

Proverbs 25-01-08a

Greetings, welcome to Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 8th of January 2025. We're resuming our study in Proverbs.

We're right at the threshold of chapter 16. The English chapter division is slightly different than what seems to be apparent in Hebrew. It's close enough, but we'll see that there's sort of a bridge, a hinge here between two sections of this first part of Proverbs that began back in chapter 10.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, we thank you for the many ways that you have blessed us, provided for us, heard and answered our prayers. We're grateful for your watch care and your opportunities presented to us to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We thank you for the passage that is before us tonight and we ask your blessing on us as we study it together. May each of us find in it your truth, divine truth that will guide us, shine a light on our path, help us to see clearly our responsibilities, our opportunities to serve, to represent the Lord Jesus in this day and in this world, to shine the light of the grace that is available for salvation to those who are far from you, and that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We ask it in his name.

Amen. If you remember, there is a overall broad structure in the book of Proverbs and we have seen the first two sections of it. The introductory section was basically chapters one through nine.

This was the challenge to the young man who has been brought into the world by his mother and father and the hopes and dreams that the parents have for the young man who was put for anyone. You think, well, I've already restricted the book to one half of the human race because it's addressed to my son. But this is, as with so many things in scripture, simply representative of each and every one of us.

It could just as easily have been my daughter and would be applicable to the son. You have to pick something. And so you have lady wisdom and the crafty harlot.

It could just as easily have been a mustache twisting evil man who was issuing the temptations to go astray and to go awry. But scripture picks these things and they are representative. Timothy's gift in the pastoral epistles is representative of each spiritual gift and so on.

But we began. And if you flip back, you'll remember that in the first nine chapters, this is the challenge. And we will see that the challenge of those nine chapters is summed up really in chapter two.

It is a section that we have memorized. We'll revisit it because it anticipates the structure of this

entire book. If you want to understand Proverbs, it is helpful to know its structure.

Within the chapters, there is structure. This is not a confetti explosion of random sayings that are just listed in whatever order they came to hand. It is carefully constructed.

There is a design. There is a purpose. We're going to see a little bit of that this evening as we move into this next sub section, if you will.

But as a reminder, the overall structure of the book of Proverbs is this introductory section, chapter one through chapter nine. There is a very helpful marker, if you will, at chapter 10, verse one, it says the Proverbs of Solomon. So this is the section that tells us that the actual teaching portion has begun after the introduction and the exhortation.

And as you've heard me say many times, and I will say it again tonight, a helpful technique for instruction is to create the need in the mind of the hearer. Anyone who has ever taught a skill, a subject, a class, whatever it might be, knows that to interest your students, especially if they are not necessarily there voluntarily, they didn't sign up for the lessons, they are kids going to school, they are lieutenants who have been assigned a military occupational specialty, an MOS, and they're at their MOS school, and they think, well, all I have to do is just drift along and wait for the information to appear, and I'll just drift with the tide. So the challenge is whether someone is interested or not to create a sense of need.

Even people who say, I want to play the piano, I'm going to sign up for piano lessons, I want to play the guitar, I'm signing up for guitar lessons. And you say, all right, well, let's begin with a little bit of music theory. We're going to talk about how many notes are on a scale, and the different kinds of scales, and now you're going to start playing scales.

You're going to learn about sharps and flats, and people say, wait a minute, I'm here to play the guitar, play the piano, what is all of this book learning stuff? Well, to get them through that difficult introductory section, you create the need, you illustrate that you have to have this. If you want to play any kind of guitar that samples what has happened since the 1950s, you have to learn a pentatonic scale. If you don't know the pentatonic scale, you are done for rock, or for jazz, or for solos on an electric guitar.

If you don't know what a pentatonic scale is, you are helpless, hopeless, and useless. You're going to be befuddled. You're going to play badly, if at all.

You have to know it, you have to understand it, and you have to find a way to learn it. There are different ways to learn the different systems of organization on the piano, and almost any instrument. You can learn the circle of fifths, you can learn the caged system on a piano, the C-A-G-E chord shapes, and where they fit on the neck, and so on.

But you don't want to know that right now, because you're not here to learn the guitar or learn the piano. We're here to understand the book of Proverbs. And necessarily, we have to know that it is more than a scattershot collection.

