

Proverbs 25-02-05b

We're ready now to pick up our study here in Proverbs chapter 16, and verse 2 is so important. We're going to see this theme repeated in the Bible. It is under-emphasized, in my experience, in my observation, in the Christian world, and it is repeated and underscored over and over again in Scripture.

All the ways of a man, these are the ways that we saw back in chapter 1, verse 15. My son did not walk in the way. This is Derek, D-E-R-E-K, if you want the Hebrew, but this word is used hundreds of times in the Old Testament, for your path through life, your road, the road you travel.

And all of the ways, we don't find fault with ourself at all. We always find a way to justify, to vindicate, to otherwise give ourselves a pass. And we have reasons, we have excuses, we have causes.

There's blame to be shared or redirected. But look at what Scripture says about this. A man's ways are pure in his own eyes.

Of course, eyes is a metonymy for our judgment, our perception, our observation. We look at ourselves, and we look at the road we're traveling, and we find no fault with ourselves. But in Proverbs chapter 3, verse 7, we saw this a while back.

Do not be wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil. If all we do is rely on our own judgment, we're never going to see what we need to escape from, much less the way of escape. At best, we will say, I've got problems.

But if we don't look to the Lord, if we don't respect Him, if we don't render to Him His due as our Creator, as our Heavenly Father, as the One who has provided a way in His grace through His Son, the Lord Jesus, if we're not aware of that and bring that truth down to where we live, I'm not doing as I should in the light of the Word of God. How can I do better? How can I change? Where is the strength to quit what I'm doing and start doing what I'm supposed to, or stop doing that which is bad, start doing that which is proper and right? The perception comes from God, and the power to change, to repent, to depart from evil comes from God. And it begins with the fear of the Lord.

What does Proverbs say? If I say, give me a proverb about the fear of the Lord, what would you say? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's how this wisdom that we want to have in our hearts is going to operate. The fear of the Lord, that's where wisdom begins.

So we saw this in chapter 3, verse 7. Do not be wise in your own eyes. We need to be suspicious of our own judgment. If I think I'm right, but I'm getting some sort of feedback from others or from circumstances or I feel a conviction that may be coming from the Holy Spirit that maybe everything isn't as well as I would like to judge it, we need to have the humility to question our

self-estimate.

If we blithely assume that because we feel right, because we think we're right, because we've got reasons and excuses to prove that we're right, we should always be suspicious if we judge ourselves to be in the right, on the right path, doing the right thing, saying the right words, thinking the right thoughts, we should be deeply suspicious. Why? Job 11.4, you have said, my doctrine is pure and I am clean in your eyes. I have said, it isn't God speaking, it's me speaking.

I am pure. My doctrine, my practice, my belief is pure. I am clean.

Job has a lot to say about this. Job 33.9 is one other of many examples. I am pure without transgression.

I am innocent and there is no iniquity in me. Nobody but the Lord Jesus can accurately make that claim. We are all as an unclean thing.

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away. All of us.

There is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one. That should be our assumption, our starting point. Jeremiah 17.9, I've quoted it dozens of times.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Who can understand it? Who can figure out that our own heart is lying to us? We must have an objective outside source that measures our righteousness. That is the word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

So, we are the ones who need evaluation from the Lord. And that's what the next part of this verse says. The Lord is the one who evaluates.

If you transliterate this into English, it looks like the word token. T-O-K-E-N. It's token.

And remember the O-E infix in Hebrew means this is an ongoing process. It's the only reason I mentioned the Hebrew here is token, O-E. That's an I-N-G word in English.

This is a constant process. God is constantly evaluating, weighing, taking measurements, processing the goodness or the badness of our spirits. And this word is used to determine the amount or the weight to gauge a thing.

It's wonderful. I have had cars in the past, and I wasn't sure of when you have an air-cooled engine. Well, if you don't have a temperature gauge, is the air cooling working? Is there an obstruction? Is your engine going to get hot because you don't have sufficient airflow? Something built a nest while it was parked, and now you don't have good airflow? A rag has gotten sucked into the intake of your air-cooled bus engine? Don't ask me how I know the results of that.

