

I. Review of Proverbs 17 and Introduction to New Principles

Last week, we looked at Proverbs chapter 17. That is where we have been. We looked at six really good, practical principles that deal with life in general. Proverbs chapter 17 has been a really good chapter, giving real-life principles for real-life issues.

When we first started studying the book of Proverbs, we looked at the verse that talked about how the book of Proverbs was for the issues of life—the things that we come up with, the things that we have to face, the things that we deal with. We have been coming through it and just really laying the principles out. I have been trying to show you how not only the book goes together in a historical fashion, but how it prophetically all deals with the future and the nation of Israel within the Tribulation. Most importantly, it deals with where it is in your life and my life. History is important. Prophecy is important. But what really gets you through everyday life trials and the issues you have to face is just understanding how to apply the principles in the Word of God. There is no greater book than the book of Proverbs.

Remember last week, just to kind of jog your memory and then to continue on with today, we talked about the great verse there that talked about a bear robbed of her whelps. You were better off to deal with a grizzly bear who is really upset because you are messing with her kids than to hang out with a fool in his folly. That is a great contrasting verse.

Then we talked about the aspect of somebody rewarding evil for good—somebody who in the ministry does what is right and lays out the Word of God and does everything, but then gets rewarded evil; people turn on them. We talked about that. I showed you how big issues in our life always start with small ones. I do not care what megaton problem you have or are going through in your life right now, and they can get catastrophic in their volume, it all started with one little problem, one little thing that was not dealt with and taken care of. In time, it brings it to where it is now today.

We talked about justifying the wicked and condemning the just, exactly what we find today in the world and everything that is going on. We found out how the whole concept is just a concept of laying out and breaking down the principles that the world we live in spends all day long justifying everything that is wicked. Anything that is good anymore, it simply condemns.

We talked about the aspect of somebody trying to pay for learning the Word of God—somebody trying to give somebody money or go to a school someplace where you pay to learn the Word of God. Hey, when it comes to medical school, law school, engineering school, flight school, whatever, you have a right to go in there and pay tuition to learn that. But when it comes to the Bible, you cannot put a price tag on, nor should you, on teaching somebody the Word of God. What God gave to us freely, we have to give to others freely.

Then we talked about probably one of the greatest principles in all the Bible on friendship: understanding true friendship, understanding how friendship is defined in the Word of God, and how important it is in everything that we deal with. These are six of the best everyday life issues that you are ever going to find.

Today, we are going to move on into our next section of verses. We are going to look at Proverbs chapter 17. We will start in verse 18 and come down to around verse 22. We will look at it from there. I want to give you five or six more really good principles today to add to what you already have. Again, we just thank you for being here. I hope that you get a blessing out of it. Let us go to the Word of God today and get into the Bible.

AJ, would you stand up and ask God's blessing on the message this morning?

[Prayer]

Amen.

II. The Danger of Surety and Lack of Understanding

Now, Proverbs 17:18 starts out, it says this:

Proverbs 17:18

A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

We are going to look at these again one at a time, and we are going to glean out of it the principles that we can really use and see and understand. Here we have a man or a woman who, without understanding, really gets themselves into a mess. I will tell you what, if there is anything in the ministry when it comes to people in churches that you deal with all the time, it is something just along these lines.

The last couple of weeks, we have been talking about strife. We have been talking about contention, problems festering and getting into a person's life. When this principle gets violated, you will see contention come in between two people. Failure to grasp this concept and this principle is always going to lead to a problem and always going to lead to an issue.

You have to come to the reality at some point in your life, and I know we think because a person is saved, a person is a Christian, that that means that you can trust them in everything that happens. Of course, we know that that is simply not true. Unfortunately, and I wish it was true, but you know as well as I do in the world that we live in, not all Christians are always really good Christians. Yet Christians seem to forget that even though we are saved and we are Christian, we all still have to deal with our old sin nature. We all still have to deal with the petty things in our own world and our own life. You are going to have to deal with people who are truly saved, on their way to heaven, but they will not follow the principles when it does not benefit them. You are just going to have to understand that.

So, a Christian will put themselves into an agreement with somebody, some other Christian. Then when it all falls apart, it does not work out. When contention comes in or strife begins

because of the problem, then they have an issue. If you deal with people as a pastor, you deal with this all the time.