So the book itself creates the need. So when you go back to Proverbs chapter 1, the Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. This gives it its authority, it's impregnable.

If you are familiar, again, with music books, there are those who made themselves famous playing an instrument. So do you want just a generic guitar book, or do you want one by Chet Atkins, or Mel Bay, or someone who is notable? If you want to get interested in songwriting or song creation, you want a book by Paul Simon, or Paul McCartney, or somebody who has demonstrated that they know how to do it. Well, if you've got a book of wisdom, it helps that it is authored by the wisest man who ever lived, and that's Solomon.

Not just any old shlomo, which is his name in Hebrew. There could have been many shlomos, like there are many Pauls. How many Pauls? How many people do you know named Paul? I've known several across my lifetime.

But Paul McCartney, that narrows it down. Paul Simon, that narrows it down. Now we're talking about a range of creativity, genius, proven popularity that is unparalleled.

There's nobody that can touch those two gentlemen when it comes to a successful music career of songwriting and song performance. Those guys are in a class of their own. In the same way, if you want a book of wisdom, and it's got Solomon's name on it, now we're talking.

Now we're talking some wisdom, especially because this is not just generic human wisdom. This is wisdom that was granted by God himself. Solomon asked for wisdom from the Lord.

God answered that prayer. And because you have not asked for riches and power and other things, I'm going to give you those along with, because you've recognized the most important thing, wisdom. So that is what began this collection.

This is the best book of wisdom ever. It's divinely inspired. It is a collection of divine wisdom.

Very helpful to know. Good way to start. And if we have a sense of need, I can tell you from my own experience, I was not born with divine wisdom.

I haven't demonstrated great wisdom across vast stretches of my life. I think we can all look back and see that maybe we didn't make the smartest choice, do the best thing. But to find the wisdom of God and to have the opportunity to learn it and have it plowed into my life and embedded into my heart so that God can wake it up and use it to illuminate my path and help me make good decisions and make the actions of my life count.

Anybody can act. Read history. Genghis Khan is famous.

What good does it do him? He wasn't in the Lord's employ. He didn't lay up for himself treasure in heaven. His fame, he doesn't know about it.

He doesn't realize he's famous. He has turned to dust in some far off mountain grave. We have the opportunity to redeem the time of our life, to convert it from sand passing through the

hourglass into treasure in heaven where thieves do not break in and steal, moths and rust do not corrupt.

And this is a daily opportunity. This book gives us the wisdom, the means, the how to for converting time into eternal capital, eternal resources, eternal opportunities. I think some of the greatest treasure that can be had in heaven isn't of the material sort.

It isn't something that comforts or entertains or stimulates or amuses. I think, especially when you look at the rewards for the overcomers in Revelation chapter two and three, they all speak of intimacy with God himself. You will be a pillar in his temple.

He will write a name on you that only you and he know. You will walk with Christ in white robes. You will go to Bible class for those who are truly interested and partake of that hidden manna and so on.

I think the opportunity to be with the Lord, to be a friend as Abraham was. Remember when, just before Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot and the pillar of salt and all of that, God realizes what the wickedness is in that region. And he comes down in person and visits with Abraham.

And he says, shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Wow. How would you like to be someone with whom God takes a walk and says, fill in your name here? I thought I'd share with you what I'm fixing to do. And you're going to be a part of it.

I'm going to discuss it with you. You're going to understand why I'm doing it, who is benefited, who is not benefited, who's going to be judged, why it is taking place. God did the same thing with Noah.

And Noah had the chance to create an example as did Abraham and others that exists for time and eternity. How many untold hundreds of millions of people have benefited from the story of Abraham or the story of Noah or the story of Joseph, sold into slavery and becoming the vizier in Egypt as a wonderful precursor and anticipation of the Lord Jesus himself, who was humbled and took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of humility and man, and yet now is highly exalted and is second only to God himself in terms of a kingly authority. So these are the kinds of things that when we think about them, makes us realize we need and we want the wisdom that is in this book.

How can I become a friend of God? It isn't by asking. There are people who get enamored with a celebrity and they think if I just write him a letter and tell him how much I love them and how much I appreciate them and I know all the words to everything they've ever written, they'll want to be my friend. You can't get friendship by request.

