

02-11-10b Revelation

Let's resume our study this morning. This is part 2 of Riches or Righteousness. And we find ourselves still in our scripture reading, which has such great connection to the passage at hand in Revelation chapter 3. And we have been looking at the interweaving of themes in this chapter, of which there are many, but three primarily are the contrast between riches, which is the desire of the human heart, versus righteousness, which is the desire of God's heart.

And the necessity, because we are called to judge ourselves, to evaluate ourselves, how many different ways, how many different places can you think of in the Bible where this is required? Jesus told the parable of the mote in the eye versus the beam in one's own eye. How can you see clearly to remove the mote in someone else's eye when you've got a large piece of lumber in your own? He says, first, remove the beam. He doesn't say, don't ever pick motes out of other people's eyes, does he? He says, be sure you don't have a board in your own first.

He says, if you get your own eyes squared away, then you will see clearly to do the other. So there is a function, when exercised properly, of helping one another out. If you ever have soft contact, sooner or later you're going to lose one up in the far reaches of your eyeball, and you need somebody else to find it.

I've fished those out many a time. And it's something you can't always do for yourself. You need someone else who can see clearly.

But if I had some kind of a giant insect or a great splinter or something in my eye, and your eye's all watered up and runny and bloodshot, well, how are you going to possibly fish around and find something that's so hard to see in someone else's eye? But we have to do for ourselves. There is something obvious that we can get out of our own eye. Some of us have beams and motes in our eye, don't we? And the beam, he doesn't say, get the beams out of each other's eyes.

The beams we have to get out of our own eyes, right? It's the motes that may be very difficult. It's the hard things that may require the assistance of someone else. Well, this goes to where we left off here in verse 14 of Proverbs chapter 11, where there is no guidance, the people fall.

But in abundance of counselors, there is safety or victory, if you have a new American standard. Where there is no counsel, the people fall. There is a third element in this weaving together of riches versus righteousness, and that is that there is counsel available.

There is guidance available to help discern where the right path is. Now, I have heard this because here's the default view on Proverbs 11, 14 and its parallels. In the multitude of counselors, there is safety.

So when I face an important decision, I should ask as many people as possible. If I am the president of a corporation, if I have a position of responsibility, I should have an employee

meeting and get as many viewpoints as possible. It should be sort of a democracy.

I should get a lot of people involved and get a lot of opinions because the Bible says in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. Well, one of our guiding ideas in looking at the Word of God is context. It is a dangerous thing to rip from today's headlines.

Well, it seems to have suffered in the ripping because what you see on TV bears very little resemblance to reality. Here is a problem and it is all wrapped up and resolved in 48 minutes plus commercials. In the same way, if you rip a section or a phrase or a passage out of the Word of God and do not respect its context, it will be done violence and there is a great potential for misapplication.

Well, we've been reading this over and talking about Proverbs 11. What is the context? I'm not necessarily saying that that understanding is wrong, but as we approach it, let's be sure that we take the context into account. What are we talking about here? Well, let's go back up a few verses.

Verse 10, 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 actors I admire, I don't necessarily like some of the movies that he has been in, but I think a very talented and accomplished actor is William Hurt.

He's had some awful movies, but as far as just being able to do the job of an actor, he's very, very talented. He's in a movie right now that is dramatizing and bringing out the facts of one of our modern day greatest traitors who sold secrets and betrayed his country. I haven't seen it.

What's his name? Is it Turner? Or the other guy? Anyway, he was an agent and there's a movie out with William Hurt. You'll have to figure it out. The point being that this is a representation of someone who with his mouth, with his communication, potentially could bring down the city.

By the mouth of the wicked, a city can be overthrown. You can have a traitor that gives away vital information, shows the enemy the path that gets around the defenses, or whatever it may be, and overthrows the city. In the spiritual sense, the tongue and the lips, communication, evil communication, can destroy and be a curse to many.

What is the concept of the city? The city is the dwelling place for many. One person with their mouth can overthrow an entire city. By the blessing of the upright, an entire city can be exalted.