But it's good to have a gauge, something that tells you here's the temperature, and maybe you can stop before you throw a rod and destroy your engine because you have a gauge that says there's something amiss. The Lord gauges, evaluates, measures. He's the one, and it is a constant process.

It's an ongoing measurement or estimate, and this means to estimate by comparing to a standard. Is this too light or too heavy? Is it too far to the left or too far to the right? Here is the standard. How does this compare to the standard? That's tachan or token here.

And the metaphor is found even in other cultures. In Egypt, they believed that a person's heart was weighed against truth after death, and truth would be put on one side of the balance scale, and your heart would be put in the other. And do you meet the standard of truth? Are you too light or too heavy? So the word translated spirits here is motives.

This goes to your New Testament allusion to the thoughts and intents, the motivations of the heart. Spirit here is put for motives. This is ruachot.

It comes from ruach. The ruach, the life, the breath, the inner essence of self. Ruach is a multifaceted word.

Ruachot is the plural, feminine plural. And God is measuring against a standard. He is weighing the lives, the spirits, the dynamic vitality, it has been called, that moves us, that motivates us.

And it comes to mean our disposition. So what is going on in the spirit? You can put out in the margin here, Ezekiel 11, verse 19. We saw this when we went through Ezekiel.

And the promise of God, the new covenant that he makes with Israel and with Judah. Ezekiel 11, 19. God says, then this is in the millennial resurrection and kingdom.

Then I will give them one heart and I will put a new spirit, a new ruach within them and take the stony heart out of their flesh. And I will give them a heart of flesh. Stony heart removed.

Fleshly heart that is susceptible to the influence of the spirit. Take out the heart of stone, give them a heart of flesh. This is the new spirit.

Now, does this mean that God is going to renovate against their will, hardhearted people? This is talking about them in the plural. He doesn't say, I will give each one. I will take out the heart of stone from an individual.

This is the nation. This is what the initial judgment of the millennial kingdom does. Is the people are filtered.

So only those who have a compliant and a receptive heart will be in. And so the people of God will be those who have a new spirit and a heart of flesh. And the Holy Spirit will be poured out on those in the kingdom.

And they will respond and they will bear fruit much as we have the opportunity to do now. That's Ezekiel 11, 19. Ezekiel 18, verse 31.

Listen to this. Cast away from you, O Israel, all the transgressions which you have committed and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. They're not waiting in a Calvinistic understanding for God to act and move in a sovereign fashion.

God says it is your choice to cast away from you the transgressions you have committed. Forswear that. Depart from it.

Abandon it. Change your mind. Cast away from you transgressions you've committed in the past.

Get yourselves a new heart. Get yourselves a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? Why suffer the inevitable penalty of continuing in this way of transgression? Cast the transgressions away.

Grab for yourself. It is on the table. God has provided it.

All you have to do is reach out and take it. A new heart and a new spirit. That is the challenge for each one of us.

If we become guilty of transgressions, have the humility to recognize it. Don't allow that inner censor to fool us and make us think that, well, that was really okay. I had reasons.

Cast it away. Get a new heart and a new spirit. One that is guided by the word and the spirit of God.

Then we will know what is right. And we will see the right way and we will be enabled to walk in it. That's Ezekiel 18.31. Ezekiel 36.26. God says, I will give you a new heart.

I will put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart that is pliable, that is teachable, that is amenable and responsive to the spirit of God. Heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36.26. We saw this in Ecclesiastes 7. I will never forget this. Kenny and I talk about this almost every time we have any extended discussion. What a wonderful study it was in Ecclesiastes.

When you get to chapter 7, verse 8 and 9, it was so memorable. Where in the English it says, The end of a thing is better than its beginning. And the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

But what it literally says is, The long spirit is better than the tall spirit. The spirit that endures across time, that runs the race and finishes the course, as Paul puts it, is better than one that is standing tall and, you know, running with kicking his knees high in place at the beginning of the

race. He's standing tall.

It isn't how tall do you stand at the beginning, it's how well do you endure. And it's not a bad New King James translation. Being patient in spirit is better than the proud.

You're standing tall at the beginning. Pride won't carry you through. We need resources from God.

