

02-11-10a Revelation

Let's begin our worship this morning by taking a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer. It is always a reminder of the gratitude that we owe to God when we think about our national situation. This is Veterans Day weekend.

Today is the birthday of the United States Marine Corps, which is near and dear in many of our hearts. It is because of God's grace. It is because of God's generosity, based on nothing that we have or nothing that we deserve, but simply on His magnanimous bounty and abundance that He bestows on us, that we enjoy the privileges of living in such a wonderful country with such great freedoms and privileges and opportunities.

There are no times more significant in my mind than when we realize what could have been if we had not been blessed with military victories, if we had not been blessed in the wars that we have fought in other climes and other places. Our lives could be far different. We could have a much different type of government.

You can look around the world and see people who suffer great oppression because of the mismanagement of their natural resources. There are countries that are very rich in possessions and in resources, and yet their people suffer so. You look at the oil-rich countries that are in the grip of Muslim leadership.

You look at African countries that have great natural resources, but don't have the financial or industrial infrastructure to make use of that and to distribute the benefit of having those possessions among their entire population. You see people who are not free to worship, who are not free to assemble, who are not free to pursue employment or education for any one of a variety of reasons, religious or simply because there are tyrannical people in charge of their government. There are people who have perverted and corrupted the government and made it a part of a drug cartel.

Almost anyone who has e-mail has received these letters, I am Fred Mobutu and I'm in such and such a government in Africa. There's this untouched bank account of \$8.6 million and I need you to help me get this out because you were recommended to me as a trustworthy individual, hence I'm going to have you get into this illicit scheme with me to profit without working and so on. But that particular brand of scheme is often and is currently being implemented with the cooperation of people in some of these African governments, people that have gone down that road of a get-rich-quick scheme and have responded to those e-mails, find that they are dealing with legitimate people in the government and after having spent untold numbers of dollars without a return, are invited to come over to the country and they do and are never heard from again.

And this is with the complicity and the cooperation of people at high levels of government and many of the facts and the documents and things that they provide to people as a part of this ruse

for getting American money into their pockets, it's with the complicity of the government. You think about if you've ever traveled abroad and you go to a market and you buy food, there's no FDA, there's no government inspection and even with the occasional snafu that we have here, you can generally go to the store and count on the fact that your meat has been kept at the proper temperature, that your fish is not going to make you sick, that you're not going to get some bacterial form of illness because of poor hygiene and poor standards. They had an expose on TV this past week about school cafeterias and about how some school cafeterias were not up to the hygiene standards and when something like that is found out, the reaction is swift and there are remedies and legal actions.

Many countries have no such thing and you're just on your own. You've got to just say grace and ask God to bless your food because there is no governmental, we take so many things for granted that if something bad happens to you health wise, they will care for you and work out the paperwork and the finances later. We have freedom, we have privacy, we can own property, we have recourse.

I love the laws of the state of Texas that say that you can protect your property with deadly force. A lot of people are horrified by that. But that is a biblical principle.

Let him that stole, steal no more. And if you come onto someone's property that owns a firearm, that is probably going to be the case. And you will not be prosecuted, you will not go to jail in Texas if someone is trying to make off with your valuables and violate the sanctity of your property and your privacy.

And you have no idea what their intentions are. I have two daughters and a wife in my household and I am not going to stop and have an interview with somebody that is here after dark sneaking around. He can have an interview with what I have packed in the magazine of my colt commander and sort it all out.

I will send him to God and he can defend his actions before God. But that is freedom and privacy and property that is part of our country and it was bought with blood. It is a great analogy in the secular realm to what has taken place in the spiritual realm.

We have freedom in Christ that was also purchased with blood and should be considered dear and valuable and something to be mindful of not just one day a year, not just two days a year or once a week, but all of the time. So in that sense we go before the Lord on this day with a special remembrance of Thanksgiving for our environment. And those blessings and that environment are not just given to us as an expression of God's grace alone, but also because it provides us opportunity.

With the freedom and with the authority that we have over our own lives and our own souls goes responsibility and we are accountable for what we are able to do. We study the church in Revelation where there were very limited opportunities. They were hemmed in and didn't have a

lot of opportunity.