God looks at proportion, doesn't he? Remember Lot in the city of Sodom. For the sake of 50 righteous, the entire immoral, degraded, depraved Sodomite town would have been spared. If there had been 40 or 30 or 20 or even 10 righteous, God would have let all the rest of these abominable, wicked, nasty people live out their God-forsaken pagan lives.

As long as Lot was in the city, it was not destroyed. It was not until the angels dragged Lot and

his family, kicking and screaming out of the city, that it was destroyed, because God will preserve a place and preserve a group because of the principle of salt, the principle of the presence of the righteous. We find that when God decides to discipline a group, He will often remove or preserve in some fashion the righteous, just as much as He did Noah and his family in the ark.

By the blessing of the upright, the entire city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. What many fail to understand is one of the reasons the United States of America continues to be blessed and continues to prosper is not because the popular conceptions of morality and goodness are right, but because there is the presence in our country of enough righteous that God blesses the entire nation for their sake. He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace.

Now, there is a time when times become so evil that a wise man holds his tongue. There is a time to speak out. There is a time to be an influence for rightness in culture and in politics and so on.

And there is a time when things become so evil that a wise and godly person will remain quiet. This can happen individually. There is a time when there is some hope of it being effective.

You can speak up in a company and speak up for integrity. You can speak up for rightness. There is a time when it is pointless and useless.

And there is a time to remain silent. We'll see a passage here, if we get to it, that bears that out as much as this one does. A man of understanding holds his peace.

A tale-bearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. Conceals or does not reveal a matter. One of the hardest things for a human being to do is know something and not tell it.

Something that is of interest. Something that would widen the eyes and drop the jaw of people who heard it. And if you don't believe me, just pick something one of these days when somebody tells you something that's a juicy tidbit, and even if you don't think it's particularly long to reveal it, just try sitting on it and not revealing it.

Just take it as a test case. Maybe you know something that's about to happen, or you've got some inside knowledge of something. And other people will find out eventually and all, but just sit on it and see the wrestling that goes on in your own soul.

All human beings are tempted to be tale-bearers. We all love to be the one that draws aside the curtain and shows something. We seem to feel a need for the reflected glory.

This is why people slow down to look at traffic racks. Do you see gore? Do you see violence? Do you see the person laying on the stretcher? Half of the guys, I will tell you a secret, from the clan of men that many probably don't know or won't admit. Half of the guys that watch sports don't

really care about sports.

They watch it so that they're not uninformed when conversation happens around the water cooler or at work or amongst their friends. And you don't want to be unknowledgeable. Some guys don't even particularly care for football, but they'll watch every game because it's going to be talked about.

And you don't want to be the guy that didn't know. You might lose your membership in the guy club or something. So a lot of this is because you want to be able to speak.

It is the speaking and the telling that's more important than the actual doing and enjoying. A lot of people go through experiences, go visit places, simply so they can show their slides or so they can come back and fly it like a flag. It's just a part of human nature and we have to guard against it.

This is one of the things that the Bible reveals and it's one of the things that changes the road map, changes the landscape of what we do in a day. Are we looking for notoriety? Are we looking for something to... There are people who will obsess, who will get wrapped up in a situation or in a conflict between people and will watch it closely and will call friends and listen over the partition at work or whatever because you want to be in the know. And if you're one of the ones that are in the know, this puts you in kind of a... And it's a false measure of what's important, but it's a part of our nature and it can seem... There is a way that seemeth right to a man, the ends thereof are the ways of death.

So we can all heed a tale-bearer revealed secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. Now look at 14. Hard on the heels of that, where there is no counsel, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Well, we go to the Hebrew here and it says, Bein, in the lack of. Ein means there is not. We saw this in our study of Ecclesiastes time and again where it said that... It's translated in your English.

It is better for a man to do this than to do that. And I re-translated it for you because the word there is ein. There is not good.

It's not saying better. It's not better. There is no good in certain things.