Proverbs 22:26 is a little verse that makes it even a little bit clearer. It says:

Proverbs 22:26

Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

"Strike hands" simply means shake hands, or you seal the deal and say, "Okay, I am going to do this for you or do this with you." In other words, what they are saying here is that a person who does not have any wisdom and understanding will get themselves into a situation where they will be responsible for somebody else's debt.

Sometimes, you feel sorry for somebody who is trying to get a car and you want to try to help that person. So you think that, "Well, the Christian thing to do is they do not have any good credit. They are not going to be able to get a car. They really want to try to do what is right. You know what? I will go ahead and co-sign on the loan so they can get the car." It does not work out sometimes. Sometimes it does. Most of the time, it just does not. You have got to always think of that.

The most frequent thing I have to deal with over the years is two people getting an apartment together, and they will split the rent and then they will split the utilities. Then what happens is that somebody is late on the utilities, or what happens is you forgot to put the food in. You get your food, you get your food, and then they start eating your food and they do not eat their food, and suddenly you do not have any food. You know where it goes from there. With me, if you moved in with me, I would not care if you did not pay the gas. I would not care if you did not pay the phone. I would not care if you did not pay the water bill. You touch my food, I will kill you.

Years ago, and some of you remember this, years ago when we were sending teams over to Europe and around the world, teaching discipleship, the same lessons you did, we put them through a very strict, stringent course. We wanted to simulate to them being in the harshest situation that you could be in. We called it "Hell Weekend." What we did was, I had back then a number of guys like I do here that were in the military and were really some hardcore guys. We put together a weekend that was unbelievable. We kept them up all night. We marched them 15 miles. You may remember at some point years ago, going down one of the streets out here in a long line of 200 people marching in single file. We would march them in, keep them up all night long. We would put them under. I tried to simulate all the pressures that you would be under in a culture that you are going to have to work in. They all had teams. Many times, one time we did it, in the dead of winter it was freezing out. They had to make their own shelters, build their own fire. They had to do their own food. It was incredible.

I would always be thinking of some of the most god-awful things to put them into to really make it. The greatest thing I ever did was I told them, I said, "Here is what we are going to do. The first meal, you can bring whatever you want. Bring whatever you want to eat, and we will eat it alongside the road." I said, "After that, you better make it what you want." Well, you know how

it is. Guys like you and me and Zach, you stopped off at the Zardar's and got four slabs of ribs. The girls brought peanut butter and jelly. One girl brought four cans of sardines. That was going to be her meal. She wanted to prepare herself.

So I marched them 10 miles, and then I got into a field someplace and I said, "Everybody circle up." They all circled up and I said, "Okay, we are going to eat." I said, "I want two lines right down here. Line over here, line over here." We are talking about a hundred people, maybe more than that. I said, "All right, get out your food and hold it up. I want to see who is really prepared tonight for this." Boy, some of those guys, they were holding up ribs. Some were holding up those chickens you get from the Hy-Vee where they bake them in the thing, you know, the rotisserie style chicken. People had sandwiches. They had everything that they had. As always, you had the people who were really into it, and they brought freeze-dried stuff, you know. I mean, they brought peanut butter, crackers, this and that. Everybody is standing there, and I said, "All right, get your food out." They got all their food out. I said, "Okay, trade your food with a person across from you."

Nothing demoralizes the spirit of a person more than taking their food when they have thought about it all week long. It is just what they are going to do. They have thought in their minds, "At least I am going to get one good meal." You know life is that way. Life is the fact that you think you are going to get one really good thing out of it, and then somebody takes it from you and gives you a peanut butter sandwich. I am telling you, I learned a great lesson: do not mess with a man's food.

We put ourselves into situations. We think it is going to be a good situation, and it does not turn out that way. Be sure of your friendship. I have seen them get apartments together. I have seen them buy a car and, as I said, co-sign. I have seen people borrow money off of people. You know, when you are in a need for money, hey, I mean, who does not want to help people?