We do and with that goes responsibility to use it well. We are those to whom has been given the five talents in that sense and we have the responsibility not just to earn one more talent or two more talents, but five more. From those to whom much is given much is expected and I constantly try to remind myself that we have been given much for a reason and there ought to be an investment made in eternal things because we are free from so much in the way of trial and trouble in the political and social and cultural sense.

So let's take a moment here at the beginning of our study to express our thanksgiving to God and to ask His blessing on our worship. Father, we do thank you and recognize the greatness of your grace in placing us at this point in human history, in this geographic location, in a nation founded on biblical principles by godly men who sought to honor you in the way they constructed our government, in the documents that define it and perpetuate it. We thank you that we have blessing even down through the years and with the many changes and attempts at perversion and corruption and departure from those principles that many of those great biblical founding stones are secure and survive to this day.

We thank you for the freedom that we have not only as Americans, but also the freedom we have in Christ. We ask your blessing on us as we recognize your provision and your blessing upon us. We pray that you will continue to lead and guide us and to show us clearly through the ministry of the Spirit, through the principles and communication of your word, where our calling lies, where our opportunities lie, and how best to seize and lay hold of the great opportunities you have put before us.

We pray for those who are not with us. We pray for those who may be in other places and other circumstances and yet are seeking to come to a greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and to live in a way that honors you. We pray that you'll be with those who serve in our armed forces.

We thank you for those who are willing to make the sacrifice of their very lives in defense of our country and what it stands for. We pray for the families of those who survive even to this day and are thinking of members that they have lost. We pray that you'll comfort them with the knowledge that it was a worthy cause for which they died and that there is a recognition and a reckoning in the world and your justice and your righteousness are in no way diminished by the advances that seem to be made by evil, by those who are inspired by Satan and his doctrines.

We know that however things may appear and however they may turn out in this life there is an ultimate day of reckoning, there is a weighing in the scales and we know that we ourselves are subject to that same evaluation and we ask now that as we study your word this morning God the Holy Spirit will help us to judge ourselves so that there will be no need for judgment coming from your throne. We pray that we can grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning turn with me to Proverbs chapter 11. Proverbs chapter 11.

While you are turning there I'm going to remind you of our context because we are continuing this morning our study of the final letter of seven that Jesus sent to the churches of Asia Minor via the Apostle John, the letter to the church at Laodicea. And the title of our lesson this morning is Riches or Righteousness. Riches or Righteousness.

As we have studied this final letter we have seen the Lord Jesus introduce himself as a faithful and true witness, the faithful and true witness. He is the inception, he is the beginning of the creation of God and he says to the believers at Laodicea, I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot so then because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will vomit you out of my mouth.

Because you say, and this is the basis, what does it really mean to be lukewarm? It doesn't mean to be apathetic about good works, it doesn't mean to be a failure as a witness to the world, it doesn't mean to be wishy-washy per se in terms of our modern idea of lukewarm. Well, he arrived at the meeting and received a lukewarm reception. He went to the political rally and received a lukewarm greeting.

We tend to think of lukewarm as not really good and not really bad, just kind of indifferent or almost apathetic. That's not what it means here. Jesus defines lukewarm in verse 17.

You are lukewarm because you say, I am rich, I have become wealthy, and I have need of nothing. The fundamental failure in this church which receives no commendation from Christ, it's unique among the seven in having no commendation whatsoever, the root of the problem is no sense of need. I am rich, I have become wealthy, I don't need anything.

And you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Jesus says, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich, white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed, and anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Therefore, be zealous and repent. Metanoeo, change your mind. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne. As I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Well, with that fresh in our minds, let me commend to your attention now our scripture reading in Proverbs chapter 11. Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.

When pride comes, then comes shame, but with the humble is wisdom. The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them. Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. You begin to see even in these first few verses, several common elements from the letter to the church at Laodicea. Not only do you have the obvious link of reliance upon riches, but note also as we go through this chapter, the principle of integrity.

Jesus says, I am a faithful and true witness. And note also the recurring theme of guidance and counsel. Once again, verse 3. The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.

Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright. And that word, that translation there, will direct, it literally means to make smooth or make straight.

But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the unfaithful will be caught by their lust. When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of the unjust perishes.

The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead. The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered. When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation.

