

Proverbs 25-02-26a

Greetings fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church and all the rest of y'all massive throngs of people out there in the wilds of the world. It's Wednesday night the 26th of February 2025. We're continuing our study in the book of Proverbs.

It is so impressive to see the design. It reminds me of these scanning electron microscope pictures you get of a butterfly's wing. And the closer you look, there's beauty inside beauty inside beauty.

It's like these Mandelbrot sets where no matter how close you look, it just unfolds more of the intricacy and the beauty of what God has done. We're going to see that tonight in this next section in Proverbs 16, which is verses 10 through 15. This is going to be a six verse set of quatrains.

We'll figure out what that is and why it's helpful, but let's ask God's blessing on our time of study and fellowship and we'll get started. Father, it is always a blessing and a privilege to gather together in your presence, to be given a wonderful meal of spiritual food from your word, to find in it those things that you want us to know and will help us to apply if we are diligent and if we're motivated. We look to the Lord Jesus Christ as our motivation.

He is our example as our Savior, as the first human being to live fully in the power of your spirit, guided by your word. And we're anxious to follow that example tonight as we delve into these wonderful truths and see your presence and your power implemented in our daily lives, to see your word as a light that illuminates our thinking, our choices, our actions, and gives meaning and purpose to each and every day that you grant to us. We pray that as we look at this portion of Proverbs tonight, that the Holy Spirit will find us teachable and impressionable with these essential principles of life so that we can put them into practice in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We have gone through at great length the first nine verses of this chapter following hard upon the heart chiasm that was the last portion of chapter 15.

We then found the Lord chiasm in an overlapping and the two sections, the end of 15 and the beginning of 16 share verse one. And you see the heart and the Lord mentioned in 16.1. It is the last verse of the preceding section that began in verse 25. And then it is also the first word of the, actually it wasn't verse five, it was verse 28.

I'm having trouble reading because I left my glasses in the other room, but 28 through 16.1 was the first section. And then we saw beginning in verse one, the Lord section that goes through verse nine. We completed that last week and we're ready now to begin at chapter 16, verse 10.

Let's read our passage. And as always, if you want to watch and see if you can distinguish how and why this is more than just a smattering of verses conveniently listed in this chapter. So

beginning in verse 10, divination is on the lips of the king.

His mouth must not transgress in judgment. Honest weights and scales are the Lord's, all the weights in the bag are his work. It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness for a throne is established by righteousness.

Righteous lips are the delight of kings and they love him who speaks what is right. As messengers of death is the king's wrath, but a wise man will appease it. In the light of the king's face is life and his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain.

Looking at these verses, what is the first thing you see that they seem to have in common? Almost all of these verses, there's a singular element. There's a unique element that seems to characterize this whole section. Do you see what it is? It is the concept of the king, the monarch, the melek, M-E-L-E-K in Hebrew.

So in verse 10, it says, divination is on the lips of the king. His mouth must not transgress in judgment. But then you don't have the king in verse 11.

You've got weights and scales that are in a bag, the weights that help those operate. But then in verse 12, kings should not commit wickedness. Kings in verse 13, delight in righteous lips.

In verse 14, the king's wrath is in view. In verse 15, when the king's face is alive with light, there's life and his favor is like the latter rain. You remember the latter rain, the former and the latter rain in Israel, because the year begins at Rosh Hashanah in the fall.

The former rain is October, early November. And then the latter rain comes around April. And that's the spring rain.

That is the one that brings the cereal harvests, the barley and the wheat, the grain harvests to fruition. And so you have the Feast of Unleavened Bread and first fruits and so on in those spring feasts. So the latter rain, this is the fruition of the harvest, the fulfillment of potential that has been building for the previous many months.

So let's dive right in. The very first word we have to tackle here is divination. Now, I thought divination was a bad thing.

Doesn't the word of God militate against divination? Well, it certainly does. And you have in Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 10, this is the very same word. I'll just give it to you once.

