have a goal. You can have what you think is a way to achieve that goal, but it is going to fail. You'll find friction.

You will find failure. You will find erring and falling and coming short again and again. Without the blessing of God, because we are the people of God.

What the unbelieving world does by way of effort and planning to get their purposes done is immaterial. We are children of God. We are the people of God.

And like Balaam trying to go down the road on his donkey, God will ensure that we do not succeed if our heart is not right. If we are not endeavoring to travel that narrow road headed for the straight gate, because this is God's love for us. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

He scourges every son whom he receives. He scourges his children because he loves us. This opposition, this failure is necessary for us to wake up and realize that we are cursed if we make flesh our arm, our strength, and our heart has departed from the Lord as our source, as the object of our love.

God will necessarily put hardship and failure in our path to wake us up. If we are wise, if we are healthy as believers and we encounter opposition, now it is a blessing that strengthens us and draws us closer to God and makes us even more reliant on his grace and on his strength and on his knowledge of purposes. That there may be reasons why we are being slowed down or why a prayer is not yet answered.

And they are part of God's greater good and greater plan. And we rest in him and we strengthen our faith. We rely on our hope.

We look around for the ways that we can express love in the midst of hardship, in the midst of perseverance and endurance like we saw on Sunday. It's a completely productive and fruitful thing to face opposition when we are wise. And where does our counsel come from? Who is our counsel? It's God the Holy Spirit.

And we don't have many Holy Spirits. We don't have a panoply of gods like the Greeks and Romans and Egyptians and other ancient cultures, the Hittites and the Canaanites. They have gods all over the place.

Wouldn't you say that would be the multitude of counselors? Look at the end of verse 22 here, in the multitude of counselors, scratch that out. It is not multitude. One of the things you know about Scripture is if you ever see a principle expressed, you will find it elsewhere in Scripture.

There will be examples. There will be narratives. There will be parallel expressions.

Can you think of a single place in Scripture at any time where there was a situation and King David or King Solomon or the Lord Jesus or the Apostle Paul went and collected as many counselors as they could find and took a vote on what to do? It is not a biblical principle. This is a horrible mistranslation. The word is Rav, R-A-V, or V. Rav.

Remember the Rav Shaka in the Assyrian story when he comes to Hezekiah? Rav Shaka. And it means, it doesn't mean there's a lot of him. It means he's great.

He's the chief. He's the head. He's the great one.

Rav is translated greatness time and time again in Scripture. And we determine whether it means multiple or whether it means great by context. And they just got this context wrong.

There are no examples. The law of Moses, the counsel of the Lord Jesus doesn't tell people, go find a bunch of other people and take a poll. If you have a problem, go to the church and share it and see what the multitude of people in the church had to say.

We never have that guidance. We have a counselor and it is the Holy Spirit. And there's one Holy Spirit, just one, but he is the greatest of counselors.

And in the greatness of counselors is where you find plans being established, being grounded. I don't need many, many people. I just need the word of God clarified for me, made pertinent for me, understandable for me by the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, not mob rule discerned, not committee discerned. This is the problem in much of church history. When you look at confabulations and collections and councils, a lot of people get together and try to say, well, we're going to put this stuff down in a creed.

We're going to develop a statement of faith. We're going to argue and hammer out language. We don't need a creed.

We don't need a confession of faith. You can clarify your understanding of what the word of God says. We have a section on our church website that says, you know, here's our understanding of what Scripture teaches, but it's an understanding of Scripture.

It isn't a separate condensation or expression of truth outside Scripture. We say, here's what Scripture says, and this is what we understand that to mean in terms of our faith and application, faith and practice. So when you see multitude here and in, I believe it's 24 verse 6, scratch it out.

It is not multitude, and that is a dangerous mistranslation. Some of them are relatively harmless. Some of them are just sort of buddying the waters.

This one is dangerous. It is not the multitude of counselors. It is the greatness.

You have a wonderful example of that in the life of David. Do you remember when David is driven out of Jerusalem by Absalom in the Absalom Rebellion in the later days of his ministry? Turn back to 2 Samuel. 2 Samuel chapter 16.

2 Samuel 16. David is on the way out of Jerusalem, and there are those who are attempting to accompany him. And when David has come to the top of Jerusalem, he is going to meet him with his robe and his vest on his head.

David said, if you go on with me, you will become a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, I will be your servant, I will be your counselor, O king, as I was your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant. Then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, who is the counselor that sided with Solomon.

I won't go into this story in detail, but it is here, beginning in 2 Samuel chapter 15, ending through 16. Ahithophel is going to counsel Solomon at the end of chapter 16 to go in publicly to his father's concubines, so that all Israel will know that you are abhorred by your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strong. So they pitch a tent on top of the house, and Absalom goes into his father's concubines, the sight of all Israel.