There has to be a common ground. You can admire someone even in the personal realm. You develop a crush and think, oh, this person just walks a foot and a half above everybody else on the planet.

I can't watch them enough. I can't think about them enough. I would so covet their company and love to be intimate friends and spend time in conversation and the other benefits of a relationship with this person.

But wanting it and even coming up and asking them, can I be your friend? That doesn't establish a relationship. What establishes relationship? Commonality. What do you have in common? What do you enjoy mutually? What can you enjoy in a complementary way? You see it from one perspective, the other one sees it from another, but you're both very interested and you have conversation and you have exchange and this is what builds a relationship is the enjoyment of doing things together.

It is no different with God. If you want to be identified as someone who loves the Lord with all the heart, all the soul, all the strength and all the mind, you have to be intensely interested in what God's up to, what he's thinking about, what his purposes are, why he allows some things and why he stops others and to have relationship with God, we have to know him. We have to enter into his thoughts.

We have to learn to think the way he thinks and see the way he sees. That's what Proverbs does. That's why it says in verse two of the first chapter, the Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, best author of wisdom you could hope for in the human realm to know wisdom and instruction to perceive words of understanding.

This isn't just how to build a better palace or how to conquer an invading army or how to do kingly things or nation protecting, nation building, nation economics, like a king might think of this wisdom and instruction, this understanding, receiving the instruction of wisdom, notice in verse three, justice, judgment and equity. We have whole departments that have been created in the government and in corporations trying to figure out what equity is and how to make it happen. You want to know about true equity, what God thinks is equity and understanding wisdom, justice, go to the Proverbs.

This is where we enter into the divine perspective, which is the only perspective worth having. Any group of human beings can make up a set of rules for themselves. You go to some of the primitive tribes and some of their rules are just bizarre.

Well, to be a man, you've got to kill a guy from the other tribe and cut his head off and make a bowl out of his skull and drink blood and brains out of it or whatever. Somebody made up those rules. Well, that is not divine wisdom and knowledge and equity and justice.

God is the standard. He is the author of what is right and what is wrong. So if we want to truly understand as we look at politics or economics or world events or local events or what is happening in relationships that we're involved in or those that we observe near at hand, what is really right? How should I view this and how should I interact with it? What is my role and my part? What should I support? What should I say? What should I refrain from saying? Should I pursue? Should I step back? Should I wait for a question or should I push an answer that is

unsought for? God's wisdom is the only wisdom worth having on those subjects because He's the manufacturer.

He built us. He knows how our souls work. He knows and you see examples throughout scripture of when to communicate and when to remain silent.

There is no greater study of this than the arrest and trial of the Lord Jesus. Prophetically it says as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth. But if you look at various trials, there are times when he speaks and times when he doesn't.

I ask myself, how could he possibly know? Is it because it's a grippa or because it is pilot or which he has the Sanhedrin? With the chief priest and the 70 there? How did Jesus know? When Paul was called up before the authorities, there are times when he would speak and times when he remained silent. The wisdom of God. We're never likely to be called into such portentous moments as the Apostle Paul and the Lord Jesus and other great biblical figures.

But to us, it is just as important if we love the Lord and want to represent him, we want to know how to speak, when to speak, what to say and what to not say. And we're given the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to give us the ability to reign in our impulses, to bring to our minds, as Jesus promised his disciples, when you are hailed before kings and others in authority, it will be given to you in that hour. Don't worry about it in advance.

If you are who you are supposed to be, and if you have learned the wisdom that the Lord Jesus taught encompassing the entire word of God, you will know in that hour if you should speak and what you should speak. What a valuable thing. I think if everyone actually knew what is in the word of God in general, and the book of Proverbs in particular, who wouldn't be beating down the doors to learn what's in it? Can you think of something better than having the wisdom of God and the power to implement it in our lives? To make decisions that please God and build into eternity? To think the thoughts that are pleasing in His sight? We're going to see a passage tonight about the thoughts and what God thinks of them.

Who wouldn't want that? Who in their right mind? But we get distracted. We are deflected. Somebody says, I'm going to buy Greenland or take it by force, and suddenly we can't think anymore.