This is the Hebrew word Qesem, Q-E-S-E-M. And you can pull that up in a Strong's and you can see all the places that it's used. I'm just going to give you a few pertinent places.

But Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 10, there shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire. This is sort of Molech worship, putting babies in his brass belly and boiling them alive, burning them to death. Or one who practices Qesem, translated witchcraft, divination, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer.

None of these, and I'd have to go back and look to see which one of those is the actual word Qesem, but it's one of those prohibited actions. And you find it in 1 Samuel 15, 23. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

Stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you from being king. Remember, this is in the section of 1 Samuel where Saul loses his throne because he has essentially practiced something that in the Lord's eyes is as the sin of witchcraft, rebellion and stubbornness.

Well, in Ezekiel 21, 18 through 23, I'm not going to read the whole thing, but all of chapter 21 of Ezekiel is about the sword of the Lord that He is sending for judgment. The word sword is in there so many times. And there is a point at which He says, son of man, appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the King of Babylon to go.

The sword of the King of Babylon is the Lord's sword. He is going to send Babylon in as a scourge, the way He had done earlier in the Northern Kingdom with Assyria, the rod of mine anger and the staff of my indignation. Now Babylon is going to be His sword on Judah.

So when the sword of the King of Babylon comes, which way is it going to go? Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem. For the King of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination, to use kesem. Which way is He going to go? He is going to appeal to the invisible higher powers, to something outside of Himself that knows more than He does to figure out which way to go.

In His right hand is the divination for Jerusalem, to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates and so on. But kings would appeal to the gods, to the soothsayers, to the diviners, to the wise men, to guide their policy when they didn't have a clear course of action before them. And so you have the wizards in Egypt who threw down their rods when Moses and Aaron came in and they replicated some of the early manifestations of God's power.

And you see in Babylon and in the Persian throne room where wise men were cultivated to come and consult with the king and guide him as Daniel and his three friends would be. But how does that pertain to our passage? It's the same word. Divination is on the lips of the king.

So is this an evil king? What it really means, and I think this is a great translation, and Bruce Waltke translates the word in this context in this way, because the word by itself out of context means to receive inspiration from beyond yourself. So obviously if Israel is looking beyond the Lord their God for inspiration, looking to other gods, looking to the wisdom of men, tea leaves and fate and kismet and karma or whatever it might be, that is evil. They are to go to the law and the testimony.

And going anywhere else for wisdom is an abomination to the Lord. So here in this context

divination is on the lips of the king. His mouth must not transgress in judgment.

So this is righteous judgment that doesn't stray from God's righteous standards. So he must be using divine guidance in the execution of his kingly function, because this isn't any old king. This is not the king of Babylon.

This isn't the pharaoh of Egypt. This is God's anointed David's son on the throne, and he is to be guided to receive inspired guidance and render inspired verdicts through his relationship to God. So I have marked out divination and written an inspired verdict, knowing what inspiration is for believers in the Old Testament and in the New.

An inspired verdict, a verdict that comes from on high. And you will see that this is a valid translational choice because of the way this section is structured. If you just pulled this proverb out, it could be abused any number of ways.

But what we're going to find here, and you remember the end of chapter 15, we called it the heart chiasm. And then the first part of chapter 16 was the Lord chiasm. There is a shift here in structure, and this is now going to be what I would call the king quatrains.

King quatrains. A quatrain, you get the Q-U-A there as in quarter or four of a thing. So these are four line sayings, four line deliveries, and we are going to see that there are three of them, three quatrains in a row.

So verse 10 and 11 are going to go together as a four line saying, 12 and 13, a four line saying, and then 14 and 15, a four line saying. So I keep my number two pencil handy. This time, instead of Navy, I've got themarines.com. And I draw a line to mark these off.

And we're going to see how beautifully structured this is. Just take a look at verses 10 and 11. So an inspired verdict is on the lips of the king.

That means he is going to speak this conclusion. He's going to deliver this verdict verbally. His mouth must not transgress in judgment.

