

Proverbs 11:15-18

Sunday 3/15/2015

If you have your Bibles today, I want to invite you again to turn back to Proverbs chapter 11, and we will be picking it up in verse 15. We are going to continue on today to work through this chapter. This chapter has been a really good one for just getting a lot of everyday, good, practical principles to live our lives by, as the whole book of Proverbs is, as you will see as we continue to go through it.

You will remember when we started chapter 11, we took a long time with verse 1. Proverbs 11:1 says, "A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." We probably took five or six weeks, and we covered all the major areas in the Bible. We covered all the major areas in life and talked about the ministry, talked about our own church here, talked about our walk with God, talked about relationships that we get ourselves into. We talked about all of those things and how to get a good balance in them in our lives and how important that really is.

Then from verse 2 on, once we finished that, we have since been looking at each verse and seeing it as it is laid out in a positive and a negative way. I have told you that all life falls around the positive things and negative things. When the book of Proverbs, that is the book on the issues of life, begins to go through them, it follows the same course that life follows. It is based on the negative and the positive in each verse.

Today, we will pick it up where we left off last week in verse 15 and come down through verse 18. Yet again, we will add, if you are keeping a catalog on these, which I hope you are, you will get more principles today on the issues of life, and there are some really good lessons in these verses today.

Now I want to begin reading here in Proverbs chapter 11. I am going to start at verse 14.

Proverbs 11:14-18

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure.

A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

A merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

Now Father, we thank you and praise you today for the Lord Jesus. We ask you to give us today all that we need, give us the insight and the wisdom into this great passage to be able to take these verse by verse and to give these good people what you have for them today. We love you. We thank you for all you do for us, for our church, for the Word of God you provided for us. And we just ask you now in Jesus' name to bless us and for His sake, amen.

I. The Importance of God's Counsel

I included verse 14 when I read it because I want you to see how getting God's counsel on everything really is the real key in what follows here. Remember last week that I told you that when it said, "Where no counsel is, the people fall," it was not talking about the physical counselors of life. Though obviously somebody who believes the Bible, a pastor who uses the Bible and understands the Bible, and Christians who follow the same suit, they can be of great value to you in helping you work through issues. We take that for granted. But when it is talking about counselors, fundamentally everything goes back to the Word of God. God gave us 66 counselors, 66 books, and in each one of them you find everything that we need for life, everything that we need for every issue that we will find in life.

II. Surety for a Stranger

So he starts in Proverbs 11:15 and he says this:

Proverbs 11:15

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure.

Now that is good counsel right there. We have talked about that before. We have run across this principle when we were way back in chapter 6, months ago. Proverbs 6:1-2 says:

Proverbs 6:1-2

My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

Putting it into a context, we understand that you have to be careful who you lend yourself to as far as being responsible for their financial situations. Dr. Lee, this is dealing here with the Jew in the Tribulation period, and he is told to be careful who he trusts, careful who he talks to, careful who he makes an allegiance with and an alliance with because there are people in the Tribulation that are deceiving people and then turning them over to the Antichrist. For reference on that will be Matthew 24:9-10. So, doctrinally, it is a Tribulation context to the Jew.

But from a practical standpoint, it is simply saying, "Don't go out on a limb for somebody in any situation," because if they do not hold up their end of the bargain, then you are going to get stuck with the burden, and you are going to have to pick up what they did not if you have made sure for their debt or made sure for their circumstances. That is why he says, unless you are really sure, the word "surety" meaning "very sure," know the person that you are standing up for.

You see this all the time when people go into business together. Many times the idea of a great business overshadows the person you are going into business with. It is only after you get into that that you see you probably made a bad choice, and the guy bails out, and you get stuck with it, or many, many times where somebody has spent all the money and then leaves you with the debt. I had a friend of mine one time that had a plumbing supply place, and he was a good kid, and he had a partner in the deal, and when they had to close the doors, the partner had it all rearranged where he got everything out of it and left the guy with nothing. In fact, he had to go bankrupt.

You find it where it is talking about signing a contract with somebody to do some work or to do this or any kind of thing that you find that you put yourself in that you are going to stand up for somebody. A lot of times people will cosign for somebody who wants to buy a car or wants to get an apartment, and they have to have somebody cosign. So they, without really knowing the person, I do not know how many times I have heard it say, "Well, he said he was a Christian," or, "She said she was a Christian, I thought it was okay." Man, that means nothing. It means absolutely nothing today, and they get stuck with it. You share an apartment with somebody, and you find out pretty much you get left with the whole thing, and they go someplace else. You see it in working with people, with issues, and in general, in things that you deal with.

My rule is, and I told you this when we came through chapter 6, my rule is, "Do not do it for somebody if you cannot handle the expense if you get left with it." You should go in with that mindset that, "I am going to do this because I want to help the person, but at the same time, I am fully prepared that it is not going to hurt me if that person leaves me hanging." It is your own choice, and you have to make those kinds of decisions.

As a pastor, and really as any Christian, we want to help somebody who we see as needing help, and that is a good thing. Our job is to help people. Even in that, you have to have a good balance, and you have to follow the principles to keep from getting burned. We all have been burned at some point in time. I have been burned over the years many times in the ministry, and every time I do, or I look back at it, I take full responsibility for it. I know the principles better than probably most people, and I know better. But at the same time, anybody can get fooled. It is probably people that I let come back to church that caused a lot of problems that I probably should not have over the years. I take responsibility for that.