You have that same word here. Ein means there is not or there is a lack. And it says here in verse 14, Bein, in the lack of.

And then we have a long Hebrew word. It is tachbulot. T-A-C-H-B-U-L-O-T.

Tachbulot. Tachbulot, if you're familiar at all with Hebrew endings, ot is plural. It's a feminine plural.

And we always pay special attention when a word that is susceptible of being interpreted as a concept is found in the feminine. You would expect now that counselors or counsel would be masculine because men run the world in the Bible, right? That's just the role God has assigned them. And when you have somebody occupying a position or someone doing something, you expect it to be in the masculine.

If it's feminine, like we saw with Kohelet, Kohelet was a feminine word. And it has the idea of the one who calls an assembly, the one who is speaking to a group in more of a metaphorical sense than someone who has a job of being the town crier or the bailiff that assembles people in a court. This had a conceptual basis.

And concepts in Hebrew tend to be expressed by feminine nouns. It's one of the signals to look for a little higher meaning. Well, this is Tach Bola or Tach Bula.

And this word has the idea, it is used of counsel. It also has the idea of advice, of direction, or guidance. That's the root meaning.

It is guidance, advice, counsel, or direction. It is actually rooted in the idea of a sailor, someone who steers a ship. It was traced back to the one who operated the rudder and set the course of a ship.

So you get the idea that this is guidance in an almost literal sense. Who is going to point your tiller and set the slant of your sails to determine the direction that you move? That's what Tach Bula is. Here it's in the plural.

So in the absence of good advice, but this is not just a single piece of advice, this is guidances, sessions of good advice. This is a pattern or the presence of advice on multiple occasions. This is not a single event.

If it was, it would be in the singular. But this is plural. We also find that this is a more general statement as you continue in the sentence because it doesn't say where there is no counsel, a man falls, or a man trips, or a man stumbles into darkness.

It says the people fall. This is talking about a national environment, a local environment amongst people in general. This is the trend of a society, the trend of a culture.

Specifically here it's talking about Israel and the nation of Israel. The people, when you have it unqualified in the scriptures of the Old Testament, the people are Israel. When it's expressed by this noun, Am, in the singular, Am means the people of Israel.

If it's plural peoples, it can refer to the nations, but more often you find it being Goyim, the non-Israelite peoples. But here, this is an environment, this is a trend, this is cultural, social, over a wide... This is not talking about any one individual in any one situation. In the absence of wise

counsels, in the absence of good guidances, the people, as a whole, will fall.

This is your standard word, nafal, to fall. But, and then you have a reversal, and it doesn't really come out so much in the English, because it says you have the consecutive particle, the or wau, it's the single letter W that the Germans call the V. It can be translated and, or, but, now, then. It's just a conjunctive particle, and its meaning is determined by context.

Here we have two things that contrast, and so the proper translation is but. So, in the absence, or in the there is no wise counsels, the people fall. It's literally fall the people, or there is a fall of the people, the people fall.

But, then you have the word for deliverance, and this is tishua, tishua. What is the name of Christ in Hebrew? Yeshua. This is the same, this is shuv, this is the Hebrew word group dealing with deliverance and salvation.

There is salvation, there is deliverance, that's the very next word. The people fall, but deliverance, Then you have the preposition but, which means in, by, or with, which is connected to the Hebrew word rov, R-O-V. It's a soft B, which we pronounce as a sort of a V when we say it in English, but rov.

The word group rav, or ravav, which is the verb, R-A-B-A-B, has the idea of multiplying, multiple things, and it comes to mean abundance. Abundance leads to a meaning of greatness. You have some people who come to this, because they don't want to say that the Bible says, go consult everybody before you make a decision.

They say, this doesn't mean multitude, this means greatness. The greatness, it's not how many counselors you have, it's how good they are that counts. Rov can have that meaning.

But, once again, context has to be our guide. We can't have a preconception and foist it on scripture. What is the preceding phrase? In the absence of something, the people fall, but there is deliverance in the abundance of something.