Verse 23 of 16, 2 Samuel. Now the advice of Ahithophel which he gave in those days was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. All the advice of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom.

He was a great counselor. However, he has picked the wrong side. And when you go on to chapter 17, if you've forgotten the details, read this at some point soon, and you will see that the advice of Hushai, the archite, is going to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, because he is an even greater counselor, because he loves the Lord.

He is loyal to David, and his counsel is this rebellion. Testimony. There aren't a council of counselors.

There isn't a collection. There's not a committee. There is Ahithophel.

He starts out great, but he makes a bad choice. He sides with the rebellion, and Absalom is not a godly man. And Ahithophel, as wise as he was, did not bring spiritual wisdom to bear when he sides with Absalom.

Hushai, the archite, knows that David is God's anointed. All you have to do is ask, which one of these men was anointed by Samuel the prophet to be the king of Israel? Not Absalom, only David. And as long as David is alive, and until God anoints another king, he's the king.

So it is the greatness of counselors. Cross out multitude and put greatness. You can look this up in the lexicons.

You will find consistently the Enhanced Strongs lexicon, which you can find online. This word, Rav, it will give you the places where it is translated greatness, and so it should be here. When we have decisions, when we face issues, when we are challenged, when we need endurance, when our faith is tested, when our hope begins to dim, when we're having difficulty expressing love for God, love for one another, and the other circles of the expression of love, where do we go for advice, for guidance, for counsel? Our great counselor, the greatest of all counselors, is the Holy Spirit.

He speaks for the Lord Jesus. He doesn't speak for himself. What are the means that you're going to hear this Christmas season for the Lord Jesus? In Handel's Messiah, in his name shall be called what? Wonderful counselor.

It's the first, the great counselor. He's wonderful. In Hebrew, anytime you start multiplying the number of something, you're talking about its greatness.

This is why we have so many dual nouns. That very first verse in the entire scriptures, in the beginning God created the heavens, Hashemayim. Hashemayim.

This is like Elohim. It's like the Anakim, the giants, or the Cherubim, or the Seraphim. The plurality of them isn't so much in view as their greatness.

In the beginning God created the heavens and they are so great. You can't just say Hashemayim. It has to be Hashemayim.

When you talk about the sea, the endless waters, the floods, they are not just ma or my, they are mayim, and that duality or plurality speaks of greatness in so many cases. That's what you have here. It is the wrath, the greatness of counselors.

And our great counsel comes from the Lord Jesus himself through the Holy Spirit and the Word. This is what will establish plans. And in formulating our plans, we will have discernment, not foolishness, to see what is the best and better path.

To know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God that you find in Romans 12.2. Put Romans 12.2 out in the margin next to Proverbs 15.22. You come again to another expression of joy here. A man has joy. This goes all the way back to verse 20.

This 20, 21, 22, and 23 are a unit, and you have the glad father, the joyful father. A man has joy by the answer of his mouth. You know what to say.

You can become a wise counselor yourself when you speak the truth in love. If someone asks you, it will be given to you in that hour what to reply, what to respond. If we are looking to God, if we are seeking and cultivating the wisdom of God in answering others.

Remember when Peter says, be ready always to give an answer. And you won't look back and say, oh, why did I say that? I should have said this and I should not have said that. We do a post-

mortem on our conversations and we just groan and roll our eyes and are unhappy and disappointed with ourselves.

That will not be the case. If we are prayerful, if we are humble, if we are wise, then there will be joy in the answer that comes from our mouth. Because like everything else in a healthy spiritual life, it isn't our strength and it isn't our wisdom.

It is God, the Holy Spirit, bringing thoughts and biblical truths to our mind, giving us the humility and the wisdom to speak them in a humble way that does not stir up anger, that doesn't result in contentions and useless wranglings about words like we've seen in both 1st and 2nd Timothy. We will have joy in the answer of our mouth and a word in due season. This literally in Hebrew is a word in its time.

It's the right time. It is the optimal opportunity for that word to be spoken. A word in its time.

How good. This is the goodness of God that we can express. That's what we are here to do, is reflect the glory of God, to bring to expression His good.

And this comes by being a wise child of God. In our wisdom we will make our Heavenly Father glad. We will heed the great counselor that He has given us and it will result in joy.

What a privilege, what an opportunity we have through the grace that has come to us in Christ Jesus, that this is our opportunity. This was an aspiration in the Old Testament. It is an accomplishment and a present possession for us as believers in this age.

Well, this brings us now, this section, verses 20-33, is the final section in the first part of the Solomonic Proverbs and it has a hinge point here at verse 24. That's going to bring us then to the second section that follows it beginning in verse 25. So we'll pick up verse 24 when we come back from the break.