From my position, sometimes you have to roll the dice on people. People sitting out here this morning, I will be very honest with you, some of you, I rolled the dice on you, and you came out pretty good. You did okay. But sometimes they do, and sometimes they do not. A real Bible-based ministry, a lot of it is putting yourself out there on a limb. I always tell people the best position to find yourself in as a Christian is way out on a limb looking back at the tree, seeing God standing there on a limb with a hacksaw in His hand and a smile on His face. That is the best position to be in.

As I say, I alone take responsibility for those things when I do it. I do not necessarily blame the person. Sometimes you have to err on the side of doing good, and you pay the price for it. But whenever I get burned or you get burned, it will always be, in my mind anyhow, that I understand I knew what the principle was. I took a chance on this person, and I got burned. Sometimes a good conscience toward God, that you know you did the right thing even when you got burned, is still the right way to handle it. That peace in your heart that no matter what happens, you can always look back and say, "Yeah, but I did the right thing. I gave that person three or four chances, or two chances, or whatever it was." There comes a point to it. You do not have "stupid" written on the front of your forehead. You realize that you try to help people, but there comes a time when you cannot go any farther with it. That is just the way it has to be.

But in all things, it says "surety for somebody." The need to be cautious, to be sure, is really vital. Some of you have taken a chance on somebody and given them a job. I have watched you do it. That is a noble thing. I appreciate when I see that. I may not say something to you, but I have watched some of you give somebody a chance when I thought to myself, "They probably are not going to make it." Well, that was a noble thing to do. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it does not. But I want to tell you this, and this is a true statement, so you want to listen to me: In every case when your motive is right and you try to help somebody and somebody comes back and burns you, God will always protect you in it, and you will always come out better than you went in it. That is just the way it works.

Now there are two key words in this verse, and I think there are valuable lessons in getting burned. I really do. There are two key words here in this verse, and they are very important.

1. He shall smart for it. Now that is an old English phrase. We do not use it that way anymore. But it simply means that once you get burned, you should be smarter than you were before you got burned. You ought to learn some lessons from it. Our ability to experience pain is a good thing. Many times it will keep us from really hurting ourselves. The little child reaches up, and you tell them, "Do not touch the stove, it is hot. Do not touch the stove, it is hot." They do not really understand it is hot until they get their finger burned. That is a good lesson. Every time they reach up to think about that, they are going to remember the pain or the experience. This is why when we go through things in life and we get into bad choices, God does not come down and just erase it and take it away. God expects us to learn from the bad mistakes that we made in life. He wants that pain. Jacob, when he wrestled with God back there in Genesis, he wanted his will over God's will, and God reached down and touched the hollow of his thigh. He limped for the rest of his life. Every time he limped, he remembered the time that he disobeyed God and the pain that it caused him. That is a good thing. The pain of a bad choice is always a good thing. Remember how it hurt when you disobeyed God.

You know the example of parents in disciplining their children. The Bible talks about corporal punishment or spanking your child. A lot of parents today do not want to do that. A lot of parents today will not do that. But that is a vital part of training up your child. I am not saying you just go out and do it because you had a bad day, you are going to take it out on the kid. But there are certain things that a child does that are a lot worse than other things that require a more severe penalty on him. You have a strong-willed child, you have a child who hurts other children, you have a child who bites other kids all the time or hurts them or is destructive to them. Giving them a time out is not going to solve that problem unless you are hanging them by their thumbs upside down. That is not going to work. There needs to be something that he associates with, "The next time I do that, man, that really hurts." That is the profit of going through something like that.

2. He that hateth suretiship is sure. The 100% safest way to keep from getting into a situation like this is just do not do it. If there is any doubt, stay away from it. That is a very good practical lesson and a rule to follow in life.

III. A Gracious Woman and Strong Men

Now look at Proverbs 11:16. Let us move on down through here.

Proverbs 11:16

A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

Now the key word here is "retain" or "retaineth." In the context, this gracious woman will be two ladies in the Bible. I told you the other night when we were in Bible study that there are two books in the Bible that are written to women, only two. When you realize how the Bible lays itself out and you understand in the Old Testament God has a wife, Israel, and in the New Testament Christ has a bride, the church, then you realize that there are two Bible books written in the Bible that illustrate both of those. Esther is written about a woman in the Old Testament that represents the nation of Israel. Ruth is the book that represents the body of Christ. So you see that. It is very important that you understand that a gracious woman is talking about these two ladies.

But in a practical sense, in an everyday application to you and to me, this woman will be, no question about it, the virtuous woman of Proverbs chapter 31 and what she should be. I do not know if you know it or not, but there are 15 different kinds of women in the Bible. You could go through them. We have been through them. Most of them are in Proverbs. In fact, they are all in Proverbs except two of them. There are 15 kinds of women that you find in the Bible.

- Proverbs 2 talks about a strange woman.
- Proverbs 6 talks about an evil woman.
- Proverbs 6 also talks about a whorish woman.
- Proverbs 9 talks about a foolish woman.
- We are in Proverbs chapter 11. It talks about a gracious woman.
- Proverbs chapter 11 talks about a faithful woman.
- Proverbs chapter 14 talks about a wise woman.
- Proverbs 21 talks about a brawling woman. She is fun.
- Proverbs chapter 21 talks about an angry woman. She is really tough when she starts hanging out with a brawling woman.
- Proverbs 27 talks about a contentious woman.
- Proverbs chapter 30 talks about a hateful woman.
- Proverbs chapter 31 talks about an adulterous woman again.
- Proverbs chapter 31 talks about the virtuous woman.
- Then 1 Kings 4 and Matthew chapter 15. These are our last two women. They are both called great women. They are not named because these two women stand for the two types of women that find God's wife Israel and of course the body of Christ. In Matthew 15, she is a type of the church. In 2 Kings 4, she is a type of the nation of Israel.