So the contrast here, if it said in the lousiness of counsel, the people fall, in the evil of counsel, the people fall, in the perverted, corrupted ideas, that's not what it says. It says it's absent, it's not present. So what is the opposite of not present? Well, you have something in abundance.

So this does have a numerical quality rather than a qualitative quality. It's not talking about the quality of the counsel, it's not talking about how great the counselor is. I've heard it taught this way, and my apologies to the ones who have done so, but it just does not hold up by way of context.

This is talking about multiplicity, abundance in the sense of numerosity, rather than quality. You just can't take it any other way. So what's it saying? But there is deliverance in abundance of what? Well, then we have yoets, y-o-e-t-s, yoets.

And again, even a first-year Hebrew student, as soon as you see that o-e infix, as far as the vowels go, o-e, that's a participle. That's going to be a cal-active participle of some word. And that is sure enough the case here.

This is the cal-active participle from yoets, y-a-a-t-s. And yoets is a participle, it's a noun taken from a verb, and it means to counsel or to be a counselor, consult. It can be an advisor, counselor, a consultant.

It can also be the counsel that is given. And in effect, it's an i-n-g word. Anytime you see the o-e, the participle, a participle is an i-n-g word.

To swim is an infinitive. Swimming is a gerund or a participle. And when you have a participle, you have the idea of ongoing action.

I can say to swim is a pleasure for many. I can also say swimming is a pleasure for many. If I say swimming, there's more emphasis on the process and the actual going on of that activity, where to swim, as an infinitive, is more of an abstract.

To swim is great. Swimming, you get the idea, here's somebody, hand over hand, executing their strokes through the water. Same thing here.

So in the abundance of counsel being given is the idea here. And I'll tell you why it is counsel and not counselors, because the participle here is singular. And if you go through the Hebrew Bible and look at the combination of rav or rov, which is abundance or many, you find out whether it's talking about the numerosity of something by whether or not the following noun is in the plural.

If this was in the abundance of counselors there is deliverance, counselors would be in the plural, just like in English. But if you say in the abundance of counselor or in the multitude of counselor, that doesn't wash and it doesn't do any better in Hebrew than it does in English. So we have to move away from multitudinicity or numerosity to the idea of the widespread presence of a single thing.

What is our context? It's among the people. To cut to the chase here, look at our country today. How many places among the people is there good counsel being dispensed? How abundant is good counsel in the sense of the teaching of the word of God in our country? This is what is being spoken of.

How abundant is good counsel among the people? Where it is lacking, the people will fall. But there is deliverance, there is salvation when counsel, wise counsel, is abundant. When it is easily found.

It's not scarce. It's in existence in many places. Does this make sense? What is the point? This is not a passage, and the same analysis applies to the parallels.

If you look in Proverbs 15 and verse 22, without consultation plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed. You have the same type of construction. You have in rove yo atzim there, and it's plural.

Without consultation plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed. This is an example of what I was talking about. Yo atzim here is in the plural.

You have rove yo atzim. This is talking about plans. If we had time to go through the context here with regard to counsel, do you listen to wise counselors in your periphery? Go up to verse 20.

A wise son makes his father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother. He doesn't listen to the father and mother that gave him wise counsel. Folly is joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight.

Without consultation plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed. This means coordinate your efforts. Don't strike out on your own.

This is a lesson the president learned, for example, when he wanted to go out and attack Iraq, which I personally think is a great idea, but in the environment in which we live, in the national environment, international environment, both of those, he cannot bring his plan to fruition without getting enough people on board to make it succeed. He can have domestic opposition. He can have foreign opposition in addition to the main enemy he is opposing.

And if you don't consult, if you don't coordinate, this has the idea of coordination. In talking about plans, if you do not consult with others, your plans are not going to come to fruition. You can't just go off half-cocked and not tell anyone what you are doing or why you are doing it when they are necessary to the fruition of your plans.

David was a wonderful general, and look at the roster of his mighty men. He had people helping him implement. He knew how to delegate.