By the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. One of the reasons the millennial Jerusalem will never be overthrown is it is the dwelling place of the righteous, and the apathetic and indifferent and unrighteousness are not allowed within the gates. The blessing of the upright, the city is exalted.

Even at the end of the Gog Magog rebellion, at the close of the millennial reign of Christ, Jerusalem is never overthrown. It is surrounded by the terrors that have grown up in the kingdom through that thousand years. They are as numerous as the sands of the sea.

There are numberless hordes that gather with Satan when he is released, and they surround the city of Jerusalem and the camp of the righteous, but they do not prevail. This is the principle. The city is exalted by the blessing of the upright.

He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace. A tale bearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. Where there is no counsel, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

We'll have to come back to that verse. He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, but one who

hates being surety is secure. A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches.

The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. The wicked man does deceptive work, but he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. Just as righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.

Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their ways are his delight. Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished, but the posterity of the righteous will be delivered. As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion or discernment.

The desire of the righteous is only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath. Back to our theme of gathering riches to oneself, there is one who scatters yet increases more, and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

The people will curse the one who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it. He who earnestly seeks good finds favor, but trouble will come to him who seeks evil. He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage.

He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner.

This is a fascinating collection of proverbs to analyze and to study, and they're collected together for a reason. There are several strands that are interwoven. I want to return to the idea of counsel because Jesus introduces himself to the church at Laodicea as the faithful and true witness.

And if you will see in a moment the importance of his identity and his identification of himself as that witness to the believers at Laodicea. But there is the idea that there is a deception, there is an enemy, there is a conflict between righteousness and evil, between those who seek to do good and to live rightly and to be approved by God, and those who are deceived and fall victim to the short-term idea of gain in this life. And one of the principles in Proverbs 11, and I wish I could take a whole morning or a couple of mornings and go through the logic and the link between each of these proverbs in this section of the proverbs.

You'll recall that in Hebrew there are no chapter divisions. It flows seamlessly from beginning to end and so you can't say well it's just this chapter. Many times the divisions are arbitrary and you may have to start in a previous chapter to get the context of that section.

But this is a pretty good collection here in Proverbs 11, a fairly good division because in this section you have the interweaving of these three ideas. What are you looking for in your life? Are you seeking gain? Or are you seeking to be righteous and to be approved by God? And if you

identify that conflict, that struggle, that difference, those two viewpoints of life, how do you ensure that you stay on the narrow path that goes through the straight gate that leads to life and not be deflected and deceived into this destructive path that seems so alluring and seems so appealing? How can you avoid the path of perversity, the path of faithlessness that's talked about in verse 3? The integrity of the upright will guide them and you have this third principle that we need guidance. We need something to steer us and to signpost for us the right path.

If you drive in Texas, especially if you travel around the state, you know that some cities are better than others for driving. I think it's gotten better in recent years, but in my early days as a resident of Texas, when I used to go down to Houston and try to drive in that city, that is the awfulest, or was, the worst place to try to navigate because there was this tangle of freeways and off-ramps and exits that were poorly marked. I will never forget going around the loop there in Houston trying to find an exit and trying to get to a particular place.

You would come upon an off-ramp and there would just be a little sign that said, Exit. I said, Exit? To what? What is this? Where does it go? Going all the way around the loop and coming around again, I circled the entire city and I found that the identification for that exit was a sign that was on the corner of a building that was about half a block away from the freeway. If you missed that sign, then you had no idea what the exit was.

I have never been, well, one other time, when I was driving in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983, with shooting and the Green Line and rocket launchers and stuff, that was, and Houston comes in a close second, because when you drive somewhere, you want signs. I want exits clearly marked. I want somebody to tell me, your exit is coming up in a mile, and in a half mile, and in a quarter mile, so if I need to get over in the right-hand lane, or if it tells you, left exit.

Dallas is bad about this. If you don't know this city and you're going around some of the roads that we have here, we sometimes have a left exit and they don't tell you until the last minute. They haven't helped you if you're in the wrong lane because you miss it.

They say, such and such, half a mile, quarter of a mile, and then you get there. Oh, left exit. Oops, I'm in the wrong lane.

Or they'll have an exit-only lane and they don't tell you it's exit-only, and you're blowing along, and all of a sudden, you're off headed for Austin and you didn't want to be. We need clearly marked roads. That's the principle.

