

Proverbs 12:23-28

Sunday 10/4/2015

Well, if you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn again to Proverbs chapter 12. As you know, we have been working our way through the book of Proverbs, and it has been a very good book to go through. I know I have enjoyed it, and I myself personally have probably been through Proverbs well over 10 or 15 times. Yet, coming through it again has just been a real eye-opener for so many things for me, and I have enjoyed it very much.

Chapter 12 has been a tremendous chapter, and we have been looking at how we use words based on our heart attitude. We have been talking about an attitude of righteousness and an attitude of wickedness, and correspondingly, what comes out of our mouth based on where our heart is, and then what we say in our speech and our language. Today, we are going to look at verses 23 through 28, and we are going to close out this great chapter today. I think we will find some things that will help us today.

So I want to begin reading here in Proverbs chapter 12. We will pick it up in verse 23 to the end of the chapter.

Proverbs 12:23-28

A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

Now Father, help us today to glean through Your Word and to learn these great things. We love You so much. We thank You for all You do for us, and we pray now Father, Your blessings upon our time today. Help us, Lord, to learn from this book and glean from it all of the things that You have us to learn. Clean our hearts. Let us come to You today to make sure that we are clean, that we receive what the Holy Spirit of God has for us. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it, amen.

I. The Prudent Man and the Fool

Now, verse 23 says that "A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness." We have seen this prudent man before. We have talked about the word "prudent," and we defined the word in the book of Proverbs a couple of weeks ago. We now know that it means to be cautious in what you do. A prudent man is someone who thinks things through before he acts. He does not just react; he responds based on principles and by getting all

of the facts. He is somebody who is careful before he speaks, somebody who understands that he has a responsibility regarding the power of words.

In the great context of this chapter of a Christian's life, there are two great principles that come to light here. I want to look at the second part first; it talks about a fool. "A fool proclaimeth foolishness." A fool will pass on all the information that he has. He simply has no discretion, he has no discernment. Whatever he or she hears, they will be a pipeline of information, gossip, half-truths, the latest buzz that is going on in people's lives. Whatever they hear, they simply cannot refrain themselves from telling what they know or what they have just learned.

The reason behind people like that—there is a science behind it biblically. There is a reason for it. I think that it is always good to understand why people do the things that they do. We have seen that information is power. We know that. So when a person is weak in his faith, and a person has a bad self-image of themselves, or he feels inferior to other people, information is what we use to lift ourselves up, to make us feel more important, or to give the appearance that we really are more than we are as an informed person. It gives us an importance to ourselves that we sometimes want to project, making ourselves look bigger and better than we really are.

People use information that they have to position themselves with other people who do not maybe have the same information. They will say things like, "Well, the pastor told me this." The translation of that is, "I am in the loop, and you are not." They will say, "Well, my husband, he is on the board, and he says..." The translation is, "You see, we are on the inside, and you are not. You will get your information from me."

My favorite, my favorite: "Now, I am going to tell you this, but you cannot tell anybody." The translation is, "I just told 40 other people what I am about to tell you, and I told them not to tell anybody," because it makes you feel like you are special.

The truth is, from the Bible standpoint, real power is not just having knowledge and information, though information is power. But real power is not just having it. A fool can do that. Real power is your ability to have information and yet have discernment and discretion, and the ability to use that knowledge that you have and not just put it out. Control the information that you have. That is so, so important. A fool has none of that. A fool has no discretion, he has no discernment. So he just keeps running his mouth about all he knows, and he looks like a fool.

Now, the second part of this, "a prudent man concealeth his knowledge." I looked at the second part first, now I will look at the first part second here. The second part of this principle to verse 23 will be in the area of knowing the Bible and understanding it. You know, there is a danger in learning the Bible. I know you would not think that to be true because there are so many positive, good things about learning the Bible. But the Bible talks about a man who has knowledge and he has a zeal, but he has no ability to use that zeal. People like that are always dangerous. I am always worried in my ministry about turning out people who just get enough Bible to make themselves dangerous.

In teaching the Bible, I follow a few simple, basic rules out of the book of Proverbs.

1. You never teach all the Bible you know. Some guys, they will get up and they will teach, tell everything they know about the Bible; it will take them about 26 seconds. But the more you learn the Bible, the more you know about the Bible, the more you realize that there is some information that you have out of the Bible that you just do not give out to everybody. Obviously, some of the things in the Bible, they are for you. God gave them to you. You do not really share them with anybody else. They are for you.

Sometimes in the Bible, if I laid out to you what some of the things that I have seen in the Bible over the years, it would blow your mind on some things. You do not spend 40-plus years going through the scriptures and digging out that book and not see some stuff that will scare you to death, man. You have got to be careful with that. There are some things about hell that are in the Bible that I would not tell anybody. I can get you worried about it, afraid of it, show you the dangers of going there, and all of those things. But let me tell you something, there are some things about that place called hell that you do not find in just your average everyday sermon on hell.

There are some things about the judgment seat. Boy, that is going to be a barn burner for some of God's people. There are some things about the judgment seat of Christ that when I see them in there, and I will lay out, I will preach on the judgment seat of Christ every chance I can. I will talk about the six questions like we did Thursday night. I will lay out things, but there are some things about things in the Bible. When you see them, you realize that you have something here that you just cannot put out to everybody.