He knew how to coordinate. He knew how to communicate. He was a good operator with a staff.

He maintained a staff. You go into Chronicles and see what he did after he became king, who he appointed, how he organized worship life in Israel, military life in Israel, how he coordinated the military reserve in Israel so that they would drill for two months out of the year and be home the other ten months. That is what is being talked about there in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 19.

So you have to look at the construction. Here in Proverbs 11.14, we have the singular. The singular is talking about something entirely different.

It is talking about the people, not an individual trying to implement a plan. In Proverbs 11.14, the people fall where there is not easily available wise counsel, where it is not abundant among the people. In Proverbs 15.22, you have an individual who tries to forge ahead on his own.

It is not talking about the people needing many wise counselors. This is an individual who does not coordinate with anyone around him when they have a plan. They have a plan, but they do not tell anybody the plan.

Much grief and woe has happened when somebody forms a plan and does not tell anybody what the plan is and goes off and tries to implement it. You have the same idea in Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 18. Prepare plans by consultation and make war by wise guidance.

Get the intelligence. Get the information. Have an overlay for your map where somebody else has already fought in that terrain.

Somebody else has lived with that enemy and knows their characteristics, so they always put out the campfires and go to sleep at 2 a.m. so you can safely attack at dawn because they will not be ready. Their fires will be cold and their troops will be hungry. Get the information.

Have a G2, have an S2, staff working your intel. Proverbs 24.6, by wise guidance you will wage war and in abundance of counselors there is victory. This is a warfare situation.

This is talking about opposition to an organized enemy. You have the singular once again in Proverbs 24.6. In the abundance of good counsel. This does not mean the larger staff is going to win.

Whoever has the most counselors on their staff is going to prevail. This is when you have abundant good information. You have abundant wisdom involved.

And you have *berov yoit*, the very same phrase we have in 11.14. So context is everything. Are you waging war where you can be blind and lose? One of the reasons Lee lost at Gettysburg is the eyes, his cavalry wasn't on hand. And when he needed it most, he didn't have good information.

And when he attacked uphill, he didn't know what he was up against, he didn't know precisely where the strengths were concentrated, and he lost. Fighting blind is one of the fatal mistakes you can commit in warfare. Well, we wage war spiritually against an unseen enemy, don't we? We are blind from a human point of view.

When we get up in the morning and look at our day, this is Sunday, we're going to be looking at the coming week, and we know certain things happen on certain days, and we think, well, I want to get through this week successfully. Do we see the unseen conflict? Can we see where challenges are going to be made to our mental attitude, where challenges are going to be made that tempt us to speak when we should not speak, to use our tongue when we shouldn't, to bear tales, and to fall into sin and error, and to fall short of the glory of God? How are we going to see the unseen? Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. Even people that seem to be opposed to us or seem to be problems in our periphery, that person is not the enemy and is not the issue.

It is the principalities and powers, the rulers, it's the spiritual conflict that is at issue. We have to get the wise counsel that shows us where the strengths and weaknesses are, that shows us where our strengths and weaknesses are, how to prevail in that unseen conflict. We have to have the guidance.

You can win a short-term gain and lose. Chess is a great place. There is a whole concept of the gambit.

What is a gambit in chess? A gambit is when your opponent sticks a piece out there, moves his rook out into an unprotected position, and you say, aha, there is a five-point piece I can take. I don't see any bad consequence because I can take it with my bishop that is only a three-point piece, and even if he kills me with his pawn, I am two points ahead. Rooks are worth more than bishops.

He has been careless. He has made a faulty move. We go out there and we grab the advantage.

We see this short-term advantage. This is what riches promise. Short-term advantage.

What we fail to see, if we are only average chess players and not great chess players, is that even though our opponent may have gone down a couple of points, they have achieved a strategic advantage that is going to result in them winning the game. A chess player can sacrifice a piece and go down in points but gain a great strategic advantage in the position of the board. Because you had to double your pawn to take his piece or because you had to expose a flank, you wind up having your king checkmated.