The end of a thing is better than its beginning. And being long in spirit and enduring to the end is better than standing tall at the beginning and flaking out. That's Ecclesiastes chapter seven, verse eight.

Verse nine goes on to say, do not hasten in your spirit to be angry. Don't let anger infiltrate and get the better of your inner heart, your inner self. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry.

Angry anger rests in the bosom of fools. If we find ourselves with that spark, that impulse of anger, what is lacking in our bosom? Our bosom is either going to be a repository of wisdom or its opposite, which is foolishness. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry.

Anger resides, anger rests, anger abides in the bosom, the place where the heart is, of fools. It is foolish to let anger get the better of us. If you watch a little too much news, anger starts welling up at the unwashed, uninformed, misguided, arrogant, insensitive masses.

You might need to switch that thing off and put on some wonderful instrumental hymns. See if you can recall the words, cultivate the peace of God that passes understanding, the peace that Jesus gives us, the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, and peace. If we come away from an exposure with something other than the fruit of the spirit, that's something we might need to leave off.

So do not hasten in your spirit to be angry. We should be slow to anger. God himself is slow to anger.

So this idea of our disposition as the ruach, the psuche in Greek, the soul, the heart, the spirit. In Job chapter seven, verse four, when I lie down, I say, when shall I arise and the night will be ended? For I have had my fill of tossing until dawn. This is lack of peace in the inner life.

Psalms 78, verse eight. Here's a great one to put in the margin that the sons of Israel may not be like their fathers. Their fathers were a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Notice who the actor is here. Who's accountable for the state of our heart? It is we, it is us, it is the face in the mirror. God held the fathers in Israel accountable.

Those who dropped in the wilderness were a stubborn and rebellious generation. That was their choice. That was their attitude.

They did what was right in their own eyes. That even persisted down into the days of the

judges. Remember the last words when you get to, you're looking at Joshua and judges.

Every man did what was right in his own eyes. A generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God. It will out, it will show, it will manifest and be evident.

What have we chosen to do in our hearts? Is it a repository of wisdom or a place of foolishness? Even our opinions and desires reflect what is in our soul. Ezekiel again, Ezekiel 13 verse 3. Thus says the Lord God. Anytime that prefaces something, we need to pay doubly close attention.

Thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. If we follow our own spirit, if we're guided by our own faulty right meter, right and wrong meter, woe is coming. We are foolish.

What we should be doing is what you find in Psalm 77 verse 6. The psalmist says, I call to remembrance my song in the night. I consciously, when it's nighttime, it's dark, can't necessarily be cheered by the light. I call to remembrance my song in the night.

I meditate within my heart and my spirit makes diligent search. I look for God's comfort, God's light, my song. Where's my song? Remember what Paul and Silas were doing in the Philippian jail? They were singing at the top of their lungs.

And the jailer had already been moved in his heart when the earthquake came and their chains and doors were broken and released. And they remained through the guidance of God and the Philippian jailer and his entire household were saved as a result. Songs in the night.

Our will, and you find this, we'll see it just a chapter or two hence. In fact, we're going to see it in this chapter. You can look at Proverbs chapter 16, verse 32.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. You've got more courage, more strength, more foresight, more character in the self-control and the self-discipline to reign in anger. He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit, his ruach, is better than he who conquers a city.

We've seen it so many times in James, the one who can bridle his tongue. We often express our anger in speech. He who bridles his tongue can bring his whole body into subjection.

And what is the answer of the tongue? It's going to come from our heart and the Lord will moderate it. The Lord will give us strength if we are those of a prepared heart, verse one of our chapter. So what's our theme here? Our heart is the place of decision.

It is the place where we set our course, where we decide what is right and what is wrong. It needs to be a residence place for God's wisdom and a place of activity for God's spirit. We make that choice.

We either clean and sweep our house and allow the spirit of God to come in and dwell or we clean and sweep our house and the demon that we swept out brings more of his friends and

returns. It is our choice. So we have to judge ourselves, evaluate ourselves.

We have to have the humility to take a hard look and be willing to question our assumptions that we are in the right and we are objective and we are the standard by which things should be measured. We have to be suspicious of our personal evaluation and seek God's evaluation. So Proverbs 12, 15, the way of a fool is right in his own eyes.