Now, let me just say this. There is an exception to what I am preaching today, and that would be what we talked about last week: when you have a friend that is like the friend that sticks closer than a brother, a friend that is born for adversity. Your stuff is their stuff. You do not have your money and then their money. You have, "We are in this together." But that is very few people. In most cases, it does not work that way, does it? You want to help somebody? I want some of you to do it. You want to help, I have done it. You want to help somebody? So you do this for them, you do that for them. The Bible says, "Be sure of your friendship," because there is a really good chance that you are going to be left responsible for the debt.

Three incredible things within the mind of a Christian that does not have God's mind and operate the way they should: a man void of understanding. I have seen this all the time. Most Christians think because they are going into a deal with another Christian that that person is just going to do what is right.

I remember years ago when I was at another church, somebody came in with four big boxes of Christian phone books. They had put together a phone book that only had Christian businesses in it. Their whole concept was, "We only do business with other Christians." They brought in probably five, six hundred of them, laid them on the dock there, and they said, "We would like to

give these to your churches." I said, "What are they?" They said, "They are Christian phone books. They only have Christian businesses in them because we want to really support our Christian community." I said, "I do not want them." He did not understand. He said, "No, you know, these are phone books that have Christians in it that Christians ought to do business with other Christians." I said, "I understand what they are. I do not want them." He said, "I do not understand why." I said, "Well, first of all, how are you ever going to evangelize the world if you only do business with other Christians?" That was the spiritual side. Now, here comes the real why I did not want them. I said, "And the second reason is the biggest hosings I ever got in my life were from other Christians." You think because a guy has a Christian business that you are going to get treated fairly? I guarantee you it is not going to happen. It should, but it is not many times.

Then you have this one. You have a Christian who thinks that if they do not honor the agreement, that you ought to understand because you are both Christians, and you just get the mindset, "Well, you know what? What are you upset about? We are Christians. I had every intention to paying it back. I just cannot. So God will take care of it." That phrase gets used and worn out more than anything else on all the planet. You know how people make every stupid decision on the planet and then they justify it by the fact, "Well, God will come through and God promised He will take care of it." God is not going to bless your stupidity. He gave you a Bible full of principles that tells you exactly how to operate.

Then I get this one: lack of memory. "Well, I do not remember if we said that. No, no, no, no. That is not what you said. No, no, no. That is not how it went down." I have even seen this. I had a guy one time who was pretty well off, and he helped a couple who really needed some money, and they were going through a tough time, and they had some money coming in, and they said, "Look, we will pay you back as soon as we get our money. But we are really hurting right now." Hey, he was a nice guy, and he said, "No problem," and he gave them the money. They never paid him. When I was talking to him about something about this particular couple, and he says, "Yeah," he says, and he told me the story, and he said, "You know what, Bob, you know what the reasoning was why they did not pay me back when they got their money after I gave them the money?" Their reasoning was—these are Christians now—their reasoning was, "Oh, he has got a lot of money. We do not. So it is okay if we hose him because he will not even feel it." Well, and that may be true. I mean, if I got a million dollars and needed ten thousand dollars, and you say, "I will pay it back to you Tuesday," and I say, "Okay, that is the agreement. I will give it to you." And then you get your money back and you simply say, "Well, he has got a lot of money." It is not about how much money I have or do not have. It is about the honesty of the principle involved. But that is missing today. This is why the verse is so important. This is why people have issues and have problems.

Now, the answer to this is simply, and I do not know why this is so hard: document everything that you do. Document everything you do. Make sure the agreement is laid out so down the line, if something goes south or sideways, it is right there. I mean, have some form of clarity that later somebody cannot come back and say, "Well, that is not what we said. Oh, I did not understand it that way. Oh, I think you are really being unreasonable about it."

The Bible, the Bible in its simplest form, you know what it is? It is a contract between you and God. It is God writing a book that tells you exactly what He is going to do for you and what He expects from you. I find God's people at a time have a problem with that contract. I mean, what part of that do you not understand when the Bible says this and you want to do something else? When I got saved, I agreed to that contract. You will find a person that will always honor whatever agreement they have will be somebody who honors the agreement that they made with God. Follow the same. It is the same thing. Follow the same principles. It is just the way that it works.