And there are many other issues, but the devil roams the earth seeking whom he may devour, who he can deceive, who he can deflect, who he can distract. Have you ever had guests coming, so there's a meal underway, you've got food in the oven, it's on, you know, 425, it's got to come out at a certain time, but you get distracted. Delivery man comes.

Oh, but there's a dog out there. They're staying in their truck and they're digging around and you forget that you've got something in the oven. And it isn't that you don't recognize its importance or that you don't have an intense desire for that meal to come out perfect for whoever's coming over.

It isn't that you don't understand its deflection. It is distraction. It is taking our minds off of what is most important.

This is the devil's ace in the hole. This is what he does. The more wisdom we have in our soul, we will stay over our feet.

We will be balanced. We will recognize that something is going on over here. I've got the delivery truck.

Wait just a moment. I got something in the oven. I'll be right back.

He can wait. We are aware and the Holy Spirit will bring to our minds what we need to know in the hour we need to know it if we are qualified. It is not an unconditional promise that because we have the Spirit, he's going to guide, he's going to lead, he's going to keep us straight, he's going to say, wait a minute, not that exit, it's the next one.

That is not an unconditional promise. For the wisdom that is summarized and condensed into the book of Proverbs to benefit us, we have to meet the conditions. And the conditions are examine myself.

Am I in the faith? Am I committing a sin? Have I committed sin and I have not brought it before the Lord for cleansing, for washing my robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? I'm not too worried about that misstep, that intentional sin, that impulsive sin, that sin of the tongue, that mental attitude sin, the grudge I'm carrying, the worry I'm harboring. I don't expunge it. I don't, by God's grace, get it out of my life.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, what's the rest of that verse? If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. We have the privilege of prayer. Our prayers go no higher than the ceiling if we're regarding iniquity in our heart.

There are things we've not dealt with, that we've not confronted, that by God's grace we have not expunged and been made clean. And you lose the intentional benefits of the presence of the Holy Spirit if we shove him aside. Have you ever had somebody try to give you some advice, but it's annoying? Be quiet.

I've done this before. Stop talking. And we proceed to muck something up very badly because it was a word fitly spoken.

It was necessary, but my pride got in the way. My impatience got in the way. The old Anderson commercial, I love those things I saw when I was a kid.

This lady has got a frown and a crease between her eyebrows, and she says, I'd rather do it myself. And of course, she does it wrong. So the Holy Spirit is there, but we have to meet the conditions.

Part of wisdom is knowing how to cultivate the conditions where God's grace and God's power

are always available and always operative. It is a choice. Why are not all Christians model citizens, wonderful representatives of the Lord Jesus, with all of the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control? Why are we not all walking around saying, look at those Christians, gracious sakes, how do they do it? Most of us as believers are horrific failures.

Why? The arm of the Lord is not shortened, then it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. Remember our memory verse. It is your iniquities that separate between you and your God, and your sins hide his face so that he will not hear.

God has conditions for dispensing his grace, for implementing his power in our life, because he made us creatures with free will, and we choose. So, here we are at Proverbs. That's why, look at chapter 2. My son, what's the very next word? If.

My son, I love you. I've got chapter after chapter of collected wisdom here I want to impart to you. I love you, I want you to have a successful life, I want you to have a life that pleases the Lord and builds into eternity.

My son, all you've got to do, this is like a formula, you just read these words, you're going to have a great life and I'll be happy. That's not what it says. My son, if you receive.

It's an opportunity. The whole first chapter is creating the need. My son, sinners are going to entice you.

You can't consent. That is a bad road. You're going to have no end of trouble.

You can ruin your life consenting to sinners. You see that back in verse 10. 1-10.

Verse 16 of chapter 1. Their feet run to evil, they make haste to shed blood. And so on. Verse 20 of chapter 1. Wisdom sings out.

Wisdom cries out in the street. It's the word for singing. It's a melodious, attractive call.

She raises her voice in the open square. She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates of the city. Verse 22.

How long, you simple ones? Would you love simplicity? Scorners delight in their scorning. Fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke.

Remember God says to Israel in another place. Turn ye at my rebuke. Why will you die, O house of Israel? All you have to do is choose to turn.

But God does not turn them. God presents them with the opportunity and the choice. And there is responsibility attached to what we choose.