How many times does scripture have to emphasize this point? The ways of a man pure in his own eyes, the way of a fool is right in his own eyes. But he who heeds counsel, who refers to the word of God, and we expose ourselves to the harsh light of that which exposes and reveals the thoughts and intents of our heart. Life is not worth living as a fool, fooling ourselves, coming to the end, standing at the judgment and it was all a waste.

There's a flash fire of wood, hay and stubble and we're not qualified for anything. We're not ready for anything. We're going to be in the darkness which is outside.

Why do that? We are warned, we are encouraged, we are given every kind of motivation, both positive and negative. Redeem the time. We're going to get to redemption and atonement later in this section.

It counts, it matters to be delivered from the iniquity that blinds us, the pride that makes us incapable of self-evaluation. So we saw in 14.12, there's a way that seems right, but the ends are the ways of death. Same thing in Proverbs 16.25, over and over again, we have to commit what we think and what we do to the Lord.

We have to pray that he will make our motives and ways clear and pleasing in his own sight. So we have verse three, commit your works to the Lord, your thoughts will be established. It's resonant parallel in this chiasm, in this section here is in verse seven.

When a man's ways please the Lord, God is going to bless the results. Even enemies are not going to prevail. Even if they continue to hate and to produce machinations and attacks, by the time it gets to us, it's going to be peace.

It reminds me of guys that wanted to fire an artillery round and when they fired it, it was a propaganda round and all that came out were shreds of paper. God will blunt the force of attacks from the enemy. And by the time it gets to us, looks like peace to me.

It's a wonderful promise from the Lord. Psalm 19.12, who can understand his own errors? Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults. Show me.

Psalm 51, you find the same thing. Psalm 139. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my worries, my anxieties, the things that trouble me, that trip me up, that draw me away from the fruit of the spirit. See if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. What a wonderful prayer to pray constantly.

Psalms 139, verses 23 and 24. Search me, O God. You find a very similar parallel in Psalm 51.

Search me, O God. You know my heart. I can't know my own heart the way you do.

You know my heart. Test me, try me, examine me and reveal, find out that which troubles me, my anxieties, my worries. See if there is a wicked way in me and lead me in the everlasting way, the way of everlasting life.

Lead me out of worry and into peace, out of failure and into that which is pleasing in your sight and reflects your glory. We saw this in 1 Corinthians 4, verses 5 and 6. You look around, you see others who are self-deceived or deceived by false doctrines. We're seeing this in 2 Timothy 4. There is a lot to distract and deflect.

There's a lot of bad doctrine, false teaching, deception both internal and external. Paul tells the Corinthians in 4, verses 5 and 6. 1 Corinthians 4, 5, 6. 4, 5 and 6. Judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes. He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart.

The judgment is coming. That's why we've seen emphatically in 2 Timothy 4, Paul says, I charge you by the appearing and the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He is going to come and bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart.

Might as well get them squared away now. I don't want to fool myself and get a bad surprise at the judgment. He is going to reveal and bring to light these things.

Each one's praise will come from God. You need to learn from Apollos and myself, Paul goes on to say in the next verse, not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. My guy's got it straight.

Your guy doesn't. I'm on the road and you're not. And we can tell if we're fooling ourselves, if we are constantly comparing ourselves to others and saying, well, I may not be great, but I'm better than that guy.

He's really on a wrong road. God will give me a pass because look at these people that are really fouled up. That's not going to wash at the judgment.

1 Corinthians 4, 5, and 6. Hebrews chapter 4, 12 and 13. We know 4.12 very well. Word of God, live and powerful, sharper than a sword, dividing asunder, thoughts and intents of the heart.

Remember the next verse? We don't repeat the next one quite so often. Hebrews 4.13, there is no creature hidden from his sight. Nobody in creation is outside God's scrutiny.

There is no creature hidden from his sight. All things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account. What's the point of fooling ourselves when God is not fooled? Be not deceived.

God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. He that sows to his flesh is going to reap from the flesh corruption.