The Bible in its simplest form is just simply that. The guy that owns all of this building here, his name is Larry. Larry is a great guy. He is a great friend of this church. He has got all kinds of people that are renting all kinds of places from here in his own building. We walk there. You have got a massage therapist down here. You have got an eBay place here. There is a fly fishing store down here. There is everybody. There is a catering service upstairs. We are downstairs. Larry rents places out. He never signs a contract. He is one of those old school guys that his word is his bond. He just simply does what he says he is going to do. It is incredible. You do not find that today. I always worry about him because I do not really worry about Larry, but I worry about the people that he deals with. Because it is out there today that God's people just think that the rules do not apply to them. When you are a Christian and I am a Christian, hey, we do not have to run it down in writing because, "Oh, that would violate something that we are Christians. That word ought to be our bond."

You know, there was a day years ago, probably in the 1800s, that when you went into a bank and a guy says, "I would like to get, you know, \$5,000. I want to go and build my addition onto my house or my barn or whatever." And the guy says, "What kind of collateral do you have?" And he would say, "Well, I am a member of the Methodist church." He got the money. Or he would say, "I am a member of the Baptist church." Well, he got the money. Try that today. See, it meant something back there because your faith in your church was associated with the bond of your word. But it is all gone today. Not there anymore.

III. Transgression, Strife, and Self-Exaltation

Look at Proverbs 17:19, the next verse. Here is a good one.

Proverbs 17:19

He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

Now, the verse is a goldmine, especially if you are going to ever work with people. There are two great things here I want you to see quickly.

1. You cannot separate transgression from strife. The two go together. They will always go together, and a wrong will always cause strife, a wrong or a transgression. In life, if a man loves something, in this case transgression, it will always mean that he also loves the things that go along with what he loves. In this case, it will be strife. You cannot separate the two.

This is a great principle in understanding people and their issues, why sometimes they just cannot break off and let something go and break free.

One of my favorite verses that follows in 1 Corinthians 8:3 says:

1 Corinthians 8:3

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

That is a great verse. If you really love God, if you really love God—I am not talking about the verbal commitment that people have—if you really love God in your life, it shows. It shows because true love will always identify itself with the object in question, in this case, God. In the case of our verse, it will be transgression. Whatever you truly love in your life, whatever goes along with that, whether it is good or bad, you also love. True love will always identify itself with the object in question, but will also identify itself with all things that go with God.

You cannot just say, "I love God. I love God." For instance, if a man really loves God, then he is really going to love His Word. You cannot say, "I love God," but not love His Word. These guys today, they drive me crazy. You will stand on a pulpit and you attack them and say, "Oh yes, I love God," but "I do not believe that you have a real Bible that you can trust that you can have and read." How about if we just reverse that? "I love the Bible, but I do not believe there is a God." You are saying the same thing when you say, "Well, I believe in God and I love God, but I do not believe I can have a Bible." They are one and the same. You cannot have one without the other.

If a man loves the Bible, he is going to love truth. You cannot say, "I love the Bible," but "I am going to do whatever I want to do here, and it really is not relevant because it does not fit what I want to do." If you love the Bible, then you are going to love truth. If a man in the world loves a rich lifestyle, then he is going to also love all that comes with that. He is going to love his possessions. He is going to love his big house. He is going to love his fast cars, his fast women, as he gets older, his slow cars and the slower women. He is going to love all the things that come along with that. He is going to love his status. He is going to love his position.

If a man really loves somebody, then he is going to love everything about them, all their quirks. He is not going to sit there and pick apart, "Well, I like this about you, but that." If you really truly love somebody, then you love everything about them. You will take the quirks along with the unquirks. You cannot separate yourself from the things that go along with the things that you claim to love. This is the basis for unconditional love. When God first looked at me, He loved me. He loved me through Christ. But when He first saw me, I was the most unlovable thing on the planet. But when He saw me in Christ, what Christ was going to do for me on the cross, He loved me unconditionally and He accepted me the day I got saved, but still all the imperfections that I had. He took everything I had and loved me. The Bible says, "If any man love God, the same is known of him." Then it also reverses it: if any man does not love God, the same is known to him, because true love, no matter what it may be, true love will always identify itself with the object. The verse says, "He that loveth transgression, loveth strife." You cannot love the things of the world and not love everything that goes along with it. You cannot love the things of

God without loving everything that goes with it. Now, Christianity today tries to do that, but that is not true biblical love. He that loves transgression will also love strife. This is one of the greatest absolute laws of human nature.