So you begin to see that from a practical standpoint, this woman here in Proverbs 11 is going to be the virtuous woman that Proverbs chapter 31 talks about. The overall concept of Proverbs, if you do not have this outline in your Bible, you need to put it in. Here is how Proverbs breaks down into three basic sections. They are not hard. If you want to understand the book of Proverbs, this is how you get it.

- Chapter 1 through chapter 8: He goes through and he talks about how we get wisdom, how we get understanding, how we get discernment. He will go through time and time over and over again in the first eight chapters, and he begins to show us how we get those key things in our life.
- Chapter 9 up to chapter 30: In that section, he talks about how the Proverbs, he starts going through them on an individual basis. That is what we are doing right now. He shows you the positive and the negative from chapter 9 to chapter 30. So you have chapter 1 through chapter 8 tells you how to get it. Chapter 9 through chapter 30 shows you what they are.
- Chapter 31: Shows you the end result. The end result is a virtuous woman.

The Bible says in Proverbs 31:10:

Proverbs 31:10

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

The storyline of Proverbs and Song of Solomon: Solomon is looking for a woman with virtue. He has a thousand wives, and he cannot find one. Of course, he was looking in the wrong place. He was looking in the world. But he finally finds her in the book of Song of Solomon. The Bible talks about Song of Solomon 1:1. It says that this woman is the song of songs. Of all the other love songs he wrote about all the other bimbos that he had in his palace, this one was the song of songs. She was the virtuous woman.

The Bible says in Song of Solomon that she was a pearl, a black pearl. Matthew 13:45-46 talks about:

Matthew 13:45-46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Now that is a prophecy concerning the church. So when Solomon finds this woman who is a virtuous woman, not only historically is it the woman that he was looking for, but in a doctrinal sense or a prophetic sense, it is a picture of you and me, the church. So Proverbs takes on a complete new dimension in our lives. It shows us in the first eight chapters how to get what we want. It shows us the very meat and the heart of the subject in 9 through 30, and then chapter 31 shows us the end result, and it is an incredible concept. Of course, you see the Song of Solomon how it all goes together in the right place, and it is an incredible study to take.

In Matthew 13, you see the pearl of great price. In Revelation chapter 20, the New Jerusalem comes down. We are told that the New Jerusalem is the abode. It is the Christ church. It is where we live. It is everything that represents the church. It says it has 12 gates, 12 tribes, salvation is of the Jew. But on each one of those gates is a pearl because that is the abode and the home of the church.

You know a pearl is not just a precious stone. I do not know if you know this or not, but a pearl is alive. A pearl is a living organism. You can take a diamond and cut it in half and have two

diamonds. You can take a ruby, cut it in half and have two rubies. You can take a sapphire, cut it in half, have two sapphires. But when you take a pearl and cut it in half, both have died. It is alive. The church is not only just a precious stone, it is alive. So God calls it a pearl. You cannot divide it. You cannot divide a pearl just like you cannot divide me from Christ.

Now I want to see this woman in Proverbs 11:16 with grace and honor and how she is the woman of Proverbs 31:10 who was virtuous in a picture of you and me, the body of Christ. The key in both cases is the word "virtue."

Now virtue is a great word in the Bible. Most people do not know what that word means. They know it is a good thing, but they do not know really what it means. The definitive passages in the Bible on virtue are found in two places. It is found in Luke 6:17-19. That is the first one we are going to go to. Then it is found in Mark 5:25-30. That will be the second one we go to.

Now in Luke 6:17, here is what he says:

Luke 6:17-19

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

Now Mark 5:25 says this:

Mark 5:25-30

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

Most people do not know what virtue is. They know it is a good thing, as I said. But when you see this here, in both cases, virtue is something that went out of him, and he knew it when it did, and he knew when it left him. Biblically speaking, virtue in our own lives is that spiritual character quality that we have in our inner spirit and our soul that we have from a working

relationship with Christ. When you minister to people the Word of God, when you give them the verses you have memorized, when you give them or lay out the examples in the Bible, the types, or you sit down and they have an issue, or you disciple somebody and you put out what you know and you give out what you know, you go through a particular issue or you walk them through something in the Bible, it is the virtue that you have put in you that is based on the Word of God that you got from your relationship with God that goes out of you and gives you the ability to minister to them. That will be the strength or the empower or encouraging other people.

Virtue is you becoming one with the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and then giving what you have inside to other people. Thursday night we talked about how through Bible study and we go through all the questions, at the end of Thursday night you go home and you are all filled up. At the end of Thursday night I get home and I am all worn out. You know why? I spent two hours putting out of me what God has put in me. Virtue is you becoming one with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and when you give it to others, it becomes a healing medicine that helps heal people's spiritual wounds or comforts them or teaches them or encourages them. Virtue, when it goes out of you, will tire you. It will wear you out. It will drain you so that you have to be done, so you have to get refilled then on a continuous daily basis. The virtue that only comes from God.

In the Bible, this is called the filling of the Holy Spirit of God. There are two great doctrines on the Holy Spirit of God for you and for me. One is the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. That happened the day you got saved. When you got saved, the Holy Spirit of God took up residency inside your soul. You were sealed unto the day of redemption. That never leaves. But in your body, there is a daily filling of the Holy Spirit of God. You get up in the morning, you get into your Bible or whatever you do, and you begin to prepare yourself, and you go through the day on what you put spiritually in your life. It is like the gas in the tank of your car, and you can start out on a trip and you can have a full tank of gas, but you can only go 400, 500 miles. You have to pull in and get some more gas. You can fill yourself up spiritually through Bible study and all the things that you learn. But when you sit down with somebody and you disciple them or you work with them or you give them what God has given you, it drains you, and you have to get your tanks refilled. It has nothing to do with the indwelling Holy Spirit of God but rather the filling Holy Spirit of God.