The same is true with riches. Riches are deceptive because they promise short-term gratification. We feel gratified.

We feel great. I love that Debbie Boone song for an illustration. You light up my life.

Have you ever listened to the words of that song? It can't be wrong if it feels so right. That's what she says. It can't be wrong if it feels so right.

Heaven help us. She, of anybody, ought to know better. I can't believe Debbie Boone, coming out of a Christian home, Pat Boone as her father, couldn't think any further than the words of that song.

It can't be wrong if it feels so right. What an awful thing. But we operate in that way.

We go by the way we feel, what the short-term result is. How many times have we looked at John the Baptist? Did he go by short-term results? He was a miserable failure by short-term standards. And yet Jesus said, a man born of woman, there's none greater than John in the Old Testament age.

The greatest prophet of all of the Old Testament prophets is John the Baptist. Greater than Daniel, greater than Ezekiel, greater than Isaiah, greater than Moses. Jesus didn't say he's right up there with Moses.

Jesus said, a man born of woman. That's everybody from Cain, Abel, and Seth on down to Jesus' day. He said, there is none greater than John.

So he is at least on a par with the greatest prophets you can name. He said, there's none greater. There may be some as great, but none greater.

But look at him. He was a criminal, he was imprisoned, and he was executed with a death penalty. And didn't live to complete his ministry by some reckonings.

I'm sure he might have been scratching his head saying, well, did I really make the best decision in being cut off from the ability to baptize in the Jordan and preach the Christ and encourage my followers? I've left all these sheep without a shepherd here who have been listening to the word of the Lord and how much more effective I could have been out there. I'm sure he was tempted to think in those terms. We have to have wise guidance.

We need help discerning what's important in our daily existence. It is not the multitude of people that we ask, it is the availability of good counsel and whether or not we avail ourselves of it. The people will perish when there is little teaching of the word of God, little accurate presentation of the instruction, rebuke, and correction that is a part of God's word.

The people will perish. People say, oh, where there is no vision, the people perish. And they say, we've got to have a vision.

Let's dream big. Evangelize the world for Christ by the year 2000. Whatever happened to that? I haven't heard any after-action reports on when the world by 2000 lately.

It is by availing ourselves of wise counsel as it exists. It's not how many, it's what you do with what is there. There is a lot more we could say about this.

You can go to Amos chapter 6. Turn with me to Amos 6. Amos chapter 6. Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure. This is the same attitude that prevailed in Laodicea. Feel secure in the mountains of Samaria, the distinguished men of the foremost of nations, to whom the house of Israel comes.

Go over to Calna and look, and go from there to Hamath the great. Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, or is their territory greater than yours? In other words, look at the great kingdoms of the day that fell because God was unhappy with them.

Do you put off the day of calamity, and would you bring near the seed of violence? Those who recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches and eat the lambs from the flock and calves

from the midst of the stall, who improvise to the sound of the harp, and like David have composed songs for themselves, who drink wine from sacrificial bowls, while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. They're in the balm and blessing of prosperity, and they don't realize that they are spiritually ruined. Therefore they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, and the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.

The Lord God has sworn by himself, the Lord God of hosts has declared, I loathe the arrogance of Jacob. Remember the pride in Proverbs 11? I loathe the arrogance of Jacob and detest his citadels. Therefore I will deliver up the city and all it contains.

And if it will be that ten men are left in one house, they will die. Then one's uncle or his undertaker, this is actually the one who burns, this is from the root seraph, means the one who comes in and there's a diseased dead body and they have to take it out and burn it outside the camp. And the uncle, I don't know why they say uncle there, I'm reading it out of the New American Standard, and the New King James is actually a little closer, a relative, this is from, it actually says dodo, d-o-d-o, dode is from the root that David comes from, beloved, dawid, d-o-d or d-u-d, is the verb that means beloved, and his beloved or his relative comes in.