Well, what marks our road? We go through our existence here. We get up in the morning, we brush our teeth, and put on our clothes, and stagger out, or leap forward, whatever kind of personality you are, to meet the day, and we immediately think, you wake up and you start going through your morning ablutions, and most of us start thinking, well, what day is it? What are my events for today? Is this the day that I do this and so? And we start planning it and trying to navigate through the day. Well, any rank unbeliever can list out the tasks, prioritize them,

schedule them, and get them done.

I've got to get in the car and be at such and such a place by such and such a time. I've got to pick up the cleaning. I've got to be at my job, whatever it may be.

The car's on empty. I've got to leave a little early and stop and get gas. We think in those terms, and so we signpost our path through the day, don't we? Hopefully, we don't just wait for things to blow up in our face.

Oh, I'm out of gas. I guess I better find some. We try to plan ahead, and so we set a course.

We chart our course through the day and say, I'm going to do these things in this order, don't we? I'm going to try to eat meals at this time. Well, if that's all we do, any unbeliever can do that. We need to have a second overlay.

One of the things that is great about being an artilleryman and being an infantryman, being somebody who works with maps in the military, is that you'll have the basic map of an area. The Army used to do all their exercises in the Fulda Gap in Germany, and in schools, at the artillery school, back when I went through, everything was charted for the Fulda Gap. This is the great valley of Megiddo, if you will, that takes place in Europe.

Back when you had the communist bloc countries and you had American forces stationed in Germany, everybody saw the great rush of the Russians and the communist bloc countries all coming through the Fulda Gap, streaming through Germany to wreak havoc on Western Europe. So the American Army had this big defensive plan, so you'd have these maps of the Fulda Gap. Or any other place, you have the basic map that people might use for anything, and then you have a clear plastic acetate overlay, and on the overlay, which you line up with the latitude and longitude, the grid lines, you'll have little crisscrosses you put on there, and this is where you mark your forces, and this is where you mark your points of entrance and egress from your lines.

You mark the, what they used to call, it's been named six different things, it used to be the FEBA, the forward edge of the battle area, and then they started calling it the FLOT, the forward line of troops, and then you have people who are not so well educated, they call it the FLOT line. The L in FLOT is line, so you're calling it the forward line of troops line, if you say FLOT line. I think it's the euphony with trot line, you know, fishermen put out the trot line, so people say, well, FLOT line, it just kind of flows off the tongue, but the FLOT, the forward line of troops, they call it something else now, I don't know what it is, but it's your guys, your people, with their machine guns and their interlocking fields of fire, and to get from one place to another, to plan for interdiction fires, if somebody starts coming and launching an attack, how do I stop them? You have to have a plan, you have to have your artillery pieces already registered, and with some firing data that you can send down quickly to put steel on various lines of approach, so you have an overlay, you have this overlay that you put over the map, and it shows you where you should

attack and where your priorities are, and where you've got weaknesses, and where you need to watch, where you need to go, and these overlays may change with the day and with the time, even though the topography of the ground and the geography of the area does not change, the overlay will change because of the movement in the battlefield.

Well, we have a basic map of our life, we have terrain that we have to navigate, we have employment, we have family, we have the need to keep food in the refrigerator, we have the need to have clean clothes, we have basic terrain features that basically don't change, right? But you can't just say, well, I've got a map of the area, so I'll take this road, I'll pass through this town, I will get from point A to point B taking this path. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we need an overlay to put on that map that shows us where the hazards are, that shows us the proper paths to take and the paths to avoid, the place where the enemy is encamped, where we can be decimated, we can be attacked and destroyed, we can suffer loss and suffer damage. Well, most troops don't make up their own overlay.

It comes down from higher headquarters. Somebody is up there in G2 or in S2 or somewhere in the intel area, they've got the intelligence, they've got the information, they've been talking to the scouts and the flyovers and the satellite imagery and the infrared information and all of the intelligence that's been gathered about the enemy and they say, okay, here's where we're going to deploy you, here are the places to be, these are the hills to hold, these are the ones that you can let the enemy take if we have to. That information is done at higher headquarters and you hope as a troop in the trenches or as a marine rifleman or as an artilleryman that the people in higher headquarters know what it is they're doing.

