

Proverbs 3

[Date of Sermon]

I. Introduction and Review of Ministry

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn back to Proverbs chapter 3. We have been coming through the book of Proverbs, and last week we looked at a passage with a great principle on the aspect of ministry. We only got through one verse, but it was a good verse and a verse we needed to spend some time with. It was in Proverbs 3:27, where it says, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."

We saw that understanding our ministry is really simple. It is simply about our motivation in giving to others, our attitude about what God has given to us, that we look for those opportunities to be able to give to someone else, the power that is in our hand because of what God has given us and coming down and saving us. For us, it is based on the simple understanding that we, as God's people, simply need to be aware of what is around us—the opportunities every day that God gives us that are just there for us to take.

I told you, the thought for the day last week was simply, "Nothing will make us Christ-like more than being like Christ in our service to others." That is so true. I showed you how Paul took the principle in Proverbs and developed it into a New Testament principle found in Galatians 6:9-10, where it talked about for us not to be weary in well-doing, that if we faint not, we will reap in due time because we are to do that good work unto all men, especially the household of faith.

Galatians 6:9-10

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

We talked about reaping more than you sow. You always do. We talked about two aspects of reaping. You reap more than you sow when you sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, as the Bible says. When you do not do right, you not only reap by what you do not do, but you reap more than what you intended to do wrong. But the same principle we saw last week applies to when you do what is right with the Lord. God's Word never returns void, and God will take those things and bring those things into our life and give us what we need.

Now, today we are going to pick it up where we left off, and we will go through the end of the chapter here. We will start in Proverbs 3:27 again, and this is what it says:

Proverbs 3:27-35

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous.

The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Let us pray. Father, we ask You now as we come to Your Word, we ask You to quiet our hearts to let us put our sole attention on the Scriptures. What You have for us today, we appreciate so very much the folks that are here today. Lord, we do so desperately want today to be a blessing to them. We thank You for the visitors, for the folks that maybe are looking at our church, and we just pray, Father, that You will show them through this message today what we are really all about. We are just about people trying to take the things that God has given to us and give them back to the people that God brings our way. Help us today, Father, to glean from this, to learn from this, and most importantly, to grow from all of this. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

II. The Call to Immediate Generosity

There are a number of things that we need to see here, and we will begin to break it down and see how it all applies. Let us look at Proverbs 3:28 for a second.

Proverbs 3:28

Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

That is basically the attitude of 99% of God's people today. "Don't bother me today. I have my own plans, my own life, my own world I have to deal with. Come back when it is more convenient for me, in my time. Come back at Christmas; this is only August, and I have my things I have to do."

Many times, I have learned this to be true, and I know that people that work with me and dealing with people know this to be true also: many times people's needs are immediate, legitimate ones. Now, I have to clarify some things as we go through here today. I realize that dysfunctional people will always be a disaster looking for a place to unfold. I know that. I know that from experience, as many of you do, that there are some people who simply do not want to do what they need to do to fix their problems. So their life is an unfolding circus of just one ring after the other, one show after the other. It would rival anything that Barnum and Bailey ever put out.

So I understand that, but you need to realize, and you learn how to deal with that in time. You learn that there are two kinds of people. There are some people that when you see that they really want to do what is right and they are willing to do what they need to do when they have a need,

you drop whatever you are doing. Their need is immediate. But then you have other folks who have a track record of just, every day is another disaster, and you try to help them, but they never implement what they need. So you have to adopt the mindset after a while that lack of planning on your part does not necessitate an emergency on mine. They go through life that way.

But you never blow off people when they have a legitimate need. When that person has a need right now and they are willing to do and they want to do and they want to embrace the things that will help it, fix it, make it, whatever it is, when it is in the power of your hand to be able to help them, then we do it.

In most churches, it is with most pastors, and this is a very unfortunate thing, but it is true. It is not what the pastor of the church can do for you. In many scenarios, it is what you can do for them. That is just not right. There are many churches that if you have a problem, you cannot even get in to see your pastor. He has a whole subcontracting unit underneath him that you never get to talk to him. You will get to talk to somebody under him, but he is too busy to fix your problems. That is a fatal mistake in the ministry because you ought to demand always to have the ability to be able to talk to your pastor.

In a day that you cannot, the day that you find yourself in a situation where he is too busy to talk to you, but you can talk to my associate or my assistant or my under-assistant or my directive assistant—everybody has a title today—you need to realize you need to be looking for a new place to hang your hat. It is just that simple.