Listen, that book on eternity is one of the most absolute amazing things, and there are some things about it. If I told you, you would lose your mind. There are some things about Christ going all the way back in Genesis 1:1 and the connection between Him and Lucifer before they fell. Are you kidding me? I have learned that a man who has knowledge and wisdom, he understands that there comes a tremendous responsibility with the information that he has. You do not just throw everything out there.

Many times there are young Christians that get confused. Many times there are young Christians that get afraid. Many times there are young Christians that have not got the ability to get and grasp what you are giving them, and it just makes it very confusing. We know the Bible said God is not the author of confusion, but foolish people are. I am very selective of who I give what to based on what somebody will do or will not do, because I know information is power. I always try to give people what they need. I always try to help them with their problems, but I am always selective because I know that information is power.

There are some of God's people. I deal with them all the time. They spend all of their lives, and they are on the stupid Internet someplace, or they are in some of the latest book on prophecy about the end times and all the things that are going on, and that is all they ever do. They never learn their Bible. They never get anything out of the Word of God. They are always going for that sensational stuff. I am telling you, I get it all the time, and I enjoy it. I am not complaining about it. I get 500 emails probably a month, and they are from everybody. People think, "I just want to know this." I want to be honest, I enjoy the emails. It keeps me up on things.

But I realized way back when, four, five, eight, or nine years ago, they came up with the idea that the ashes of a red heifer. Somebody read back in the Old Testament that if you want to trigger the rapture of the church, and you want to bring all this stuff and make it all happen, you have got to get a red heifer as laid out in the Old Testament, and you have got to burn it to the sacrifice, and then you take those ashes, and the nation of Israel would do that. It would trigger all the events that would bring Christ back. We actually had guys down in Texas that were breeding, according to the Old Testament, the exact specifications of the red heifer. I got emails that secretly in Israel, they are breeding cattle because the Jews know they have got to have the red heifer. The Jews do not know squat about anything. They do not care about Christ's return. You could breed 10,000 red heifers, and it would not do you a bit of good because that sacrifice has to be offered by the priesthood, and as we stand here today and look at the nation of Israel, you do not even know where the 12 tribes are, let alone who the priestly tribe is anymore. People get caught up in those things.

The blood moon. One day this week was the most spectacular lunar eclipse that you probably would have ever seen for a long time. Now, I am obviously into astronomy. I have got to be honest, lunar eclipses never did much for me. I mean, you have seen one, you have seen them all. You want a really great time? You get a solar eclipse, a totality solar eclipse, and you watch that sun get blocked out and watch when that thing gets down right when it covers us up. You actually see the fire shooting out off the sides, and then as it moves off just the edge, you will see this big, bright, sparkling thing. It is called the diamond formation. It looks like a diamond ring, a black circle with just this bright, brilliant diamond. Now that is something. That is something.

Hey, guys, you know these stupid people that get in there and say, "Well, the blood moon, you know, it looks like blood." No, to me, it looked like dirt. They all get caught up about the fact that there are so many, all the blood moons. It is nothing more than a lunar eclipse. There is no blood to it. They take it out of Joel chapter two and make it a blood moon. The moon in Joel chapter two is in the tribulation period, not in the church age. You do not even know your Bible. I have probably got 37 emails, and I like them. If you are sending them to me, keep sending them. I enjoy them. Twenty-seven things that are going to happen. And was it September or October? I cannot even remember. Twenty-seven great things. Oh, like, wow, we have got something here. Well, I can tell you last month, 30 things that happened. I eat breakfast every morning. How is that? I will beat that out. They will spend all their time talking about that stuff and never learn the Bible.

But I like that. I have got to honor. I like that kind of mind. I have that kind of mind. I have an investigative mind. I see something. I have been at Bible study or you have had a conversation with you, and you have said something that triggered my trigger about something. I may have never even told you. I will go home, and I will not go to bed until I solve that thing. I like that kind of mind. But that kind of mind has to be under a discipline. I used to be that way. I mean, I still am to a certain degree. But years ago, I mean, I spent all my time on that stuff. And I realized at one point that I was never going to learn my Bible. I was spending 80 percent of my time following that and 20 percent of time on my Bible. Now in my life, I have turned a thing around. I spend 90 percent of time on my Bible and 10 percent on that stuff.

I want to tell you something. Learning the Bible is a good thing, but a lot of people out there learn the Bible, but they never learn the author of the Bible. You go to seed on that stuff. You wind up with every kind of issue in your life, and you wonder yourself, "Why did all this happen to me when I have been doing study and all this stuff about God and the Bible?" Because all the stuff you are studying about God and the Bible is not the Bible. You have got to get in the book.

In Acts 17:20, you have the Athenians. Remember them? In Acts 17:20, Paul says, "For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." That is what we have got today. Last week I talked about the fundamentals, how important the fundamentals are. But I will also be telling you, the fundamentals, they are not as exciting as the blood moon. They are not as exciting as finding the red heifer down in Texas. You would have to know the bar she goes to on Saturday night. It is not as exciting as all the things that are out there, but those fundamentals are the bedrock of what you believe.

What is going to get you through tomorrow, next week, your marriage when it goes through problems or the struggles you go with, is not going to be who scattered the ashes of a red heifer where. But it will be the fundamental principles that shape you, that keep you, and get you through.