There's a very famous story that took place in World War II about a group, and I'm sure it was repeated many times, it's almost a truism, but there were troops who were in an area and they received an urgent radio transmission. They were moving forward and over the squawk box there, over the radio, to the radio man came the message, don't continue to fulfill your original orders. You have got to get out of there.

Leave now. And that's all the information they got. Bad radio reception, difficult situation there and they just had to trust that one message to get out of the area and they did.

They said, well, that's a change in plans, a change in orders, even though everything else we know tells us we're supposed to go forward and go to this certain place and they were actually trying to get back to where they would have rest and refreshment and recuperation. And the people said, no, go in the opposite direction. Go in the direction that seems totally wrong.

Well, they did and come to find out there had been an emergency airstrike that came into that area and there had been an insurgence, there had been a circling, a flanking movement and they had to bomb those guys and you've got to actually go toward the enemy to preserve your life. Well, on the strength of that one radio message, they did what they were told and their lives were

spared. There's an almost identical story with a different outcome that came out of Vietnam.

You know in Vietnam there was a lot of the rebellious mentality. A lot of people got drafted and didn't have the same background and same fabric of integrity that was woven into most people in those days and there was a squad of infantry that were moving through the jungle and they were on a road and the message came down over the radio, get off the road, you've got to get out. Well, they wanted to stay on the road because if there were mines they could spot them but if there were booby traps and things you moved through the jungle it was very difficult, it was very slow going, it was hot, you could get no breeze in the jungle where there was a little bit of air movement on the road and the message came and said, get off the road, disperse and get off the road.

Well, the men said, we don't want to get off the road, we're tired of hacking through the jungle, we could trip a mine, we could step on plungy stakes or something in there, we're not getting off the road. Well, a friendly airstrike hit the road and they were wiped out. Guidance from somebody who knows the bigger picture, it goes without saying, you have to have knowledge that comes from someplace greater than yourself.

Well, back to the map of our life, we wake up in the morning, we pretty well know the landscape and the geography but as believers we have an obligation to overlay that map with the information that comes from above, with the knowledge that dictates our spiritual priorities and even though something may seem desirable, even though something may seem to make sense to us, if the overlay, if the guidance from on high says, you can't go there, don't do that, don't fall for the desire to take the easy road or to accept the default answer as you look at the map, that is guidance. And that's the third element you see here in Proverbs chapter 11. You see the obvious tension between righteousness and riches in Proverbs 11.

The short term caters to our pride. We feel better when we seize something that's appealing to us, whether it makes us look better in the eyes of people, whether we gain something that we were after or that we sought for, whatever it may be, if it caters to our pride, if we wind up building our self-esteem and our sense of self-worth on this thing and we obtain it and it builds our self-worth, we have a sense of gratification that says, this was a good path, this was a good choice, I feel better having done this. And our criteria becomes, hey, I'm on a higher hill, I've made progress on my topographical map here and we disregard the guidance from above.

So you see in verse 2, when pride comes, the Bible says, if things are catering to your pride, if your pride is the criteria by which you judge the worth and the value of what you do in daily life, shame is going to follow. Pride comes first, shame comes after. With humility is wisdom, humility is teachability, willingness to accept the word and the authority of someone who knows more than you do.

It hurts our pride to admit that someone else knows more than we do or someone else may have

thought it out better or may have a better answer. All of us wrestle with this. We like to think that we've got it figured out.

The troops love to grouse and gripe about what are these officers smoking up there and giving us this word from on high, what do they know? They're not down here on the ground suffering through the trenches like we are. But there is a humility that means teachability, willingness to accept the word of someone who knows better. So, teachability, willingness to accept guidance.

You see the same thing in verse 3, the integrity of the upright will guide them. As God builds integrity in our souls, as God builds up our character, as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, we are going to begin to accept and understand. There are, to use the military analogy again, it's easy to react at something because it's inconvenient, because it doesn't make sense.

I just spent a day digging my fighting hole here and now you're telling me we've got to pull up stakes and move. And you rail against the incompetence. You move back to a place that you just filled in all the fighting holes and filled in all the trenches.