Remember the answer of the lips. The answer of the tongue is from the Lord back in 16 1. These sections follow one another logically. And the Lord is the one that should be guiding the answer of the lips for every faithful believer, especially the king.

So when his lips speak, this should be an inspired choice, an inspired policy. We say an inspired verdict because of the second part of this, the second line, his mouth must not stray. The word transgress doesn't mean to sin.

It means to stray, must not deviate, must not depart. And I could give you places in Proverbs where it is translated to stray or to depart. So his mouth, when he speaks and renders the verdict, it should not stray from justice.

This is Mishpat. I think I just mentioned this in the last week or two. Shafat is the word to judge.

You put an M in front of it. It makes it a noun. It's judgment, justice, a righteous analysis and decision about what should happen.

So should not transgress in Mishpat. Now notice the next verse, verse 11. Honest weights and scales are the Lord's.

The word honest there is Mishpat. The last word of the first two lines and the first word of the second two lines is exactly the same, Mishpat. These are just, these are fair weights and scales just for clarity.

Why are weights and scales both mentioned? The first one is a balance beam, is a structure that involves a beam and it's kind of a heavy permanent scale. The second one, the measure is a handheld balance scale. And so one is in a fixed place of justice or judgment or in a market.

The other is you're traveling. You go over to a farm and you're doing an informal outside the courthouse transaction. So whether it is large and important and central and in the courtroom, whether it is out neighbor to neighbor, whether it is the large scales or the measures in things large and things small is the idea.

Honest weights and scales are the Lord's. The weights in the bag are his work. So this isn't just any verdict that the King renders or what seems right in the eyes of men or what is popular with the citizenry.

This verdict goes back to chapter 16, verse one, the answer of the tongue needs to be from the Lord. And this is a metaphor. It goes beyond just things that you weigh in a scale or with a measure.

This is, are you doing what is right? Because the standards, the weights that are in the bag are of the Lord. The King is of course, at the top of the justice scale, just weights. You can go back to Leviticus chapter 19, verse 36 for the literal sense, 1936 of Leviticus, you shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hen.

I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And this, you are reflecting my justice when you are just and fair with each other. Deuteronomy 25, 15, you shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure.

So that your days may be lengthened in the land, which the Lord, your God is giving you. Remember the consequences of honoring your father and mother that your days may be long in the land. Same thing here.

It's repeated in Ezekiel 45, verse 10. And the Lord stands behind these weights and his people should not have a reputation for duplicity. Deuteronomy 25, 13, you shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy one and a light one.

So when you're buying something like grain, you put the light scale, you put the heavy weight

on there or the light one to benefit you, depending on which way the transaction is directed. Well, I want more grain, so I'm going to put the heavy weight on the other side of the scale and you'll have to put more grain in the bag for my money. Or I'm selling grain, so I'm going to put a light stone on there so he doesn't get as much of my grain for the money that I'm receiving.

My grain, get it? So same thing in, that was Deuteronomy 25, 13, Isaiah 46, 6. Part of the condemnation is they lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver on the scales. They hire a goldsmith and he makes it a God. They prostrate themselves and they worship.

So the idea that these weights are contained in a bag, Micah chapter 6, verse 11, shall I count pure those with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? If we are dishonest with one another, it is displeasing to the Lord and the King as the example and the leader. And of course, who does the King of Israel ideally foreshadow? The Lord Jesus. He is an anticipation.

The Lord Jesus is the ultimate and final King of Israel. And these earlier kings are to be an anticipation of a day of justice and righteousness where the poor are not taken advantage of and the rich are not favored. In any area of life, we have to work hard to be as fair as we can be.

And by the way, this works in a way you might not expect. If you have righteous weights and just measures, your scales balance perfectly, you are not cheating the other person in a transaction. But what's the flip side of that? You are also not constantly shorting yourself.

It doesn't say always use a light weight so that you put 13 eggs in the dozen. You do a baker's dozen and put in a 13th biscuit or whatever it is. It is fair to both parties and fairness to ourselves as well as fairness to others is important.