Now around here, I understand that. So I try to keep a balance. Sunday morning I focus on the practical things and a little sprinkle of doctrine every once in a while. I will drop something many times. I will say something, but I do it on purpose just to see if Thursday night somebody picked up on it. Sometimes they do, most of the time they do not. My goal on Sunday morning is to build you up, to lift you up, to challenge you, to admonish you, sometimes to rebuke you, and obviously to convict when conviction needs to be there. So Sunday morning to me is a time where I want to give the body of Christ what they need.

Now Thursday night, steak night, prime rib, all you can eat buffet, porterhouse, half inch thick, done just the way you like it. But again, you never lose the opportunity to bring it back to a practical way. We did it Thursday night. But you still always want to be aware of your crowd. Most churches, if you study churches, and I think studying churches is one of the greatest studies that you will ever take. It takes a long time to do it, but it pays off.

Most Baptist churches come to the place where they have Sunday morning, they have Sunday night, and they have Wednesday night church service. It used to be years ago that you had Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and you came back on Thursday night and went out on visitation. Visitation was when you got all the prospects of people that visited your church, or all the people that have not visited your church. You would go out there, you would get a little group, and you would get in your car, you would get your little cards, and you would go out there and you would knock on doors and say, "We have not seen you for a while, we would like to have you come back." I have been in places like that where they would not even turn the television down and talk to you. I have been in places like that where they slammed the door in your face. I have been in places like that where they said, "Oh yeah, we are coming back

this week," and they have not been back in 12 years since that time. And it all fell apart. Nobody does visitation anymore. Hey, you go in somebody's house at 9 o'clock at night and knock on the door, you are liable to get shot.

Churches today, on Sunday morning, maybe I know my own home church back in Canton, Ohio, Canton Baptist Temple, Sunday morning they will run 1,200 people. Huge auditorium. It used to hold 6,000 to 7,000 people. Now it is down to around 1,200, 1,400 people on a good day. They have Sunday night service, 200 come back. They do not even meet because they are so embarrassed to meet in that huge auditorium, they shifted over to another little chapel that looks like, "We are really full." You are really full? Bring them over to the big auditorium and see how full you are. Wednesday night, half of that. Researchers have never gotten the idea that if people do not come back on Sunday night and they do not come back on Wednesday night, what do you think you would get it after a while? Maybe we are not meeting your needs. Maybe I am not giving you what you need. Maybe just a structured program of Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night is not really working. And all the answer is, "Well, we have always done it this way, so we are going to always do it this way, whether it works or not."

We have special classes around here, a time that is set aside, a designated time, and we look at large portions of the Word of God that are keys in your life. We do it on Thursday night sometimes. We do it on special nights like maybe church history or manuscript evidence or history of the Bible, things that are absolutely important to you. We have the people ministry here. We fired it back up yesterday after being off for the summer where we simply—my goal is to give you every workable solution to every problem that anybody is going to ever have in their life that is found in the Bible and to teach you how to work with people and help with people. And then you have the one-on-one, my time where you come over and we spend time together. I have a little more freedom in a situation like that because it allows me to see what you really do in one-on-one. In all of it, I will give you what you need, I will answer your questions, but even in answering your questions, I may stop short of going to someplace where most of God's people out there are not ready to go with something. One-on-one is a little different. In that, when you come over on a continual basis, I can find out if it is real to you, the book, or just a joke.

But in all this, you follow the simple rule that you do not teach all that you know. You just do not.

2. Do not try to teach something to somebody if you do not thoroughly understand it yourself. People will come to Thursday Night Bible study, and we will lay out something that is fairly deep and something that has got some real impact to it. The first thing they will do is take it home or take it to work the next day and try to explain it to somebody like you are going to impress them with what you learned last night, and you look like an idiot because you do not even understand it yourself. That is exactly what happens so many times. You have to understand what is going on. You have to be able to take the Word of God and completely, for the most part, understand it before you can explain it to somebody else. I am not saying you do not say, "Hey, you have got to come and hear this," or "You have got to come and see this." But just taking it because you want to give it out and impress somebody does not work that way.

II. Diligence and Bearing Rule

We will look at verse 24. "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." Now this is a great practical verse, and it is so true in life. "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule." That simply says a child of God that is in the Bible, dialed into the Word of God, will submit himself to those that have a spiritual rule over him. That is what it is saying. "Bear rule" means to go with something. It means to embrace it, to go with it, to lean on it. You are going to find that there are rules all the way through the Bible. I know we do not like rules. I do not even like the word "rules," but there are rules in the Bible. You can call them principles. You can call them whatever you want. At the end of the day, there are rules. When God gave the Ten Commandments, they were not the Ten Suggestions. They were rules.

If you want to find a spouse, you have to follow Genesis 24. There are 18 or 20 rules in there that if you follow them, you will do good. If you want to learn the Bible—I wrote a book back there on how to study the Bible. I think I gave you probably 20 or some rules that you follow if you really want to learn the Bible. In 1 and 2 Timothy, there are rules in building a church. He lays them out. In 2 Corinthians, there are rules that you have to have to form up and build a ministry. He lays them out every chapter. In Romans 14 and 15, there are rules on how you deal with people in life that you have to deal with and you meet and you have to go through relationships with. In the people ministry, when we taught you how to deal with people, one of the first things I gave you was a set of rules you need to follow. Follow these rules because this is how you do it when you deal with people.