But this cat meowing around in here is used to having food all the time and we have to take the food away because she's on a diet that's better for her system. And she doesn't understand. She meows, where's my food, where's my food? I don't understand.

But people who are smarter than the cat, like the vet and the people who own the cat, are saying you only get your food at a certain time and it's a certain kind of food. But the cat has a hard time understanding. But there are others who grow, if you could imagine a cat having the perspicacity to realize, you know there are a lot of dogs, I think dogs are smarter than cats by far, and dogs will trust you.

If you tell a dog to stay when it wants to go do something, dogs have a trusting nature and you get the idea that they, however limited their intellect is, they recognize that you're trying to do them good. There's a reason for what you're doing and they sort of trust. And in my mind, it's sort of a crude analogy, the integrity of the upright will guide them.

When we begin to recognize that God's values make sense, and we trust Him, and we know that even though it seems like, well Lord, why did you let this circumstance come into my life? Why am I having to fight this particular battle? The Apostle Paul, the thorn in the flesh, he went to the Lord three times and asked Him to remove it. And God basically said, Paul, it's needful. As much as you suffer with this thing, you can't imagine what you would lose if I took it away.

And it requires trust. We have to have the integrity that says, I live my life to please the Lord. If this is what pleases Him, if this is His overlay for my map, then I'm going to follow that even though I don't see the sense of it.

That's integrity. We talked about integrity when we talked about the light that's on the inside

shining all the way through. There's no hypocrisy.

There's no difference between what's on the inside and on the outside. The integrity of the upright will guide them. But the perversity of the unfaithful or the faithless will destroy them.

If we try to skirt or find ways around God's principles and God's guidance, we decide we're smarter than He is, we want to cut straight across and take the shortcut, it's going to destroy us. Riches do not profit in the day of wrath. You can't say, but Lord, look at how successful I was.

Look at the things I gained. Look at my accomplishments. Riches do not profit in the day of wrath.

But righteousness delivers from death. We've seen the Lord Jesus bring up the concept of the second death at the judgment. Those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death.

Loss at the judgment. Loss going into the millennial kingdom. Loss going into the kingdom of the Father because of a short-term perverse and unfaithful attitude here.

This is not an academic concept. This is not a hypothetical. The words of the Lord Jesus to these churches, and in particular these to Laodicea, are meaningful to us on a daily basis.

When we wake up in the morning and we look at the landscape of the day before us and we decide how we're going to navigate it, do we stop and flip down the overlay? Do we stop and take the guidance from God? All through this chapter, you see the concept of guidance. When you get to 11.14, he says, where there is no counsel, the people fall. But in the multitude of counselors, there is safety.

Well, a lot of people have come to this verse and its parallels. People try to explain this one verse away. There are four or five other places in Proverbs where this same statement is made.

Well, are we being encouraged here to seek godly counsel from fellow believers and check with several? Is this what the word of God is saying? Well, it's time for us to pause and take our break. So to prevent anybody from leaving during the break, I'll leave you dangling from the cliff here. When we come back, we'll take a look at this.

But the message from our study of this chapter as it relates to Revelation 3 is this. All of us face the same challenge of riches versus righteousness. It's not just material possessions.

It's that which gratifies, that which satisfies, that which allures and calls us. What compels us? You wake up in the morning and you look at the day. What are you after? What do you hope to achieve by the end of the day? If you're looking at it from a human point of view and if you achieve it, if you get to the end of the day and say, I really feel good about this day because I got X, Y, and Z accomplished.

I acquired something that satisfied me. That's your riches. That's what you consider valuable.

How do you measure a day? How do you measure the successful navigation through the hills and valleys of circumstance and relationship? If you reach the end of the day and say, I have succeeded, what is your standard of measure? What makes you rich? What do you consider a rich and valued life? Well, look at the standard. Because if we satisfy ourselves and don't satisfy God, there is a reckoning coming. And the Word of God says, as believers we do not live unto ourselves, we do not die unto ourselves.

We affect other believers and most importantly, we reflect or fail to reflect the glory of God. It's unendingly important. It is exceedingly important for us to know why we do what we do and who it is we're living to please.

That's really what riches is talking about. It goes way beyond measure of possession. So it turns on the counsel we accept, the guidance that we go by.

And that's what we're going to look at when we return after the break.