The Bible says in Ephesians 5:18-19:

Ephesians 5:18-19

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. You get filled by being here on Sunday morning. You leave here filled up. You get filled up by Thursday night. You leave, your tanks are full. You get in your prayer group. You get filled up. You do your own Bible study. You get filled up. You spend your time with God. He fills you up.

You get into your fellowship with Him and other people, your prayer life. It gets your spiritual battery charged on a daily process that when you put it out and you give virtue, the quality of God in your life that you got from Him in the Word, you put it out to others, you have to replace.

Now let me say this. I am going to make a lot of friends today. I am going to make a lot of enemies. Women are especially good at this or can be because women have the natural ability that God designed them to bring forth life into the world, a child. As that child grows up, that mother nurtures them, gives of herself to them and in everything that she does, in all that they do. This is why you will hear your wife say, if you have got two or three kids, or in some cases just one kid, "Boy, I am drained after being with these kids all day." They wear you out. They wear you out because they take it out of you. They wear it out because you are constantly giving to them. They are wearing you out because you are taking of your strength and you are constantly helping them, giving them, teaching them, correcting them, mentoring them, giving them all. It wears you out and it drains you. A woman or a mother is wired by God to pour herself into her family. If you look at Proverbs chapter 31, there are 14 things in that chapter from verse 10 on that a mother does with her kids. Every one of them requires putting something out, putting something in.

So for a saved woman who already has that natural ability, who is already wired by God to be nurturing and giving and pouring herself into her family, when she gets into the book and she gets the Word of God in her and she gets on fire and wants to serve the Lord, it will be easier for her to do it than it will be for a man. Now this is the importance of, for all of us, getting the Word of God in your life on a constant basis, or you are going to run out of gas spiritually. That is why when you start to struggle and you start to have problems, the reason why you start to have problems is because you are not renewing everything in your life, and your problems are starting to overcome you. The first thing those people do is get farther away from the gas station.

Listen, when that little red light comes on on your dashboard and you know you only have 30 miles left, and you pass up a sign that says, "This is the last gas station for another 100 miles," how many foolish people would say, "I can make it"? You realize that you are almost out of gas, you know it, you can see it, your red light is coming on, you just saw a sign that says, "If you do not get gas here, the next one is 100 miles," your odometer is telling you, you only have 20 miles left, you are a fool if you do not get gas. In our spiritual world, when that little red light comes on and it is getting close to empty, and you know you have got some issues and you better get your tanks filled up, you will just pass right by that sign and die in the desert. That is the way it works. That is exactly the way it works. That is why you have to see the importance of that.

Now look at the last part of Proverbs 11:16, "and strong men retain riches." Here is a great spiritual contrast that shows the fundamental difference between men and women. The woman gives out virtue, but the man wants to retain everything that he has. Fundamentally, you see it all the time. It is harder for a man to give out virtue. Most husbands, most fathers, it is harder for them to show compassion than it is for a mother. It is harder for them to show that they really care. I am not saying that they do not. I have known some fathers that I believe really loved their families and cared for their families, but they had an innate inability to show it to them. They could not tell their kids they loved them. They could not tell their wife how much they loved her.

They could not display emotion or affection in any way. To them, doing that was kind of like almost being effeminate. You know, a real man does not do that. That is the mindset we have today.

But I want you to know, man, God gave you tear ducts in your eyes just like He did the eyes of your wife. This is what He looks at. He looks at it totally different. He goes around and he says, "You know what? He says, I just, he cannot." When his wife struggles, he looks at it and says, "Well, come on, what is wrong with you? Why can't you just get up and keep on going? Do not let that bother you. That would not bother me." Well, of course it would not bother you. You are not a woman. You are a man. But she is more sensitive in those things. Because she is the author of life, she has all that ability to give. A man wants to hold on to it. So when it comes to love, a mom will just pour it all over the family, sometimes too much. When it comes to the dad, he just kind of, unless, and I have had guys tell me this, I have sat down with husbands and wives for many, many years that struggle with this problem. The guy will always say, "Well, you know what? I grew up in a family where there was not a lot of love shown, and I grew up in a family where my father did not show that." I get all that. I understand that. I will let them go on for five or 10, 15 minutes. When they are done, they think they have just accomplished something great. Then I just kick all four legs out and say, "So what?" The Bible says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. All things are passed away. All things become new." You may have been raised that way, but once you got saved, party is over. You now have the ability to be like Christ and Christ-like in everything that you do.

But a woman has the internal makeup of naturally giving out love and nurturing and giving out virtue because she can produce life. A man cannot produce life. So he is wired differently. He is the strength. He is the structure. So it is harder for him sometimes. A man will really, in most cases, have to see this in his life and work toward a goal. He will have to develop it. If he is ever going to be effective in his family or in the ministry, he is going to have to realize that, "Hey, look, this is, it is different for me. I have to really work on it. I cannot just say anymore, "That is the way I am." You have to realize that that may be the way you are, but that is not the way God wants you to be.

You see this all the time with my pastor sometimes, or so cold, so aloof, so indifferent. Do not let the people get around them in any way, shape, or form to have any part of them because they are that way. I knew a preacher one time. He hated people. He did not want to talk to anybody. He did not want to work with anybody. Everybody looked at, he looked at, all he wanted to do was get up on Sunday morning and lay out the Bible and then go back to his man cave in his office and just lock himself away and never have to deal with people. He put a whole staff of people around him, pastors who dealt with all of the people, and all he did was just spend all day studying, doing what he wanted to do, step up in the pulpit, and then as soon as he was done, he was out of there. There is a guy who, as far as I am concerned, has no business being in the ministry. There is a guy who has lost any ability of reality with his people. He thinks he is like the Lord. He just comes down on Mount Sinai to give the Ten Commandments every Sunday and goes back to heaven.