In understanding marriage, divorce, remarriage—many people have gotten—and I never followed anybody from having a bad marriage. It happens all over the place. People get divorced. It is part of life today. I wish it was not that way, but it is. But if you want to find out why you messed up and why you do not want to mess up again, go to 1 Corinthians 7. You know what you have got? You have got the rules on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. It is all through the Bible.

In the church, 1 Timothy 5:17, the Bible says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." They rule. They do not rule as kings or lords, or they are not supposed to, but they carry out the rules. When you went to school, you had to follow rules. When you go to work, you have rules. Every place you go in life or whatever you do, there are rules involved. Why would you think that being a Christian and getting into the Bible would be any different?

In civil government, civil life, in Romans 13, we find that God made civil government because civil government is the rules of society that keep society from going into anarchy. He tells you in verse 3, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." God uses those rulers. He is a nation to accomplish His plan. Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

Simply what he is saying in Proverbs is that a diligent man or woman knows that accountability and responsibility are a key to the Christian life. God has put a structure for us as Christians, the

New Testament local church. It has the rules that we follow to stay between the white lines of life. A Christian's life will be in these areas. God gave us the government to keep us safe, to give us some kind of order in society. God gave us the Bible to follow a structure in your life of God, what He wants you to do. Then God gave you the New Testament church as a structure and a guide to help you get to where God wants you to go. I am telling you, the local church is absolutely vital in your life.

Now look at the last part of verse 24, "but the slothful shall be under tribute." "Under tribute" here simply means under bondage, a heavy debt, paying tribute. In life, people who will not bear rule will put themselves in a bad situation in many cases that winds up with them being in tribute, paying for something that they did. The greatest example I can think of is the IRS. The IRS has one simple rule: you pay your taxes every year. There will be people who will try to beat that system and not pay their taxes. I have known people who get away with it for years, but sooner or later they will find you out and they will get you in time.

Back in the 90s there was a pastor, who was the pastor of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple. His name was Greg Dixon. He had got the idea from somebody somewhere, someplace that it was unconstitutional and unchristian to pay taxes. So he went around, he made it his deal that he had not paid taxes for 20 years. He made it his main thing in life to go to churches, and he quit preaching the gospel, did not get anybody saved. They were now around telling churches that they should not pay their taxes, and a whole bunch of Christians fell into that and believed that because he said, "You can beat it in court and you can do this and it is unconstitutional and they cannot force you to pay taxes. Our church is not doing it and we are not going to do it." He was running about five or six thousand in church that Sunday. Every sermon he preached wound up with, "You should not pay taxes." That is where he went to seed on it.

The IRS came down and put a lien on his church and charged him for six million dollars in back taxes. He cried and cried and yelled and yelled and screamed about a deal and this or that and how unfair it was, and the bottom line is when he finally started his prison ministry, he realized that there are rules when it comes to paying your taxes to the IRS. You may not like them. You may not like them. They may not like you. They may be unfair. The tax laws look like they are a jumbled mess. Who could figure them out? I hope someday they will simplify it, but they probably will not. That would be too simple. They will not do it. But the bottom line is there is a rule that says you have got to pay it, and when you think you can beat the system, you know what you wind up being under? Tribute. Because you have no rule in your life. And you wind up paying tribute.

You take a two hundred thousand dollar tax bill after a twenty year period of time, and they add the penalties to it and all the interest to it. Now you are at nine hundred thousand dollars, maybe over a million dollars in back taxes. You are looking at that saying, "How am I going to get that million dollars to pay those taxes?" And every day you are saying that, it is going up a thousand dollars a day in penalties and interest. By the end of the week you are another seven thousand. That means that at the end of the month you are another thirty thousand. And you never simply get out of that. You know why? Because you violated the rules, now you are under tribute. You were not diligent in the rules, and now you are under tribute.

Now let us put that in a spiritual context. This is the answer why so many of God's people have the issues they have in life. In most cases, like a couple of weeks ago, they become unteachable. You cannot teach them anything. They will not follow the rules. They think that God called them to minister outside the rules. You see? That is their mindset. They think, "Well, the rules apply to everybody else, but they do not apply to me. You have to be in the structure of the local church, but me and my ministry, we are going to be outside the local church."

When you get saved, there are some rules that God gave us to follow. As I said, in the Old Testament they called it the law, the Ten Commandments. When you follow the rules, when you bear with it, you do fine. But when you think you can be a Christian and beat the system like the guy who is an American citizen who thinks he can beat the IRS, you are in trouble. Just like the guy after twenty years with the IRS has all this money he owes, all this tribute, all of the compounding interest and the penalties added to his original debt. You tell yourself, and after twenty years of as a Christian living their life or her life in a lawless fashion doing your own thing, and after twenty years you look back and you say, "How am I ever going to get out of the mess that I am in?" You probably will not. Because there comes a time that the tribute gets so heavy. It gets so detailed. It gets so absolutely attached to everything that it is almost impossible to get out of, just like with the IRS.