The New Testament principle on Proverbs 3:28 is found in 1 John 3:17, where it says:

1 John 3:17

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

That is a good question for a lot of pastors. They rationalize it in their mind to thinking that they are so big and they are so powerful and they have so much to do that it is okay for them to give you to somebody else. I am not saying that you do not have people help you in the ministry, but there will never be a day in this church that you have a need you cannot get to me because that is my job. I do not know what these guys do all day long when they call it ministry, but the ministry is people. You have to be there when people need you.

James 2:14-17 says:

James 2:14-17

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

That is a great principle in the Bible, but it is also, and I want to explain this, it is also one of the great heresies that is taught in the Bible. Because if you go down a couple of more verses, I think it is in verse 20, it simply says, "faith without works is dead." So you have a bunch of people out there that want to take that concept, take it out of the context, and simply say that faith without works is dead. What they mean by that is you have to work your way to be saved. That works is what saves you. Of course, that is not what the context is saying at all. That is not what the verse is saying, but they will lift it out of context and take that passage and then verse 20 and say, "faith without works is dead," and try to get you to believe that you have to work your way to heaven, that your faith without, you get your faith and keep your faith by the works that you do.

Now we know that is not true. Ephesians 2:8 and Titus 3:5 make it very clear that not by works of righteousness we have done, but according to His mercy He has saved us. We know that. We know that works do nothing for you for salvation. In truth, that is not what this great passage is saying, but what it is saying is simply that saved people who are truly saved will always do a certain kind of work. That work will be the ministry. Nowhere in the Bible does God ever recognize a child of God that gets saved that does not minister. It is just that simple. I do not know what else to tell you. Your faith, your works, it is not to be saved. It is never works for salvation, but it is because they are saved. That passage simply says true salvation will always produce a true work, and that work will be ministry.

Because if you get saved and you really understand what God has done for you, then you are going to realize that your job is to take it to others. What he is saying there, if it does not, if you do not have that, then there are two issues. One, you do not have 1 John 3:17, you do not have the love of God in you. And the second one, James 2:14, your faith is not real. That is what he is saying. He is saying real salvation produces the real work. When you do not see the real work, then you have to question the real salvation. It is what he is saying, simply as that. I say it again, nothing will make you Christ-like more than being like Christ in your serving for others.

I run into people all the time, and so do you. I am not making any judgment call on them. People say all the time, "Well, I am a Christian," but you do not see the things in their life that are supposed to be in a Christian's life. I am just telling you what the Bible says.

III. Avoiding Conflict and Problem Creation

Now look at Proverbs 3:29-30 as we move on through here. We see this a lot.

Proverbs 3:29-30

Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

This is a great principle: do not cause a problem where there is no problem. I have seen this all of my years in the ministry with people. Now the word "neighbor" here needs to be explained a little bit because in the Bible, the word "neighbor" is used a little differently than we use it. When

we use the word "neighbor," we are talking about the person next door to us where we live or across the street. That is not really how the Bible uses the word "neighbor." In the Bible, it is used that anyone you have an opportunity to help, that you are associated with.

In Luke 10:27, it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Now they are not talking about the person across the street. They are talking about anybody that you have an opportunity to help, being neighborly. In a church setting, and I have said this before, we are likened to a city. Your body is likened to a dwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. Your body is likened to a building. Your body is likened to a temple. So all of you here today that are saved make up an individual building, an individual temple. When we all get together, then we are like a city. In that sense, the neighbor in a spiritual sense is the people that are living right next to you in their temple of God, the body, and that is the picture in a spiritual sense for you and for me.

What he is saying here is real simple. You have heard me say it all the time: we, as God's people, need to be problem solvers, not problem-causers. If every Christian grasped that principle right there, that simple basic aspect of solving problems instead of causing problems. But the reason why we do not do that is because many times, as the verse is indicating here, we look for a problem with somebody when it really is not a problem with somebody. But we need them to be a problem because it gives us an advantage of some things in our life sometime. It is always easier to have a problem with somebody to justify what you want to do.

The old adage that I have heard all of my life, "Well, I do not go to church because there are too many hypocrites in the church." How many times has somebody said that to me? I am sure you have heard it too. That is the same concept. Sure, there are hypocrites in the church, but there are hypocrites where you work. There are hypocrites when you go to the ballgame. There are hypocrites in everything that you do. But you see, when you say it, when you do not want to go to church, then it is easy to use the hypocrites and have a problem that does not exist to justify what you want to do to give you the advantage. That is the way it works.