If you use unbalanced scales to the other person's advantage all the time, you can create a sense of guilt or beholdenness or, well, you owe me. And to be fair so that both sides walk away satisfied that we owe no man anything. I was fair to him.

He was fair to me. This is just the scales balance. We don't constantly tip them in our favor, nor do we constantly tip them in other people's favor.

This is scripture. This is what we are to do as God's people to have one measure that we use all the time, whether the transaction is flowing out from us or in to us. And in the same way that we are looking at the pastoral epistles and seeing how the instructions for pastors really inform everyone in the church, everyone in the body of Christ, the pastors are to be examples and are to teach these things.

But the reason they teach them is so that everyone learns them and practices them. And in charging Timothy with the way in which he should exercise his spiritual gift is itself an example for all of us with whatever our gift may be, because the power, the guidance, the balance that is employed when a pastor discharges his responsibility or an elder, as we've seen the qualifications in first Timothy and Titus, it's really true of all of us. These are exemplary.

They are in a way metaphorical for all of us. Same thing here. When you look at the instructions for a king, we're not off the hook.

Well, I'm no king. Nobody's saying long live the king to me. I'm not the queen of anything.

I'm not even the prince. There is a sense in which we are all royal family of God because we are related to the father, the king of the universe through Jesus Christ. We are in unity with his son.

And as such, we are his children. That makes us royalty, royal family in the spiritual sense. Any way you want to look at it, these standards and these practices and these characteristics should apply to each and every one of us.

So when we make decisions, when we act and implement and perpetrate policy toward others, we should be just like the king of Israel. It should be an inspired verdict. We should be constantly looking to the Lord because the proper balance, the proper weight, the proper measure comes from him and from nowhere else.

People want to carry around their own weights and try to use them to their own advantage, and that is proscribed. Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord. So an inspired verdict is on the lips of the king.

He not only knows what's right in his heart, he speaks it. When the jury comes back in and the foreman hands the thing to the bailiff and the bailiff hands it to the judge, the judge speaks the verdict. How much more so the king.

He's going to communicate the verdict and the king's word is law. That's what happens. So in the areas where we have accountability and responsibility, because we have authority to make a decision, we need to be looking for the Lord's weights.

They belong to him. The statutes, the ordinances, this is what you get from Psalm 119 as a summary from much of the scripture. They belong to the Lord.

And by the way, that's why the king isn't mentioned in that second verse there, verse 11, because the king is so representative of the Lord that when you mention the Lord's weights as being just and honest and his possession, here the king and the Lord blend together. One represents the other. And this is a beautiful foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus, who is a king on earth, but he is co-existent with the father.

If you've seen me, you've seen the father. And so the weights and measures that the king uses are the ones that belong to the Lord. And it is all the same, whether it is the Lord speaking or the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, same idea.

So that is the first quatrain. And it is an emphasis on the authority, the responsibility, and the accountability for being just and fair in our dealings with others. What we say should reflect God's standards.

So then you come to verses 12 and 13. This is the second quatrain. The first one dealt with the king's personal responsibility, who he should be as a righteous judge.

He should be a full reflection of God's righteous standards. So you have those two linked with the word mishpat, which is justice. Now we're going to have verses 12 and 13.

And before we look at them in detail, what is the last word of verse 12? Say it out loud. What's the last word in verse 12? Righteousness. What is the first word in verse 13? Righteous.

Tzedek. This is no accident. This is such a beautifully crafted, it's like going to a museum and seeing fine china, fine pottery, fine paintings, fine statuary, beautiful carvings, other creations that just reflect diligence and creativity and genius and symmetry.

The way God has crafted this scripture is gorgeous. You can hardly quit looking at it. How easy is it for us to see that these two verses are to be taken together? They are linked with a doubled word, tzedek.

So what does it say? It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness. For a throne is established by righteousness. The whole purpose of the throne is to seat a king who will act in righteousness, God's righteousness.