The tribute of sin will just keep adding on your existing problems. You will get out of fellowship with God. You will quit coming to church. You get an attitude about the preacher or the church or people in it or the Bible, and then what happens is next you start having personal problems. When you start, add it up, get a pencil, and then when you have personal problems, it is only a short time you have marital problems if you are married, and it is only a matter of time and then you start to have work problems or job related problems, and you continue to have an attitude about the church or attitude about the pastor or God's people, and then you have people problems, and then as your kids get a little older and hit the high school age, now you have kid problems, and now your marriage is falling apart, and now you have divorce problems. Now you get divorced, you have two kids, they go live with her because you are such a fool and an idiot, and now you have alimony problems. It puts so much stress and anxiety in life. Now you have health problems. Then it leads to emotional problems. Then you have stress and anxiety problems. I want to tell you something. The price of a life of living lawlessly and forsaking the rules and the laws of God in your life will put you under tribute. As I said before, there are rules to learn the Bible, there are rules to operate a ministry, there are rules in building a church, there are rules in your everyday Christian life that you have to apply, and when you do not apply them, you will wind up under tribute.

III. Heaviness of Heart and the Good Word

Now look at verse 25. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad." Now this is a great verse, and it is a great verse on the number one issue of God's people today: depression. I have never seen a time where God's people have been in such a state of absolute depression about things. Their anxiety overwhelms them. It leads to, I do not know how many Christians that go in to see a psychiatrist or a therapist and they simply say, "Well, you are

manic depression, you are bipolar, you have the highs in the morning and the lows in the afternoon." Now we have developed what we commonly know as Prozac Christianity. The Bible principles do not work anymore, but the meds do.

The Bible says the heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop. Now depression will always affect man's heart through his spirit. We talked about Job chapter 26 a while back, and it talked about "whose spirit came from thee." Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." You know what is spiritually a medicine to you? When you get down in the dumps and you get down and you get all bummed out and you stop one of the things and this and that and you start feeling sorry for yourself or something did not go the way you wanted it to go, so you start feeling that and you start getting depressed. You know what is a great medicine for you? I will tell you what it is. The joy, joy, joy, joy down in your heart of that book. That good word is the Bible. It is like a medicine. Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

In your Bible, the definitive chapter on depression and dealing with it is found in 1 Kings chapter 18. It is an incredible story. We came through it in people ministry last year. It is built around a man of God, Elijah, who is up against two of the most wicked people the world has ever seen, Ahab and Jezebel. He is God's man. He has got the power of God. Why? He just brought down fire from heaven and then burned up the sacrifice, killed the 400 prophets of Baal. He just had a great spiritual experience. And then he hears over the internet, somebody sends him a text, "Jezebel is really ticked off at you and she has vowed to kill you." And the man of God who just had the greatest event spiritually in his life falls apart and goes into depression. You know why? You cannot rely on spiritual events for your spiritual maturity because they will come and go. Wherever there is a mountaintop of your Christian experience, there will be a valley to get to the next mountain.

O'Malley used to say, "You do not go from Christian experience to Christian experience." He says, "You do not have a great experience and say, 'Wow, look at this.' And then you have a bad experience." He says in the Christian life, "You just always walk even. You always walk even." Because I am telling you, your success and your victory in Christ is not going to be built on the great victories that you have. It will be the principles that will get you through the good times and the bad times. When you just focus on the good times like Elijah did, the valleys are coming. They will always, I do not care how great the spiritual victory you just had is, there will always be a Jezebel who will bring you down.

Elijah, instead of responding to all he knew, he reacts to what he hears. "Ahab and Jezebel are coming after me." He loses his perspective because he lost his principles. And guess what happens then? The great man of God, the man who just killed the 400 prophets of Baal and stuck it to Jezebel and Ahab and just did everything for God now, he runs into the wilderness. All of that beginning of running for the wilderness now begins the other issues. Now he wants to be alone. He does not want to be around people anymore. Now he stops eating. All he wants to do is stay in bed and sleep all the time. He starts feeling sorry for himself like, "I am the only one that is going through this." He loses all his perspective of what God was doing in his life, and he

enters in and spirals down into that state of depression, and now he gets to where they all get. He wants to commit suicide. "Oh God, take my life."

Now I want to say something to you. That Bible says, "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word," a good word, the good word of God, "maketh it glad." Now I have been in this business for a while, and in 40 years of ministry I have never met a bipolar, depressed person, saved person, that ever had those issues of depression, that ever had three things in their life. Never.

3. I have never met a person that struggled with depression and has all of those emotional issues who ever really knew his Bible. He has never invested his life in the Bible. I do not know what he invested it in, but it was never the Word of God. He never got into the good word. He never fed his spirit with something that stabilized him that when the tough times come, and they will come, there has to be something that will carry you through. I never met one who knew his Bible.
4. I never met one who was ever actively involved in ministry. "You are always too tired, too depressed. Well, I am just too emotionally upset to focus on any of that stuff." Well, of course you are. I talked to a lady one time and she said, "I am having a problem with depression." For the next 40 minutes she laid out at least 120 things that she was dealing with. When she was done I said, "Ma'am, I totally understand why you are depressed. Who would not be with what you have got in your life? Now let us go back and figure out how it got there and how you are going to get out of it."
5. I never met one who was actually ever a soul winner, working with people. Now this is an unfair question to some. I understand that, so just take it for what I am saying here. I do not mean this as a criticism in any way, shape, or form. Have you ever won anybody to Christ? I am not looking for an answer. Have you ever won somebody to Christ? Have you ever sat down with somebody and opened up the Bible and realized that God of the universe has just choreographed all the angels in heaven on one little spot that you are sitting in with a chair, opening up that book and showing somebody how to get into the kingdom of God? And you walk them through, you show them, you see their response, you see their eyes well up with tears, you see them actually trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior.