2. Look at the last part of Proverbs 17:19: "He that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction." This is a really good principle that shows how God ties really the stories in the Bible and connects them to the principles in the Bible. I have told you many, many times, once you get past the book of Acts, you do not have a lot of stories in the Bible. Now all you have is hardline principles. In the book of Proverbs, you do not have a lot of stories. In the book of Psalms, you do not have a lot of stories. You have hardline principles.

I have told you many, many times that all the stories in the Bible—Abraham and Lot, Cain and Abel, Elijah, wherever you want to go—all of those stories will illustrate New Testament biblical truth. The key to understanding how to deal with issues in people's lives is to see the story lining up with the New Testament principles, put the two together, and then have the ability to help somebody with wherever they are at. That is the key. That is the key. This verse here is exactly the same way.

The Old Testament, when it talks about the gate here, that will be the Old Testament entry to the city. It was the place where all the elders met. It was a place where all the action took place. It was a place where they stood and had their meetings and talked about civic events and what they were going to do. It is where they watched who came into the city and who left the city. It was a very important position.

The Bible example of this being used by somebody that gets destroyed would be what I call the Absalom syndrome in 2 Samuel 14 and 15. Absalom was David's son. He wanted to overthrow his father's kingdom. He wanted to bring down the kingdom of David. He wanted the kingdom for himself. So he goes to the gate where everybody is coming into the city. He goes to the gate and he positions himself there as people come in and people would come up and talk to the elders about their issues and about their problems. It was the central place. That is why the word "gate" here is used in Proverbs. He would stand down there and would see somebody come up that would maybe be upset about something that was not going their way. He wanted to go and he would listen and put an ear to it. They would go on and they say, "I am not happy with this. I am not happy with that. I am not happy the way this is being done." He would sit there with that sympathetic ear and he just listened. Then he would look down at them and he would say, "Oh, you know what? If I were made king of Israel, I would right all your wrongs. If I was in the position, I hear it. I feel your pain. If I was the king, I would fix all of those things."

The Bible says that Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. He did it by exalting himself at the gate. He did it by taking the position that he had and exalting it to, in time, destroy his own father's kingdom. It is simply people who will love the wrong things. They will always do the wrong things, and they will exalt themselves at the expense of somebody else. That is what he did. They will use transgression and strife to exalt themselves. If you ever want to see it, just look at the political campaign that is going on right now for president. It is not about what you are struggling with. It is not about maybe you being out of work or the economy or war or this.

You know what it is about? It is about somebody finding dirt on somebody else and then using it to exalt themselves, that you think they are better than this person, and everybody does it. You and I, as the common ordinary people, we just get lost in the shuffle. That is exactly what this verse is talking about. We use transgression and strife to exalt ourselves. "Look at this person. Look what they did. Look how bad they are. I am not like that. And if you elect me as president..." That is how it goes. It has always been that way.

The gate will be or represent somebody's power platform, somebody's position. A recognized position as a leader or an elder, in this case, from which Absalom elevates himself to try to destroy his own father's kingdom. The verse says there, "He that exalted his gate seeketh destruction," and in 2 Samuel 18:10, he gets killed. He gets destroyed. Absalom does. It is an incredible concept.

IV. The Froward Heart and Perverse Tongue

Look at Proverbs 17:20.

Proverbs 17:20

He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Now, in the context of what we are looking at, that would fit right in 2 Samuel 14 and 15 with Absalom. This is exactly what happened. But it fits in anything that we are into. We know from when we were back in probably Proverbs 17:16 that the "froward heart," we defined it back there as somebody not willing to yield or comply with God's principles or His Word. The "good" here that he is seeking will be the blessings of God in his life, which he is trying to get without having a real relationship with God. In the Bible, wherever you find good or goodness, it will always be a representation of something from God. In the New Testament, it will be Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's goodness. When we say "my goodness," we are talking about "my goodness is Jesus Christ." When we are talking about "goodness gracious," we are basically saying, "Jesus Christ is full of grace and He is gracious." That is where these things come from.