So if he abuses his authority, if he mishandles his responsibility for justice, that is an abomination. It is abhorrent to the Lord, because he is supposed to symbolize, represent, and foreshadow the righteous rule of God in heaven that will come to earth in the form of his Son, the Anointed One, the King of Israel, David's greater Son. The throne is established by righteousness.

When the throne functions as it should, God will bless it, God will establish it. Verse 13, righteous lips are the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks what is right. And that last word there, right, is not a tzedek word, it's another word that has to do with what is proper.

But look at the outside of verse 12 and 13. It is an abomination in the first line, and there is love in the last line. There's hate and disgust at the beginning of verse 12.

There is love and delight in verse 13. It's a choice. Righteousness is a choice.

Justice is a choice. So another thing to notice here is subtle. And I could set a timer and let you look for 10 or 15 minutes, and you might pick it up.

But that's how long it took me, so it probably wouldn't take you quite that long. But I want you to notice something. Now we're talking about singular and plural.

King in verse 10 is what? Singular. In verse 11, it isn't specifically mentioned. Verse 12, it is kings.

Verse 13, it is kings, plural. So this should characterize kings in the generic sense. But look at

our final section, verses 14 and 15.

Messengers of death is the king's wrath, singular. In the light of the king's wrath, in verse 15. So we start with the singular.

In the center, we have the plural, which generalizes a thing. Americans should be this way, or an American did this, or an American. It's singular and plural for a reason.

And these forms also tie together those verses, 10 and 11, and 12 and 13, and 14 and 15. So here in the center, it is an abomination to commit wickedness. What is the specific kind of wickedness that is in view? We don't have multiple wives or sending your troops out and staying home.

There are many other kinds of wickedness. You could make unholy alliances. You could go to Egypt for help and you're leaning on a broken reed.

We've seen all kinds of wickedness. King Ahab murdering Naboth for his vineyard at his wife Jezebel's behest. Kings have done all kinds of abominable things.

But what is the specific wickedness in this context? And we've seen that this is a tight structure. So it is self-referential. It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness.

This is abuse of their authority to benefit themselves instead of provide justice for the people they have been appointed to shepherd. This is self-interested governance instead of looking to those under his rule. And that is an abomination, a throne, a government.

You remember in Romans and other places where Paul talks about being respectful of kings and those who are in authority. God has put them there and you respect them out of love of the Lord and fear of the Lord, not because they are a good king or a bad king or because you agree with them or disagree with them. They should be respected and obeyed as long as it doesn't transgress a higher spiritual priority because it is God's structure.

A throne is established by righteousness. A government will endure. A king will endure.

And making application from the king to us, our lives will be established. Our provision, our fruit will be gathered and put in the storehouse for future days and future ages. Established is settled and provisioned, protected, defended, supported, encouraged.

And in the same way that a king's throne is established, when he looks to the Lord for guidance and for righteous weights and measures, when we do the same, we will similarly be established. Our feet will be set on the solid rock. Our house will be built on the rock and not on the sand.

So this is a wonderful word picture for us to not bend the rules, to not cheat someone, fail to tell them something. I'm going to sell you this car, but I don't want you to know that I put motor honey in it. And after you go 150 miles, the transmission is going to grind itself to fine

powder.

I didn't tell you that it needs \$2,300 worth of work and that's why I'm selling it. That's an abomination to the Lord, to practice wickedness, to be unfair, unjust to others. We need to be fair.

If the car is still, despite its problems, worth a certain amount of money, charge that. We are fair to ourselves and we are transparent and open with those to whom we are talking when we're in a transaction, when we're treating someone, when we are responsible to reward or to discipline someone, it should be fair. It should be equitable.

And we should be looking to the Lord because the weights and measures are His. Every weight in the bag, whether large, small, formal, informal, we look to the Lord. Smallest little things, we want to be fair.

Well, that leaves us with the final quatrain and we'll take a look at that when we come back from the break.