In dealing with people, we always work and look to solve the problems biblically. Do not make an issue bigger than it has to be. If everybody would follow that line of reasoning and just take those principles and apply them, we would not have any problems in Christianity. It would all get worked out. Many times people will make up an issue with something or somebody simply because they do not want to help that person or they simply do not want to do what is right. You see it all the time.

IV. The Danger of Envy and Oppression

Now look at Proverbs 3:31.

Proverbs 3:31

Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

Doctrinally, and we talked about the book of Proverbs as being to the nation of Israel, the oppressor doctrinally here will be the Antichrist. He is telling the nation of Israel, typified by

"my son" in Exodus 4, as the corporate nation of Israel. He is telling Israel that the oppressor will be the Antichrist, and the nation of Israel, the Jew, is being told here not to believe anything he says, not to follow him, and not to go his ways and not to be associated with him in any way, shape, or form. But the practical application is to me and you. It will be for us as New Testament Christians not to envy what the world has and not to go down the road of the world.

Now there is a great counseling principle here that I want you to see and understand. I think it is very, very, very valuable, very, very, very important. We live in a very, we talked about this last week, we live in a very dark world without God, without any light. It is a very depressed world. I totally understand, I totally get it, I totally understand why the suicide rate is so off the charts today, especially in America. I understand and totally get it why an unsaved person gets depressed and takes their own life. I get it. Darkness, 24/7 in your life, no light whatsoever.

There are places in Alaska up there when you get farther up to the north by the North Pole. There are places up there that they go through four or five months where they do not have any daylight. It is dark 24/7 for about three or four months. They are so far up north and because of the way they are situated that every year they go through a period of time that is two or three or four months where it is total darkness. They do not see the sun for 120 days or so. There are many people that live in those towns that leave up there when that happens, living in a complete world of darkness where you never see the sun. The alcoholic rate, the suicide rate, all of the problems that that brings in because we were never designed by God. We never were. We were never designed by God to live in total darkness. In a physical sense, when you are in a world that is absolutely dark for three or four months, you will lose your mind. In a spiritual sense, when you and I, because we have no light of God in our life, go through this world, which is darkness 24/7, you are going to lose your mind. I understand it. I get it. I really do.

But at the same time, I want you to know that it is a thing that we see all the time, but there should never be a child of God that finds themselves in a life of depression. Now, I know we all get bummed out about things from time to time. I am not talking about that. We all do. We all have our bad days. We all get grumpy. We all have our times when something will go wrong in our life, and for a short period of time, we will be down in the dumps. I do not go down to the dumps much anymore because I found out that people do not throw things away like they used to, so there is nothing to find down there. But it is a thing where we all get there. It is so important. I am not talking about that. I am talking about chronic, continual depression. I am talking about somebody who gets so depressed that they cannot get out of bed in the morning. There are people like that. I am talking about people who just want to withdraw from everybody and not be around everybody, and it all turns inward. Now I understand why the world does that, but there is no reason for a Christian to ever do that. But there are tens of thousands of them that have that problem.

The reason is real simple, and you need to understand it. Now you always cannot fix it. Many times you cannot. Sometimes you cannot, but at least you need to understand it and how it works. Now the key word here is "envy." If you are not, as a Christian, if you are not satisfied with who you are in Christ Jesus and you do not recognize who you are in Christ Jesus, then you are going to become unsatisfied with yourself. You are going to see somebody out there that is

better looking, somebody out there that is in better shape, somebody out there that seems to be more happy, somebody out there that has more money, more things, somebody out there that goes places on vacation that you will never get to go on. When you start to envy that, it oppresses you. It oppresses you. The word "oppression" is the world's system that will totally take over your life and take away any balance. That is the other key thing you have to have. You have to have a balance in your life. The moment you get out of balance, oppression is going to start to move into your life.

He says, "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." Now oppression will always lead to depression. It always will. The moment you start to be oppressed, you are going to start to be depressed. It is just that simple. It goes back to envying what the world has. "I want what they have, and I do not have it. I want to look like her; she is pretty, I am not. I want to be like them. Why can I never get to go where they go? Why can I have a house like she has? Why can I have a car like he does?" When you get to that point in your life and you are not satisfied with who you are, and I am telling you, your number one goal, other than learning the Bible inside out and being everything that God wants you to be as a child of God, needs to be that you come to the place where you understand who you are in Christ Jesus and you are satisfied with who you are. If you do not, you are going to go through envy the rest of your life, and you are going to envy the world system, the oppressor, which is always going to lead to depression. That is just the way it works in a very simple, basic form.