I say all that to say this, listen to me, there is no greater fulfilling feeling in all the world than that. I won \$60 million in the lottery. It cannot compare with you sitting down and giving life to someone who 30 seconds before that was on their way to hell. I do not know of anything greater than that. I do not know in 40 years of ministry and 65 years of living on this planet, and I have experienced it all, seen it all, done most of it, and bought the t-shirt in most places where I was. But I am telling you right now, I do not know of anything that will keep you from ever going down the tubes of feeling sorry for yourself when God is continually using you to change the lives of people.

We get that way because we are stagnant. We get that way because we are not following the rules. We get that way because God is not using us. I get down, everybody gets down. I will get discouraged, everybody gets discouraged. But depression, are you kidding me? How do you get depressed when every time you open that Bible it just falls all over the place? How do you get

depressed when you look back at your life and you see what God has given you and everything that you have done and your family and in your church and in the people and you look around, but you know what? You have got to get your eyes off yourself and start seeing what God has done with you. What the problem is, He has not done anything with you. If I were you, I would be depressed too.

I know some of you are young Christians, and I am careful how I say what I am saying. I know some of you are young Christians, and I know that you will win somebody in time to Christ. I know you will. I have had you sit in my office and say, "Bob, I just, you know, I have been saved for two or three years now and I just really want to win somebody to Christ." That is what I am talking about. You will win somebody in time. You just have got to get to that point in your life. It is the ones who never care. It is the ones who have been saved 10, 15, 20 years. Not only have you not won somebody to Christ, you do not care about winning anybody to Christ.

Now in our context here, Proverbs 12:25, the heavy heart, the depression that makes a man stoop or a heavy burden or a heavy yoke as the Bible calls it that puts him in a state of depression. In our context here, it will be in direct connection to verse 24. The depression will come into our lives when we are under the tribute of not following God's rules. A man forsakes the Word of God, the accountability, the responsibility that God saved him for, and lives a lawless lifestyle as a Christian. Now he is going through all the issues that have settled in his life and overwhelmed him or her, and now they slide into a state of depression. Welcome to the 20th, 21st century Christianity.

You know, I have often wondered how the apostle Paul ever got through all that he did without his meds. I mean, if you go to the book of Romans over there, I mean, I told you last week, do you see the stuff that he went through? Do you see the rejection? We think the apostle Paul, the greatest Christian ever lived. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. You ought to see what he went through to get to that point in his life to do what God called him to do. And not one time do you find burden. You find a place where he is willing to die and go to hell for his own countrymen to go to heaven, but never depression. You know why? He knew who he was in Christ. He knew what Christ had him to do, and he was focused on doing it. When you lose your focus, you lose your perspective, you lose the principles, you go under tribute. As I said earlier, where the Bible will not fix your problems anymore, the Prozac will.

Now here is the key, "but a good word," that is the Bible, "maketh it glad." Get back to the structure that God has for you, a New Testament Bible-believing local church, and submit yourself to the Word of God through it. Start playing by the rules. Listen, it is absolutely impossible to get into a state of depression with the hand of God on your life and the power of God in your world. Impossible. Impossible. You cannot fall into a state of depression when God's hand is on your life and the power of God is working through your life. Impossible. Because all around you, you see and you focus on what God is doing. When you do not have that to focus on, you have to focus on what you are doing. You have to focus on your circumstances around you that you are in control of. That would make you depressed on its own. You need to look around and see what God is in charge of, what God is doing in your life, how He is changing the events.

IV. Righteousness and Association

Look at verse 26. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them." Now, that is a great verse. The word "neighbor" is not used in the Bible the way we use it today. You think of the word "neighbor," you think of the person next door to you where you live or across the street or down the street. But that is not how the Bible uses the word. In the olden days when the King's English was still pertinent, it was a thing where they would call everybody "neighbor." It did not mean that you lived next to them, it meant that you were going to be a friend to them like if they did live next to you. That is how it was used.

The verse simply says that you may start out in excellent fashion with God, but if you hang out with the wrong crowd in time, you will be just like them. Psalm 1, one of my favorite passages in the Bible says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." You quit walking with God and you start walking with the ungodly. You are not walking with God anymore, you are walking with the ungodly, and pretty soon the next stand is the fact that you are standing in the way of sinners. You are not just walking with them, now you are standing with them. Have a conversation. Then he says, "sit at the seat of the scornful." Now you started out walking with them, now you are standing with them, now you are sitting with them, and you are just like them. 2 Timothy 3:13 says, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

Remember the seven fundamental warnings in Proverbs I gave you last week? Remember what number seven was? The proverb talks about all through there: Be careful who you hang out with. You know, my girls when they were in high school, Kelly. She had the chance to be a cheerleader at school. They went to Raytown South, which was not a very good school to begin with, and I know many of you went there, so you know what I am talking about. Zach, you went there, didn't you? William, didn't you go there? No. Because they put bars in the windows right after you guys left. Joe went there.