Seek as you will, without a working biblical relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be no good found in your search through life from the Bible standpoint anyhow. Here again, this is where Christians completely go off track. You want to remember, you do not define good. Your definition of good has to be God's standard of good. You do not define good in your life by your standard. Many of us try to do that. You define what is good in your life by understanding God's standards.

There has been many a young gal that found a guy and thought he was the greatest thing in the world, and then three years into the marriage found out he was not. You know why? She used the wrong standard to measure his good. There have been many a guy who married a gal that six months or a year or two years into the relationship, they realized that they had made a bad choice. You know why? Because they used their own standard to say that person is good versus God's standard. Good in our eyes will not always be necessarily good in God's eyes. A lot of

things we think are good are in fact terrible things in God's sight. God's standard will always be the difference that you want to use.

Look at the last part of the verse. Now that is a good concept. The reason he will never get anything good in life, the person in Proverbs 17:20, the reason he will never get anything good in life will be because of his own big mouth. He will never shut up. They have no control over what they say. Their heart is against God and His Word. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). It just continually makes a mess out of things.

Again, you have to be able to look at life around you and exercise the biblical principles that you are learning to see them work. I hope you do not think that I just lay this stuff out to you on Sunday morning so you can just take it and put it in your Bible, to put it into your notebook. You ought to be using them, looking around you and everything that you see going on in the world today. You want to exercise the principles that you are getting by looking at real-life scenarios that illustrate what I am giving you.

That verse says, "He that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief." I told you that a guy, when he does not have good in his life and God in his life, the thing that is going to keep him from ever getting anywhere is his own mouth. It just continually makes a mess out of things. I will tell you right now, I mean, you see all kinds of examples, but in the midst of where we are at, and I go back to the political world, man, just look at Donald Trump. I do not know if he will make a good president or not. I do not really care. But I want to tell you something. There is somebody that every time he opens his mouth, he digs his hole a little deeper. Every time he says something, he cannot speak without going into a defense mode against everything and everybody about him. That will always get you in trouble. The world is this and the world is that, and there are many issues out there, and he is fighting over some judge saying he is racist because he is Mexican and this and that. He is majoring on the minor, and he just cannot keep his mouth shut. He is just drawn into everything he does. There are people like that all the time, man, all the time. It just continually makes a mess out of things.

Remember Proverbs 16:23 when we came through that a couple of months ago, that great verse:

Proverbs 16:23

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

What you do when you get into the Bible, you learn when to speak and when not to speak. You learn what is credible to talk about now and when you should not talk about it. You know when you should be on the offensive or on the defensive. You learn when you ought to just never say nothing. You learn to pick and choose your battles of what you are going to get into verbally. The Bible says, the Bible talks about, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." Then it turns right around to the next verse and says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Hey, there is a time to answer a fool in his folly, and there is a time to shut your mouth and not answer a fool in his folly. The Word of God gives you the insight when to and when not to. You add learning to your lips. You teach your mouth what to speak.

When you get into a situation with somebody that is struggling through life or a marriage situation that you are dealing with, you have got to know what you are talking about. You cannot just give them your homespun theology of what you think is going to work. You have got to be able to look at the scenario, look at the circumstances, look at the situation, look at the people, and then exactly know, because you have taught your lips and your mouth what to say, to be able to give them what they need to get. That is the key. Not so with a fool that has no wisdom or understanding. The biggest issues will be what he says and not knowing when to keep his mouth shut. Where you and I, with understanding and wisdom, get to the point that we learn to speak and talk intelligently, a fool never does. He is stuck on himself. He is stuck on trying to whatever his agenda is. That is all he can focus on.

A child of God with wisdom and understanding, you back up and you see the whole picture before you say anything. I want to tell you something. The more you get into the Bible, the more you learn those principles, the quicker you can assess a situation. Where some of you right now may get into a situation with somebody and you have to drive home that night and think about it and get into your Bible a little bit and call this guy or call me or call somebody else and lay it out, and it may take you a day or a half a day to figure it out and come back and see it. When you really get the Bible down and you really understand the principle and that book becomes what it is in your life that it needs to be, whenever situation you come in, it is an insta-focus. You know exactly what you have and exactly what you are dealing with and where to go. That is having the wisdom and understanding of God and dealing in people's lives and people's problems. But the fool, he just keeps opening his mouth and keeps falling into mischief by what he says. His situation just continually gets worse and worse and worse.