Who wants an inheritance of corruption? Rotted meat, nasty, fly-infested, maggot-filled, awful. If we sow to our flesh, if we trust our flesh, if we're satisfied with our own evaluation, we are going to reap corruption. He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Lord, deliver me and lead me in the way everlasting. That's what we will reap if we pay attention. If we cannot judge our own motives, how much more should we not busy ourselves judging others, finding fault with others? If our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and we can't accurately judge ourselves, what business do we have judging others? Matthew 7, verse 1. Remember the Sermon on the Mount? 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew? Chapter 7, verse 1. Judge not, lest you be judged.

We've got our hands full evaluating ourselves, seeking God's grace to improve, to fix, to forgive, to cleanse, to renew a right spirit within us. I don't have time, I don't have occasion, and I am certainly not qualified to judge others, to look at the superficial outward appearance and draw hasty and generally inaccurate conclusions. Even when that judgment is good, I can say, here's a person that's a spiritual giant.

They've hung the moon. I want their resources. I want to read their book.

I want to follow their... You have to be really careful, even when you evaluate someone well. They can be on a wrong road. They can be the blind leading the blind.

They can be a misguided shepherd. We have to go directly to the Word of God. Do not rely on people, good or bad.

Go to the Word. That's why each of us has the Holy Spirit. God could have arranged the church age to where the shepherds have the Spirit, and you've got to attach yourself to somebody that's got the Spirit, and let Him do the judging, and let Him do the parsing, and the application of the Word of God.

Why is it every single one of us has the indwelling and the filling Holy Spirit? Because each and every one of us has access to the Word, and we are to do for ourselves. We are no longer infants carried about by others, or blown around by winds of doctrine. We are to be mature.

We are to take the Word of God for ourselves, apply it to and for ourselves. It's wonderful to have a communicator, wonderful to have someone explain, or to emphasize, or to give us a reminder, but what happens in the soul, you can't lay off on anybody else. We will be accountable for our hearts and our souls.

We are accountable now, and we've got to throw ourselves on the mercy of God, in humility, in recognition that God's grace is sufficient for every need, and if we pursue it, if we take it to ourselves, God will bless. God will create in us a clean heart. God will renew in us a right spirit.

From that spirit will come words and actions. How powerful is this section of Proverbs, once you see the connections, once you see the message, so beautifully ensconced in this structure. It hits me between the eyes like a knuckle punch, and it should all of us.

However long we've been at it, however long we've been carried along by the grace of God, this is a wonderful, necessary, critical message for every single one of us. Redeem the time, pay attention to our hearts, avail ourselves of God's grace, make every minute count, every hour count. Who knows when the Lord may return, and we will be standing at the great assize, and the evaluation will be made.

We've still got time. We're here, and the Lord has not returned yet, and as much as I want to see Him and be reunited with loved ones, I want some time to add to the positive balance on the books. We have that opportunity.

Let's peg the meter. Let's make the most of it. Put the pedal to the metal.

Make every moment count. Don't let pride blind us. Don't let circumstance deflect us or distract us.

We are here by God's grace to accomplish God's purpose and to be examples of what He can do in a willing heart, with a willing spirit. Read these verses, reflect on them, marinate in them, and then look at our circumstance, look at our opportunities, and let's be those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises. What an opportunity.

It's all by God's grace. It's all in God's strength. All we have to do is choose and be consistent in that choice.

Be humble, not fooled. Be wise, in God's eyes, not wise in our own eyes. What a great opportunity this is.

I'm excited. I am motivated and encouraged. God will bless the outcome.

He'll bless our words. He'll bless our efforts. He'll bless our works.

The promise is right here in the first few verses of this chapter. So, we can take it to heart and be wonderful examples of what God can do in willing hearts. Father, thank you for the revelation of your truth and your word in this passage.

How much treasure we find in these Old Testament passages that so many overlook or set aside. We're grateful for the presence of your spirit. We're grateful for these truths and these promises.

And we pray that they will flame and live in our hearts and our souls. That you will purge us. That you will motivate and encourage us.

That you will use us in your service, both now and in the ages to come. That we will be

wonderful reflections of what is possible in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name.

Amen.