Right now we are in the holiday season, are we not? Christmas and New Year's. I cannot wait for New Year's. We take these times, and times like these, you know what we do? We feel better for a short period of time about ourselves. You realize that the Christmas and New Year's and shortly thereafter are the two most depressing times for people. The suicide rate in this country is astronomical during those times of the year. The therapists and the psychologists and all of the men out there who take your money because of your problems that can never fix them, they make a bumper crop during this time of the year. It is the most depressing time of the year because we put so much into it. We inflate ourselves. We go to the Christmas parties and we have fun. For a short period of time, we are happy. You look at the presents, and your husband or your boyfriend or your wife or whatever, buys you something, your mom or your dad, and you get a present and you open it up on Christmas morning, and for a short period of time, it makes you happy. "Oh, I love this! Oh, this is what I wanted! Whoa, I am happy!" You go out with your friends to eat, or the family comes over, and it is a fun time, and you are happy.

But then in January and February, two of the bleakest months of the year, it all comes crashing down, many times before Christmas and New Year's and right after. It is always the toughest time for people because it is all fake, folks. It is not real. It is an illusion. The holidays are a man-made feel-good formula that collapses on itself, and you feel worse after than you did before. After the tree is down, after the lights are turned off, after all the presents are open, and then the bills come in of all the presents you bought, reality sets in, and you realize that it was just something that was man-made that will never, never, never satisfy you. Listen, the things of this world that we really think will make us happy will always wind up oppressing us and then lead to the depression in our lives. It ends that way every time, being envious of the things of this

world and not being satisfied with what I have in Christ and what He has given me. As 1 Timothy 6:6 says, "godliness with contentment is great gain," but that is where we are at today. He says, "Envy not thou the oppressor." You do not envy the things of this world, but so many Christians do.

V. The Recipe for Disaster: Abomination and Curse

Now let me show you something here. In the next three verses, I want to show you, and these are what I call compound verses. There are two great thoughts in it, one positive, one negative. I want to show you the negative first, and I want to come back and show you the positive. But let me show you the next three verses, three things that when you go the way of the oppressor, why you will never have what you want out of life. Now I call this, these three verses, my recipe for disaster in your life. You want a recipe for disaster in your life? Here it comes.

- 1.) Abomination to the Lord
- 2.) The Curse of the Lord
- 3.) Scorned by the Scorners

VI. The Recipe for Success: God's Secrets and Blessings

Now I want to show you something. This is why I love Proverbs. We are going to see this a lot when we get into the Proverbs after chapter 8. Much of the Old Testament deals with chapters that deal with the blessings of God if they do right and the cursings of God if they do not do right. Deuteronomy 11 is a great example of that. Now I just showed you the recipe for disaster, three verses. Now I want to go back to those same three verses, and I want to show you a recipe for success. Now let me take the same three verses and give you the second half of them, of the compound verses, and give you what you get when you do right and follow the Lord in His Word. Because one way or the other in our life, it is going to be the blessings of God or the cursings of God. There is not any in between.

- 1.) His Secret is with the Righteous
- 2.) He Blesseth the Habitation of the Just
- 3.) Grace for the Humble

VII. The Inheritance of Glory vs. Shame

Now, let me give you the great closing verse here.

Proverbs 3:35

The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Now, this first part of the verse goes back to what we looked at when we started back in the book of Proverbs, the nine character qualities of a wise man and the eight character qualities of a fool throughout the book. The "inherit glory" here will obviously deal with his millennial inheritance when Christ returns, what God will give you based on what we give up for Him and the cause of others for His truth. We have gone through it in great detail when we went through 1 and 2 Corinthians, and in particular 1 Corinthians 3, 2 Corinthians 5. It is dealing with the judgment seat of Christ and our inheritance that we either get or we lose.

He says, "but shame shall be the promotion of fools." Now, this verse is really clear. When Christ comes back, there will be two aspects to the believer. You will either have honor or you will have shame. Notice there is nothing in between, and it is based on one of two ways you went: God's way or the way of the oppressor. The use of the word of "shame" here is clearly defined in 2 Corinthians 5 and Revelation 3:18 where it talks about the judgment seat of Christ, the shame of their nakedness not appear, and the fact that we are all going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Just as the faithful child of God is promoted to glory, the unfaithful Christian is promoted to shame. Now, there is a reason why he used the word "promotion" there, but we do not have time to get into it this morning. You would think of being promoted to shame would be the right terminology. It is when you understand the doctrine behind it.