V. The Sorrow of a Fool's Father

Look at Proverbs 17:21.

Proverbs 17:21

He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

Now, in the context here historically, we know that Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, and we know that the fool in Solomon's life would be his own son, Rehoboam. You will find him in 1 Kings 12 and other various places. Rehoboam is a great disappointment to his father. Rehoboam is one of the worst kings that Israel ever has. Rehoboam is a fool who sets the first step in progress to destroy the nation of Israel. That first step is simply he splits the kingdom. When he split the kingdom, Jeroboam, one of his generals, takes over the southern tribes, and it is a mess. The devil begins to destroy the nation of Israel once he splits them in two, because the key to our success as a Christian, our success as the church, or Israel's success as a nation of the Old Testament, was one word: unity. When you let something get between you, when you let something get in between you, it will separate you, you are in trouble. It will come to the point that it is the beginning of where you are going to go away from God.

But inspirationally, even though it is Rehoboam in the story here, inspirationally it would be any father who raises up a child who is a fool in the Bible sense. Now, keep in mind, I am talking

about Bible definitions here. Some fathers have been proud of their son from a worldly standpoint or a fatherly standpoint. From a Bible standpoint, that son was the biggest fool you ever saw in your life. So it is not about your own definition of the thing.

Psalms 14:1

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

We take that to mean that a man or woman has to be an agnostic or an atheist. That is not necessarily true. Anybody who claims to be saved and then does the opposite of what the Bible says in the Bible is treated like an unsaved man, whether they are saved or whether they are not. You are not a Christian because you say you are. I mean, you may be a Christian, but you do not prove your Christianity by what you say. You prove your Christianity by what you do.

Over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, where it talks about divorce and remarriage and all of the things that go along with that, the Bible talks about a man who has an unsaved wife. Then it turns around and talks about a wife who has an unsaved husband. It talks about in that passage how that a wife or a husband that is a saved person should do everything that they can to try to get that person to save. You do not leave them. We talked about this a couple of sermons ago. You do not leave them. You do not abandon them because you say that, "Well, they are unsaved and I am saved now. So that is not right." We talked about that, how God honors the marriage for the saved person's part.

But the Bible also says this. It tells the believer that in certain scenarios where you have an unsaved spouse, if the unbelieving depart, let them depart. It simply says if the unbeliever in the marriage says, "I do not want any part of this anymore, and I am not going to do what is right, and I do not want to be here anymore," then the Bible says that you let them depart, and it also says that you are not under bondage anymore in that relationship because they decided to leave. It is called desertion in the Bible.

Hey, I have been in marital struggles where I know both people are saved, and I will use this verse as a great tool to get my point across. I have had them sit there, where the husband and wife, and the wife wants to do what is right and the guy does not. I have had them vice versa, where the wife does not want to do what is right and the guy does. But I have had them there where, in one particular case, I can remember he had a gal here who really wanted to do what is right, and the guy was really an idiot. He did not want to do what is right, and both as saved as I am, as far as I could tell in my own mind, I believe they were. She looks at me and she says, "Well," she says, "Honey, I really want to work it out." He said, "You know what? I do not want to work it out." He says, "I just do not want to be a part of this anymore." He says, "I want out of this." She looks at me and she says, "Well, Pastor Bob, what do I do now?" And I said, "Well, hon," I said, "I feel sorry for you and terrible that you are going to probably bust up. But here is what I can give you out of the Bible. The Bible says in this given situation, if the unbelieving depart," pointing to the guy, "let him depart. You are not under bondage anymore." That is the best advice I can give you. The guy said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa." He said, "I am a believer." I looked at him and I said, "Then if you are a believer, do what is right. Do not tell me you are a believer. Do not get upset that I just said if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. You raise your

hand and say, 'I am a believer.' You are not a believer because you say you are a believer. You are a believer because you are going to do what the Bible says. Now, if you are a believer, then do what is right. Understand this marriage and do what you need to do. And if you do not, you want to leave, then, honey, the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother and sister are not under bondage anymore." My point is, you are not a Christian, even though you may be, because you say you are. Christians do what the Word of God says. It is just that simple. The guy was saved as you are. I believe he was, but I made my point. Saved people follow what the Bible says.