But you see, for a woman, a relationship with Christ will always be easier than it will be for a man, and that is just the way it is. If she is a good woman, she is naturally drawn to things like that. Did you ever notice that in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you ever notice in Luke 23 and 24 that the Lord Jesus always had a little crowd of women always around him? Wherever he went, they went. They ministered to him, did everything he needed to do, got his car filled up with gas. They would never need it to be done. I will tell you something else, you ever see this, the first coming of Christ? There was not one woman in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John who ever rejected him. There was not one woman anywhere in the Gospels that ever rejected him, not one. Do you know why that is? Because Christ fundamentally is everything a woman wants in a man. He was compassionate. He was caring and nurturing. He was never too busy to listen.

Let me tell you something. Mary and Martha, I love Mary. Martha would drive me up the wall. Martha has got a mouth like a top flap, jab, canned garbage lid. She is always never shut her mouth. She always says the wrong thing at the right time. She is incredible. She is a busybody that is in everything. There is not one time that Jesus, when she had something to say, as goofy as it was, he did not stop and listen to her. That is why women were drawn to him. He was caring. He was nurturing. He was never too busy. He was godly. He never yelled at her. He never screamed at her. He never cursed her out. He never hit her. He never pushed her around. He was the rock in her stability. He set the standard of the principles. Every woman in the New Testament says, "That is exactly what I want in a man." So with the first coming of Christ, there was not a woman that rejected him. He was every woman's dream man. Every woman wants a man just like that. I will tell you what, ladies, when you look for a man, those are the things you look for in there. I have told you that before. It does not do any good, but I am telling you.

The Bible told us in Genesis 3:16 after the fall that the woman's desire was going to be to her husband. Christ fulfilled that. But for a man, you see, his desire is the things that he retains. I saw in a hunting fishing magazine one time, I saw, they have a, believe it or not, some of them have a, "You want to find a male, you want to find a woman in the back." This guy had put an ad in there and he says, "A real outdoor, real man looking for a woman. She must like the hunt. She must like the fish. She must be able to cook, keep a clean house. She must have a boat. She must have a dog. If you are interested, please send a picture of the boat and the dog." That is a man. That is what he does. That is what we do. He likes to retain his possessions, his things, his emotions. He has to work much harder than a woman does because he is the strength and she is the weaker vessel.

But a woman in the New Testament, there was not one that rejected him. I will tell you this, I do not preach on this, but I will say it right now since I am here. You ever meet a woman who absolutely rejects Christ and wants nothing to do with him? You met a bad woman. I am just telling you. Now guys, you are not going to like what I am about to say. But if you want a true example of what you and I should be, and if you have a wife or a girlfriend, or today I suppose I should say a significant other, who loves God and is godly and lives by the principles and will not compromise and is giving to others and loves you and loves people and prays and studies

your Bible, that is the greatest example of what we as men need to be as the bride of Christ. I hope some of you, pride, silly pride, will not let you keep you from getting that.

I know that not everybody has their struggles, and I know that I get, I am talking about in a pure biblical, here it is the way. I will tell you something, there are many examples of that in the Bible. I mean you go back there in Genesis with Sarah, what an example she is. She had her issues, but she became a, God blessed her with many nations. You have Rebecca, one of the greatest examples in the Bible. You have Rachel and Leah from the twelve tribes. You have Ruth and Naomi. You have Esther. You have Hannah and Samuel's mom, one of the greatest examples and studies in the Bible of how to train up and raise up a child, incredible. You have the Shunammite woman who is called a great woman in 2 Kings 4. Then you have the woman in Matthew 15 who is another great woman. You have Elizabeth, you have Mary. The list is endless, but it will all show us by those examples of what me as a man has to work on, become part and have a relationship with Christ. I am going to tell you something, it does not come natural for us. We have to work at it. You have to get to the point where you really, really, really identify what you have to change and then you begin to be that.

IV. The Merciful Man and the Cruel Man

Look at Proverbs 11:17.

Proverbs 11:17

A merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

Now this is a great verse and it is a great practical principle. When you show mercy to others, give them grace, then you have a good conscience with God, and you do not do any man evil. You sleep good at night knowing that no matter what the situation is, you did what was right. You followed the principles, whatever the outcome is. When you are going life as a Christian is simply to be a blessing to others, we then become an encouragement to them. Tell them you appreciate them. Tell them how much that you love them. You love the unlovable and you love the lovable.

I tell you, and our church does a good job of this, and I appreciate it, but I tell you, on Sunday morning when you see, sometimes you have to break out of your little world. So you get your little guys over here, your little girls over here, you are talking about this. You want to break out of that and just look around and see, one, the visitors that come in. Make sure that you had a fight in line to be able to shake their hand. Tell them how glad you are here. Bless them. Give them the blessing that you know that, "Hey, I am glad I came here today." Look for them. Do not get into your little world and talk about this or talk about that and what you are going to do here and what you are going to do there. I will tell your jokes and laugh at it. That is okay. There comes a time when you have to break out of that world, and you have to look around you that the people that are here, you can be more than a blessing to just one or two of your buddies or one or two of your girlfriends. You look around here at the people, just go over and tell them how much you appreciate them. Just put your arm around and say, "Hey, I really love," and I know our

church does a great job. We are the only church in the world. It is like the Waltons. It takes us 45 minutes to say goodbye for many activities. I get that.