That's who would come in and dispose of the dead body in the house, or the one who burns, who disposes. Will pick up the body, take it out of the house, he will say to one inside the house, are there any more with you? Someone will say none, he will say hold your tongue, for we dare not mention the name of the Lord. That sounds very confusing, but the idea there is this calamity will be recognized as coming from God, and nobody will want to draw God's attention to that house again by even speaking his name.

Where ten men were in a house, nine of them were killed, and it will be very clear that it was disciplined from God, and the one that is tenth will not even want to mention the name of God, out of fear. There will be a prevailing spirit of fear, out of seeing the severity of God's judgment. That's how severe it will be.

It's like superstition, people say knock on wood, you mentioned something, or I'm bragging on my car and how well it runs, it will probably break tomorrow. Well, he'll say don't even dare to mention the name of the Lord. I don't want him to hear his name and come back, and finish off number ten.

I'm hiding in the bowels of the house. Hey, you're calling out to see if I'm here, let's not even talk, and I certainly don't want to mention the name of the Lord. For behold, the Lord gives a command, he will break the great house into bits, and the little house into pieces.

Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood. In the same way, how appropriate is it for there to be injustice in Israel? How appropriate is it for there to be fruitfulness turned into wormwood in Israel? It is just as appropriate for there to be injustice and fruitlessness in Israel as it is to hitch

up your oxen and try to plow a furrow in solid rock. It's totally inappropriate.

It's ridiculous. It makes no sense. Who would try to plow solid rock? Well, God says that's how sensible it is for you to be the nation of Israel, and be called the people of God, and be sitting there lounging on your couches, and have no regard for justice, and have no regard for the fruit that you're supposed to be preserving.

When God tries to plow, it's like plowing a rock. It just totally does no good. There's a lot I could say about Lodabar and Karneim and all that.

These were military victories that took place well out toward the capital of Assyria. They were reveling, and they said, look, we've had these great victories. We've had a military success clear out there halfway to Damascus.

And God says, I'm going to roll that up. I will raise a nation up against you, house of Israel. They will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath all the way to the valley of the Arabah.

The entire land, all the way to the southernmost border, is going to be afflicted and destroyed. You're bragging about one little victory you had up north? I'm going to destroy your country all the way to its southernmost border. I will roll it back farther than Jerusalem.

This is God's attitude toward those who are complacent in opulence, who say, I must be doing well because look how comfortable I am. Well, the theme is summed up in Proverbs 13.7. There is one who pretends to be rich, but actually has nothing. Another impoverishes himself, but has great wealth.

This is not a new concept. It was taught in the Old Testament. There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing.

Another, and I think it says in your Bible, it may say another pretends to be poor, but it literally says another impoverishes himself, but has great wealth. The more we give away, the less we hold on to the things of this life. The more God is free to give us.

That is the principle in Laodicea. Returning now to Revelation 3. In the letter to the Laodiceans, Jesus says, look at the emphasis on the Lord Jesus as the counselor. How many times is Jesus referred to here? Count it up.

After identifying himself as the faithful and true witness, in verse 15, I know your works. I could wish you were cold or hot. In verse 16, I will vomit you out of my mouth because you say I am rich and so on.

You don't know that you are blind and wretched and naked. Verse 18, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire. In verse 19, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Therefore be zealous and repent. Verse 20, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.

That is 12 separate references to Jesus Christ in those few verses. Jesus emphasizes that if you want the guidance, if you want the understanding, to know whether or not you are fooling yourself, whether or not you are accepting the feeling of comfort as a substitute for a genuine evaluation of where you stand, go to the wise counselor. Make sure that you avail yourself of the abundance of good counsel that keeps the people from falling.

Jesus emphasizes His personal presence. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and ministers them to us. So what is the upshot? As we look forward to this coming week, as we scan the map of people, places, and things that define our daily life, we have to look for that guidance, that information that comes from the one who knows the invisible, who understands the conflict, and defines for us our priorities and our good path.

It is not enough to feel good about our day. We have to see it in objective terms that come from God. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your word together. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our heart so that we will live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name.

Amen.