Turn you at my rebuke. Verse 23 of chapter 1. Surely I will pour out my Spirit on you. I will make

my words known to you.

Wisdom, guidance, light on the path, steadiness, blessing, opportunity, growth for service and function, to reflect the glory of the Lord and to enter into His future plans and purposes, both now and in the ages to come. How could we not want this? How could we not make this our top priority? I want to see where I have fallen short. Notice rebuke only comes if you're messing up.

You don't get rebuked for doing things right. You get rebuked because you're either failing to do anything at all or what you are doing is wrong, right? So when there's a rebuke, He doesn't say, when you hear my rebuke, get all puffed up and send answers and defenses back my way. If you hear my rebuke, tell me why I'm just as wrong as you are.

If you hear my rebuke, tell me how it's not your fault and there's excuses and you're going to shift the blame and the shame and how dare you make me feel bad about myself by pointing out a failure. What is the proper response to rebuke? Turn. Okay, I messed up.

I either did a sin of commission or of omission. I will turn. I'm going to use God's grace and the presence of God's Spirit and the power of God's Word in my heart to do better next time.

I will change. If you turn, you change. Remember the passage in Ecclesiastes, to everything there is a season, and the little under-refrain is turn, turn, turn.

There's a time to every purpose under heaven. So if you're misdirecting your times and your seasons, if you're gathering when you should be scattering or you should be scattering and you are gathering, turn, turn at my rebuke. That's what this scripture is for.

That's why we have this book of Proverbs. And as we enter into a new section, it's helpful, I think, to review why we're even looking at it. We have such an opportunity.

What a privilege. God could have kept all of his wisdom up in heaven and just let us wander around bumping into things down here. But he says no.

Look at chapter 2 now. My son, if you receive my words, this is our Father in heaven speaking to each one of us. My daughter, my son, I'm talking to you.

It's just you and me in the room. I've got an entire collection of wisdom for you. If you will receive my words and treasure my commands within you.

It's not enough to nod in assent. We have to internalize them. Hide, treasure my commands within you.

And then there's a result. So that you incline your ear to wisdom. Notice he's created the need.

Chapter 1 is all about you need this wisdom. There are sinners that are going to entice you. You've got to have the strength and wisdom to not consent.

To not go down that road. You've got to turn at a rebuke. And you need power to do that.

Pride will prevent it. Stubbornness will prevent it. Ego will prevent it.

But if you receive my words, when they come, take them in. When they knock at the door, don't say, I already gave it the office and slammed the door. Receive my words.

Treasure my commands within you. Recognize their value. So that you incline your ear.

The words have come. You've internalized them. You've received them.

Now you're listening to what they say. This is the benefit of recognizing the need. I'm going to incline my ear.

When I'm working on a problem in an appliance or a vehicle or a tractor or a chainsaw or a dishwasher or any one of a number of other things, I go to YouTube and I find some guy that has done the same thing before me. And I treasure the information and I incline my ear to it. I don't just say, well, I'm sure I can fix this now because I pulled up a YouTube video.

I've got to listen to what the video says. The guy says, you know, I pulled this entire manifold off here, but then after I, if you keep watching, but then I realized I didn't have to, and there's a much easier way. So to imbibe the entire thing, learn from the stakes of others.

This is why there's so much narrative in scripture. Look at the mistakes these guys made. Don't do that.

Instead, do this, incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. I'm going to change the way I think I'm going to turn at the rebuke that says that is a wrong road. That's 40 miles of a bad highway right there.

This is what we need. This is what the book of Proverbs is. We're about to turn from one type of presentation to another in chapter 16.

And to understand that we want to incline our ear and apply our heart to that is essential. It's one thing to observe it. You can find any number of commentaries that will tell you here's the structure of the book of Proverbs.

And here's what characterizes this part. Here's what characterizes that part. My question is, okay.

And if it characterized one way in these chapters and it's something different over here, what does that mean to me? How is that going to help me turn at a rebuke? How is that going to help me incline my ear and apply my heart? I don't care that they're antithetical distances over here. And there are synthetic Bicola over here. So why would God do that? Is He trying to tell me something? Well, here is the introduction that tells us what God is trying to do with this book.

So we're reviewing it here. We're going to do a little bit more of that. And then we'll return to chapter 16 when we come back from the break.