I will tell you something else. You know what I like about when we go to the ball or softball, when we go to Jason's Deli, one of the things I love about it is that we are all together in one place. I love just going around from table to table to table and just looking at somebody, patting them on the back, telling them how much I love them, tell them how I appreciate them. Go from this table and laugh and listen to you guys and put my arms around you and just talk and then go to the next table over here. You have to do that sometime. Now, I have to warn you, Shoney's, I get the mindset that it is all ours. A couple of weeks ago, I was walking around and I am up here rubbing his people's back and I said, "I am so glad you are here." And I looked up and it was not my people. He looked at me really weird. I think she liked it, but I do not know what to tell you. But you have to do that sometime. You just have to go around and tell somebody that they are special. Tell somebody that you love them. Get out of that little mold mindset of your little people group. When your goal becomes that you want to be a blessing to other people, then you will be a blessing to other people. You do not want to keep that to yourself. You want to be able to share that. You want to be able to give that to others.

Now, the Bible says the merciful will do good to his own soul. The greatest example of that, I think, in the Bible is the story of Joseph back there in Genesis 37 to chapter 50. It is no wonder that we talked about this last Thursday night. It is no wonder that in the Bible, Joseph is the greatest type of Christ in all of the Scriptures. It is incredible. He is number one when it comes to being the types of Christ in the Bible. He had a father who loved him so much because he was so special, he gave him a coat of many colors. That is very significant in the Bible. His brothers, the brethren, hated him because he had the favor of the father, just like Israel with Christ. Joseph sees and tells prophecy just like Christ did, and he gets hated even more. They come a plot together to kill him. Finally, they sell him to the Midianites for 20 pieces of silver. Christ was sold for 30 pieces of silver, and the difference between that is in Leviticus 27:5 with the age that they have.

In the Old Testament, Judah says, "Let us sell him." In the New Testament, Judah says, "Let us sell him." You know those are the same two names in the Bible? Joseph is hated without a cause, just like Christ. When they wanted to pull off the deception, I cannot miss this, they said, "That is how we are going to do it. Well, let us pull him out of that hole, sell him to the Midianites. We will go get a goat. We will kill the goat. We will rip his coat up. We will put it in the blood, and we will take it back, and we will tell Daddy that some wild beast got him." I look at that and thought to myself, "Wow, isn't that instructive?" Remember way back when Daddy wanted to deceive Esau? You know what he did? He put on a goatskin, and he pretended he was somebody that he was not. So when he gets deceived, his own boys take a goatskin and deceive him, just like he deceived his brother. I wonder where they learned that. The scary part is, they were not even born when he did that. Your kids pick it up. You wonder where they get it? Look in the mirror.

Joseph is a type of Christ. He gets rejected by his brethren the first time, first coming of Christ. Then he is accepted by his brethren the second time, second coming of Christ. How much time is

in between? Seven years. Tribulation period. He is a great study. Because he is a great type of Christ, he never held a grudge. Not even when he came to power, he was made number two in the kingdom. Not when he was on top. Now his brethren did not know who he was because many years had passed, but now they had to come to him for their own food. Boy, there is a great principle. See how it works? That is how it works. They will curse you, but at the end, they will slander you. They will lie about you, but you will always come out better than they will when it is all said and done. He could have had them killed. He could have had them tortured. He could have sold them into slavery. He could have put them on the rack and burned their eyeballs out. But no, he showed them mercy, just like God showed mercy to me and you, just like we need to show mercy to other people.

Out of that story comes one of the greatest verses in all the Bible to show people mercy and how it comes back to your own soul as a blessing and your own flesh. Joseph knew and understood the great principle of Genesis 45:5, where he says that God had sent him on to the slavery of Egypt to pave the way for God's people. What incredible insight. What perspective. What ability to see past your circumstances and see what God is really doing. He realized that him going to slavery, he says it, his going to slavery and him paying the price of slavery was for the salvation of his people. You see, that is exactly what we need to be when we give up our own lives and give up what we want so others may get the salvation, just like he did.

Then he says in Genesis 50:20, probably one of the greatest statements in all the Bible, when he looks at his brethren and he finally confronts them and they are all torn up and upset. He pats them on the back, puts his arms around him and he says:

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Wow, what perspective. There is the ability to look past what somebody is doing to you when you do not deserve it, but you just keep being what God wants you to be, doing what God wants you to be, showing grace, showing mercy, and you will see who comes out on the end. Understanding that they meant it for your evil, but God always means it for your good. His whole life, he blessed people by showing them mercy, and it was good to his own flesh. God blessed him for it, and he became number two in the kingdom. That is probably one of the greatest examples in the Bible of being Christ-like.

Now the second part of that verse, Proverbs 11:17, "but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." Listen, when we do not do right unto people, at some point it is always going to come back and bite you. I think the saying is, "What goes around comes around." I think the saying is, "Every dog has his day." I think the saying is, "Do not worry, I do not get mad, I get even." When your goal in life is to hurt somebody instead of being a blessing to them, it will eventually come back on you, your family, your kids, or your flesh. Last week we saw the story of a talebearer, a wicked person who tries to hurt and destroy people with their mouth and what they say. In every case I have ever seen, God blesses the one who gets the abuse and curses the one who tries to hurt the others, and it never fails. You just have to pay attention and look around you and see

what happens. God blessed Joseph, his brothers went through a famine, and there are many people, God's people, who are going through a real famine spiritually today because of what they did to God's people who were trying to do what is right all across this world.