She came to us, and you know how kids can be. I think she was probably 13 or 14, and she won the buzz at school, and she had a chance, and all her friends were going to do that. It can be a tough time for parents. I mean a lot of pressure gets put on them, and this is where if you have not paid your dues in building the relationship with your child, right here is where you begin to crack the foundation. Because they get a lot of pressure to be part of that crowd. It appeals to them. And of course we said no.

I sat down with Kelly, and I told her this story. One of my illustrative stories that I put together through their kids' lives, and you know, I told her about the time. I said, "Honey, let me tell you about the time that I worked in a flour mill. It was a great job, and I made a lot of money. But," I said, "the problem with working in a flour mill, that that flour dust was so fine and so minute that it just stuck to everything. I mean, I tried as I would to stay clean and keep the flour off me. It just would stick to everything I had, get in my clothes. Every day I tried to come home, and the flour would just be on me all the time. I would look in the mirror, and my face would be just in my hair, be in my ears, be in my eyes, be up my nose. It was a thing where it just got everywhere. And there was nothing that I could do."

I told her, I said, "You know, think of flour and that job that I had as the world influences in your life. They are so subtle. And they are so minute. Many times I was going there and I was working in the flour mill, I never even knew the flour was sticking on me. It was not until I got home and I looked in the mirror and I saw Casper the Friendly Ghost." I said, "You know, in anything in life, but what you want to do here, you may have the best intentions to stay pure before God. But sin is like that flour. While you are doing with the best intentions what you want to do, that sin of being associated gets in your everything you do. It will get in your ears and it will affect what you hear. It will get in your eyes and it will affect what you see. It will get in your nose and you will take it inside you and it will affect who you are."

I said, "You know what? There will be enough bad issues in life that you have to deal with that you do not have a choice in than making a choice to put yourself in a bad situation that is going to cause you some problems. It is just that simple." I said, "My word to you, my word to every one of my kids, stay out of the flour mill. It is impossible to stay clean when you are working a flour mill." You know what? You can have the best intentions, but when you fellowship with the world, you are going to get dirty.

Parents today, a lot of times I do not get them. I do not understand it. I have watched them and I know it is none of my business and I never stick my nose in. I just, I do not. I just go on with what I have got to do. Somebody asks me, I will tell you. If somebody does not ask me, I just move on with life. I have got enough things to deal with. But sometimes I wonder. I look and I know it is a part of the time that we are living. But sometimes I wonder and I think to myself, parents today think the devil died. They really do. You think that he died someplace 30, 40 years ago. I have seen parents put their kids in a situation and their parents just never stop and think that you think that you think the devil will miss that trick that you just did. You think the devil will miss that opportunity you just gave him?

Parents today, they deal with their kids and their children and they actually come to the point where I think they believe that the devil does not exist anymore. Or maybe their family or their child is exempt to it. That is exactly what the devil wants you to think. And it will only get worse. And you who think that you are an exception to the rules will get deceived. I have seen it with young gals who marry an unsaved man or a man who marries an unsaved woman. It looks so good. It looks like it is going to work out. They will tell you whatever you want to hear and then once the marriage is taking place, they will do whatever they want to do. That Bible says, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." He is out hunting and he is hungry. He will devour everything that he can.

V. The Substance of a Diligent Man

Now verse 27 says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." Now this verse illustrates the man that is all through this chapter. Verse 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, all the way down through. All the way up to verse 24. He is slothful. The verse here says that he kills animals out of no regard for anything. There are no damage to his property. They are not destroying his crops. They are not digging holes in his backyard. They are not coming in and doing some disruptive thing. He just likes to kill for the

sake of going out and killing something. And he is wicked, worthless, and he is slothful. His substance last week in verse 21 is filled with mischief. We saw it last week.

Now look at the last part of verse 27. "But the substance of a diligent man is precious." Now the diligent man with substance is precious because he is so hard to find. Proverbs 31:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." The precious substance of Christ reigning in us to do His work. I want to say, I think the number one missing ingredient in God's people today, if somebody just had to boil it down to one thing, it is that one word right there, substance. There is no substance to them, no substance to them at all.

You know, all my life I have been a collector of something. I grew up in the, I was a war baby, grew up in the 50s when World War II was still fresh and on TV you had combat, G.I. men. The war was still fresh in everybody's mind. And of course it formed a lot of guys my age. You know, I got interested in the military, got interested in military history, got interested in collecting the artifacts of wars and all that stuff. It was a time of my life that I have been intrigued by that, loved the research of it and loved the history of it and just collected all kinds of things like that.

People do that. You have some guys that collect guns, got fabulous gun collection. Some guys collect coins, incredible coin collection. Steve Bracken had a collection of fishing lures, incredible. Who would care about fishing lures? I mean, it was from Bollywood back to the early, early turn of the century, incredible. Everybody collects old cars, got some incredible old cars, got some incredible hot rods too. Incredible. My mom used to collect salt and pepper shakers. Wherever we went she bought a set of salt and pepper shakers. She had 16 cabinets loaded with salt and pepper shakers. I mean, it was incredible. She had them from Washington, went to Washington, D.C., like the White House and the Monument and she had them everywhere. Everywhere we go, that is all she wanted was salt and pepper shakers. Never used them. We did not have any salt and pepper in our house, but she had it. If we ever did, she was ready to go, I want to tell you.