I have said this many times, and I say it again, and I will continue to say it until I preach my last message. There is absolutely, folks, no reason for a Christian not to walk away at the end of it all with the judgment seat of Christ with everything that God has for you. If the judgment seat of Christ is God's final test, and it is the account of grading of the test, then the Bible that God gave us is the answers to that test. So no one would have to fail the test. Now, let me ask you a question. How stupid do you have to be to have to take a test, and the teacher gives you the answers to the test, and yet you still flunk the test?

We go through life blaming our failures and trials and issues of life on everything and everybody. "Well, it is his fault. Well, it is her fault. Well, if they would not have done this, well, if they would not have done that, well, if the preacher would not have said this, well, if this person would not have said this or would not have done that, well, he made my son do this, and he did this, or they said this about my boy or my girl, and they are not coming to church anymore. So it is your fault." You know what, folks, if the Bible is clear in anything, it is clear in the fact that when that day finally comes, it will be you and your refusal to allow a book that God gave you to guide your life and the choices you made that puts you in a no-win situation. You bought a house, third house on the left of Dead End Street. That is where they are at over the book that God gave you that will get you over the oppressor that you embrace so passionately over the deliverer that God gave you to give you the victory, the Word of God.

Now I want to leave you with this. I am going to get a little philosophical here. I know many of you cannot see what I am about to say yet, but hopefully in time you will. Most of you are very young. This is a very young church, which is a miracle in itself. Most churches look like an old folks home in Florida, but we do not. This church is alive and on fire, and God gave us a bunch of great couples. We have got a lot of John Harpers here, a lot of good people. But when you were young, as most of you are right now, you guys have your whole life ahead of you. You

really do. The prospect of getting married if you are not married, even the ones who are married, you know, you just got married or you have been married for a while. You have the prospect of having children, raising a family. It is all in front of you. It is all out there for you. Life has at this point of your life so much for you. It really is. You need to recognize that.

But you also need to understand that when you hit 60, 70, or 80 years old, and you begin to realize that you have more days behind you now than you have in front of you, you start to look at things a little differently. When you get older, you begin to understand that the world and life in general start taking back more than it gives you. It is a simple fact of the cycle of life. Talk about Ecclesiastes 3. The cycle of life as you get older takes from us our health. Your eyes get bad. Your hearing gets worse. You lose your natural strength. You start to have heart problems. Memory relapses. Your blood pressure gets high. Cholesterol goes through the roof. Triglycerides take a ride around the block. You get diabetes. You get liver problems. But it also takes from you our loved ones. We lose our moms. We lose our dads. We lose our grandparents. We lose our aunts, our uncles, our brothers and sisters. In time, all that life gives us, it will take back from us through the cycle of life.

But that is not true with the Bible. The Bible continues to give and add to you more as you grow older. As you get older, it gets sweeter. As you get older, you get more fulfilled in who you are. I mean the compounding effect of the grace that God has given you, the blessings of God in your life, the promises of God that you have that have come true over and over again, the assurances that God has given you. Heaven becomes more real. The Lord becomes more real. By loved ones that go on before us, we know now that life is just a temporary thing, and there is going to be a great revival coming. The older we get, the more peace you have. The less you get upset about things, the more wisdom of God and understanding and discernment you have to figure it all out. As you get older and you get in your 60s and your 70s and your 80s, the thing that God puts His arms around you and you see that just carries you through what the world will never give you is you see that unbroken chain of your family carrying on the ministry. That unbroken chain that many of you had to weld up because of your family that you came from was so screwed up. Now you have it. Your kids are soul winners. Your kids get into the Bible. Their kids will. The unbroken line of your family carrying on what you started. You will find out that God will be more real to you at 80 than He ever was at 30. Realizing that this old life that we have right now means nothing. Amen. It is nothing but pain and suffering, broken lives, broken marriages, broken hearts, disappointment. But oh, I am so glad that God, the older we get, when you do not go the way of the oppressor and you go the way of the Lord and that book becomes everything. By the end of your life, you have 10 of these books full of the secret things you realize. Finally, get to the point where this life means nothing. It is the one that is coming. We are bound, and we are closed.