Some of God's people are just cruel to other Christians. Growing up in churches, I have seen deacons, I have seen deacons in small churches who have had the power for 20, 30 years be some of the most mean-spirited people you ever saw in your life. I am not kidding you. I have seen people, deacons that have some kind of power that they go around when there were young kids that they would see, they would go up there and that kid might be a little or something like that, and that guy would go up to that kid and try to say hi to him, pretend he would take that kid right there and pinch his shoulder right there, the tears coming that kid's eye, and then pretend he was just kidding. Mean-spirited man, mean-spirited. I have seen him. I have seen some churches where the women ran the church and the pastors and the men were a bunch of wimps, and there it becomes some of the cruelest people you will ever meet. They never grow. They cannot get anybody there. One experience is all that you need to know that this is not where I need to be. I will tell you what, it is all the cause of the cruel, cause of trouble for their own flesh.

In the Bible, the greatest example of this will be also, or in the book of Exodus, will be Pharaoh, chapter 1 through chapter 12. How cruel and wicked he was to God's people. I told you Thursday night, there are 18 types of the Antichrist in the Bible. He is one of them. His dealings with God's people was a great example of this, Proverbs 11:17. "He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." He was intimidated by the children of Israel. He was afraid they would rise up and take his power. Now that is a great principle, because the more you learn the Bible, and you better get this down, the more you learn the Bible and the closer you get to God, the more intimidating you are going to be to some people. That was Pharaoh. He puts them under slavery and hard bondage, making bricks to build his empire. He puts them under this terrible burden. In chapter 5, he gets them to make bricks, and they have to have straw to make the bricks. He has been having the straw delivered because they had a certain number of bricks they need to make, a tally, a toll every day. He just sits there being cruel, and he says, "You know what I am going to do?" He says, "I am not going to deliver it to them. They are going to have to not only make the bricks, they are going to have to get down and get the straw themselves. Not only are they going to have to take half their crew to get this, they still have to make the same amount of bricks or they are going to be in trouble." Boy, I have seen that. Oh, yes, I have. That is by design, putting people in a situation that you know they cannot meet and they fail, and then you persecute them for their failure when you set them up for the failure in the first place.

I have seen preachers do that to their people. I have seen a lot. I have seen other Christians do it to younger Christians. Years ago, I was on a pastoral staff, really, and nobody back then, but I believed the King James Bible had a Sunday school class, I believed it. But nobody else in the church pastor did not believe it. I had great success. Many of you older folks were back with me back then, and you know, we had great success, but we took a stand on the Bible and we were good. One day in a staff meeting, the head pastor just went off. Somebody was going around the church, putting these little round circles that said, "The King James Bible, the Bible God loves and the devil hates," and putting them all over the church. He thought it was me. Or one of my

people. He ripped me a new one right in front of everybody and told me that I better find out who this was and I better get it stopped. He said, "I will let you do this and do that, but that is going way too far." Well, I will tell you what, I said, I went to my people and I said, "Hey, who is doing this? I mean, I am getting clobbered on this." Nobody, nobody, nobody said, "Well, he is not doing it. He is not doing it." They kept showing up. Oh, I kept getting reamed. I mean, he just let me have it. And I kept showing up, kept showing up. Everybody did be in places.

I saw one afternoon, I get ready to go home. I had a Jeep back then, and it was parked out in front of the church. I want to get out, and right on the steering wheel was one of those things. Now I am thinking, "Come on." I am looking all around, and I am here, and I am just beside myself. I am so frustrated. I am so mad. I said, "I kept the kid is doing it. I am going to kill him." I said, "I do not, I am going to get this is," and I am just really angry. About that time, remember this, Jim, Jim Bruce came around the corner, was in the church. Jim Bruce has been with me for about 40 years, Jim, something like that. Probably. Now, Jim is the kind of guy you have to be careful what you tell him to do. Because he will do exactly what you say. I used to take Jimmy with me back in the high school camp. Remember Jimmy? Remember when Steve Bracken was only 12 years old? Remember that days? One night, Jimmy was my, Jimmy was my go-to guy. I always, I could trust to get Jimmy to do anything. One night I said, I said to Jimmy, I said, I was about 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock. I said, "Jimmy," I said, "I am going to bed." I said, you know, I was just giving him something to be nice to him. I said, "You keep an eye on the camp tonight." I get up the next morning, he never went to bed. He walked around that camp all night long. I wish everybody in this church, Jimmy, took what I say as good as you did.

I saw Jimmy. I am frustrated. I said to Jimmy, I said, "Jimmy," I said, I did not want to give too much away. But I said, "Jimmy," I said, "Have you seen anybody around my Jeep?" Because I had only been there about an hour. So it was not there when I got there. I said, "Have you seen anybody about on my Jeep at all?" I said, "You have been here for a while?" I said, "Yeah, I have been here for a while." I said, "You seen anybody?" He said, "No." He said, "The only one I saw was the pastor went out to your Jeep." That pastor was putting them around the church and blaming me for it. Now, I know what the verse says. I did not get mad, but I did get even. He was a big guy down at the BBF fellowship. He was really up high. He was always going down there for meetings. They all had their big deal, all the big guys. They all had their big cars, Lincolns, Cadillacs, you know how that was. I found me a bumper sticker about that big. Had a skull on it with a snake coming down through the top of the skull, out the eyeball, and back in the mouth, and out the other eye. It is a beautiful thing. I got a tattoo of it right here on my upper arm. And over here on the bumper sticker, it says, "Kill them all, let God sort them out." One night, I heard the heavens open. God spoke to me in the clearest tone I have ever heard and says, "Go join yourself to that man's chariot, especially the bumper." I took that thing, put crazy glue on that thing on one side that you would never come off. It was already sticky. I put that thing right on his bumper, and I smoothed that thing over. I heard the story later. He went down to Springfield, and they all were down there in their big meeting. They are all walking out praising God, coming to their cars, and they are all walking over to his car. He looked down at his prestigious, beautiful, pearl-colored Lincoln with a bumper sticker on it that said, "Kill them all, let God sort them out." I do not know what ever happened to that car. It probably went to a junk pile

someplace, and probably it is down there along Truce someplace or Truman Road on one of those big stacks of old cars. But I know how you will be able to find it. It will be the only one with that bumper sticker still on its bumper, because it was not coming off. He was doing that to me.