Some people like collecting antiques. Some people like to collect the Civil War stuff. Some people like World War I. Some people like World War II. Everybody has got their deal. In time, when you collect things, you will educate yourself about what you collect. I do not care what you collect. Somebody writes a book on showing you the real thing from the fake. Sometimes the things that you collect are not worth anything. Sometimes you may be common things, but they are in great shape, so you want to have it put it in your collection. Some things may be hard to find items in any condition. In every collection, I do not care what it is. I do not care if it is Gary with cars, you guys with guns, fishing lures, or me with World War II stuff, there comes down a time when you find that item. It is absolutely one of a kind. There will be another one, priceless, and it is there. And you are just saying, "You know what, man? That is the premier spot in what I collect."

I want to be honest. In collecting anything, you learn to spot the fakes from the real items. You really do. We are coming up to October 17th, where they have the veteran salute. And I always do a display up there. We have been up there before. This year, Kelly and Aaron, Kelly gave me, her mom knew I collected stuff, and her dad was a lieutenant commander in the Navy and flew

off carriers. She gave me all of his stuff. So when people do that, most people just leave it in a basement someplace or a garage someplace, but people give it to me, and I am doing a display up there for her with his picture and all of his stuff, and her mom and her family is coming in to keep their honor alive. I think that is so important.

But you know, I personally think that God gave me that passion to collect. It really helped me in the ministry, because the greatest collection I have is the people that God has given me. I collect people. My collection is stunning. I believe every church is a pastor's collection. You want to know what his church is like? Look at his collection. I have known guys that, you know, in collecting you have different things. They have what they call fake stuff, and so you get a black light, and a black light, you turn it on, turn the lights off, and you shine it on something that is fake and it glows. It is a thing where if it is real, it does not glow. It is just flat, but if it is what you did, and you know, I have seen collections that were totally fake. I mean, everything in it. I mean, you turn the light off and turn the black light on and the whole room lights up. And yet there are churches just like that. There are churches like that. I believe every church is a picture of the pastor's collection of people. You know what? Sometimes it is fake and phony. Sometimes it is the real deal.

I have got to tell you, God has allowed me to unearth and find some of the most precious people that you could ever meet in your life. You know when you collect stuff, you have got to go places. I mean, you do not find the rare stuff just you have got to go to 63rd Street flea market. You have got to go down to the bottom someplace. You have got to go to a garage sale. You have got to drive around looking for that special item. They are not always hard to find. They are always not easy to find. But what makes them precious is just two things: the fact that they are diligent about the things of God, and the fact that some people just have substance to them. They have a depth to them based on the biblical principles. I will not tell you, in collecting people, those are two of the rarest qualities that make that person the rarest of the rare.

People who know me, they laugh at me because of the fact that they know I never sell anything out of my collection. I have had stuff for 40, 50 years. I have seen guys who buy it this week and they tire of it and sell it next week. I am the same way with people that God has given me. People who are diligent, people who have substance. I would not trade them for anything or anybody in the world because you are precious. You have substance. You have diligence. Every Sunday when I walk down them steps and I come up the door and there is a men's prayer group and I come down here and I see women's prayer groups everywhere, all over the place, I say to myself, "Wow, what a collection." That is some unearthed, some of the most precious vessels that you ever saw in your life. I am telling you, in this lukewarm, Laodicean Christianity, you are one of a kind. You are the rarest of the rare.

Just like somebody wrote a book that, if I am collecting car parts, this, coins, stamps, guns, whatever, you have got a book you can go to and you can find out the value by looking at the picture, by seeing the description and then getting the price on it. God wrote a book on collecting people. And He lays out the description of what is rare. He lays out the value whose price is far above rubies. He lays out the characteristics that you look for, the model numbers. He lays out every aspect so that if you are paying attention, when you build your collection of people in your

church, you build it with the most precious people who have substance and who are diligent to the things of God. There will never be another one like you. Lots of fakes and reproductions, who they try to get passed off as the real deal, but when you look closely and compare it with the book that the greatest collector of people ever wrote, it shows you the fake stuff from the real stuff.

"But the substance of a diligent man is precious." The substance and diligence comes from the rules you follow in life. The rules that God gives us build self-discipline. It builds discernment, discretion. It builds character. It builds responsibility. And it builds in time understanding and wisdom. And it fills us with substance. Yet it makes you the rarest of the rare.

VI. The Way of Righteousness

Then he closes out with verse 28, and boy, what a great way to close this chapter out. He says, "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." Now what a way to end a chapter of chapter 12. We have learned that life is choices. And man has a free will to make those choices. All through Proverbs we see the two choices with their true consequences. One is a life with God and pleasure. The other one is under tribute. A life of fulfilled happiness and joy, filled and satisfied by the Word of God for the work of God. The other is a life of mischief and trouble, heartache, deceit, wickedness, and all the consequences that come with that. One is a path that leads to life with no death. The other one is a life that leads to death with no life. It is just that simple.

Well, we will hold up there. We will have a word of prayer and be dismissed in a moment. Do not forget, we will have the restart meeting in about five minutes.