I see it a lot. Pharaoh and everything he does to them, for 430 years of it, tens of thousands died. Tens of thousands met their death under his brutality and cruelty. But as always, God takes his cruelty and makes them a great nation. At some point, he delivers them, and Pharaoh gets killed. In other words, God blesses Israel, and he curses Pharaoh. "Let my people go." When he will not, the plagues of the Lord on his land, the killing of his firstborn, and the verse says, "He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." Boy, I will tell you what, there was not a truer statement ever made.

V. The Sure Reward

Now look at Proverbs 11:18. It says:

Proverbs 11:18

The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

We have commented at great length on the deceitful work of the wicked, and we will not comment it any further. You all have had it many, many times. We have been through it over and over again. But I want to focus on the second part here in closing. Let us pack a part of that verse as the great one. "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." Now spiritually speaking here, the context here is a man who shows the Word of God, spiritual things. So is Proverbs 11:16, mercy and grace. Showing the good things that build people up and never tear them down.

In these verses, there are three things that a child of God who follows the Bible and its principles can be absolutely sure of. We live in a world where there is nothing sure. We live in a world where if there is any reason it would drive you to the Bible after this morning, it would simply be that in a world of nothing sure, you can have three sure things that you can absolutely bet everything you have on and it will come to pass.

3. A sure word of prophecy. The first thing is found in 2 Peter 1:17-19. That is a sure word of prophecy. God gave you a book you can be sure of. When you come down to that it says: 2 Peter 1:17-19

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: He said we were on a mountain and we heard the very voice of God. This is Matthew

chapter 17, Mount Transfiguration. We heard the very voice of God, and he says now today we have a more sure word of prophecy. You want to ask yourself the question, "More sure than what?" The answer will be, "More sure than the very voice of God." God is not going to come down and speak to you audibly anymore. He has given you a sure word.

4. Now I believe what I believe about the Bible. I could go through manuscript evidence. I could spend the next 20 hours boring you to death with it. I believe what I believe about the Bible because there are two verses in the Bible. I do not think I have ever given them to you. I will give them to you now. The first one is in Nehemiah 9:5. The second one is in Psalm 138:1-2.

5. Now Nehemiah 9:5 says this. These are the two verses. This is why I believe what I believe. Nehemiah 9:5

Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Alright, in Christianity we have the blessings of God right here. We have the praise of God right here. We are going to have a praise service. We are going to bless the Lord, and over and above both of them is His name. His name is put above all blessing and praise. You got that? Now Psalm 138. We pray in the name of Jesus. We preach in the name of Jesus. We live in the name of Jesus. We do all those things.

6. Now look at Psalm 138:1-2. Psalms 138:1-2

I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. You have blessings here, praise here, Jesus here, and then he puts that book over his own Son's name. Oh, that is why I take it the way I take it.

7. You can know for sure you are saved. Once you have a sure book, an absolute standard, then you can know two things for sure. The first thing you can know for sure is you are saved. 1 John 5:11-13 says, "These things that are written unto you to believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life." Titus 1:2 says, "Hope eternal life which God who promised cannot lie before the foundation of the world."

8. You can know for sure what exactly God wants you to do. The second thing you can know for sure is you can know for sure what exactly God wants you to do. No question of God. Those are the two biggest dilemmas that every Christian has. The lower end Christians, they are always worried they are really saved or not. The upper end Christians, they are always worried you might do the right thing for God.

2 Peter 1:10 says: 2 Peter 1:10

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. You can know absolutely what God wants you to do with your life, but it has to come from a sure book. The diligence of so many, the dilemma of so many Christians, and yet the last verse is so easy. Note the last part of that verse, "if you do these things you shall never fall." The last part of the thing, we were talking about last week, God will deliver you and keep you from the wicked. The diligence that he is talking about is he is talking about staying in the sure book, and you will get the sure ministry, and

God will always make sure you are doing exactly what he wants you to do. You do not have to wonder one second, "Am I doing the right thing or what God has saved me for?" if you follow this sure book because it will give you a sure calling.

The third thing that you can be sure of right there in Proverbs 11:18, "to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." That verse is one of the greatest promises in the Bible for every child of God at any age and dispensation. There is absolutely no reason on earth for a Christian not to come out at the good judgment of Christ in good shape. He has everything he needs to make it. He has a sure word, he has all the principles, all the examples, all the types, all the stories, all the illustrations, all the promises, all the warnings, all the admonitions, all the rebukes. He has every tool at God's disposal is given to us to succeed. To succeed wants a sure book to a sure calling, and man, woman, you get that thing figured out and you get a sure calling, you are going to get a sure reward. One day after one time, what is the definition of success in the Bible? It is real simple. Success in the Bible is simply a man or woman who finds out what God wants them to do and then spends the rest of their life doing it. That is success. Plain and simple. A sure reward.

I have told you many times, life is never complicated or confusing. It is us who make it complicated and confusing. It just boils down to some very basic things. In these things, life is in its simplicity of God and His plan for all of us. Simply getting to the point where we follow the principles out of a sure book. The sure book will always give us a sure calling, and a sure calling based on a sure book will always give us the sure reward. It is just that simple.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for the book of Proverbs, for its truth.