We get the idea that, "You know, the fool has said in his heart that there is no God." So therefore, "You know, that is only for agnostics and atheism." Uh-uh. I have seen many of God's people who live their life the same way. Luke 6:46 says:

Luke 6:46

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Of course, that is what you find all the time: a fool.

Then the last part of the verse: "and the father of a fool hath no joy." Now, there are some great examples of this in the Bible. I think of Adam and his boy Cain. How disappointed and how the joy must have left when he found out that his one boy killed his younger boy. We talked about David and Absalom. I know David was torn up over Absalom. I do not care what Absalom tried to do to him. David loved him. David wept and was grieved when Absalom got killed. One time there was a great battle and Absalom had been killed, and the guy came back and told David about the battle. David did not care one thing about the plans of the battle, who won or who lost. You know what he said? He says, "What about Absalom? What about the boy?" He wanted to know about him. He loved him. Great disappointment. We talked Thursday night about Eli and his sons. What a great disappointment that must have been. We talked about also Samuel and his sons. What a great disappointment that must have been. I look at Lot and his kids. I mean, wow. I mean, even that Lot even cared, but his kids were an absolute mess.

Fathers, fathers like to be proud and take joy in what their kids do, and particularly here, he is talking about a son. You know, I have watched them. I have watched them encourage their kids to play football. All of those things are fine. They really are. But let me tell you something. If I had a choice between my boy or my daughter being an athletic star and getting a paid scholarship to some college someplace versus them standing up and laying out the Word of God in a devotion and laying that thing out and putting out the Word of God, I would take the Word of God every time. I certainly would.

Most of the time, moms and dads, they have got their things and their priorities in the wrong place. I mean, what good is it if your kid gets a scholarship to the best college in the world because they are a great baseball player or football player, and he loses his faith in God and does nothing for God the rest of his life? What is the point? What is the point? But you know what? Fathers are proud of that. They are proud of that. They do not understand that every time you take your child and you teach them that it is more important to do this than to be in God's house,

that that goes into them, and you are building some kind of process into them. It is going to come back and bite you later. It is just that simple.

Dads, you want a real joy? Watch those kids that you have got right now when they are in their teenage years and even some of the younger ones. Watch them going up to Lincoln. I will tell you what, you should be so proud of your kids yesterday, what they did. I mean, they just laid it out, and the kids up in Lincoln did an incredible job. I mean, it is one of the greatest things that you can have your children to be involved in. These adults here are taking them, molding them. They took the other two teams that are not even up there yet. They met Friday night, and they were working on their team, and when those kids went up there yesterday, they laid that thing out. They taught the Word of God. It is the greatest single thing they can in front of all those people. Those people up there working with Caleb and Sarah, they did their thing. They did a masterful job. I mean, I expect the adults to do it. I expect that of them. But for your kids, our kids at this age in their life, to do as good as they do with the Word of God and being able to teach people the Bible, it does not get any better than that. Why a parent would want to put the emphasis on something else, no matter what it may be. And I know it is all a balance. I get it.

You ought to see those kids out on the street. I can always find them because there are 50 of them. I am driving. There they are. They are over there at the park, and they are passing out hot dogs and passing out tracts. I have seen them at that old bus stop down there by the library. I have seen them down there where so many younger kids that maybe could not witness and were too young to do it. I have watched some of the older kids over there, and two or three of them standing over here praying for the person. You do not learn that on a soccer field. You do not learn that in a huddle. You do not learn that at a pep rally. You learn that by letting God take your child, build into them the things of the Word of God.

Dads, you want a real joy? Watch what they do right now. Watch how they are learning. Watch how they are growing. Then you want a joy that is beyond joy? Wait three or four years, five or six years, and they are standing by your side in the work and the ministry. They are doing everything that you do. You disciple together. You minister together. You teach together. You work together through a camaraderie in the Bible of putting everything in your life together. You want a real joy that is beyond joy? Wait till they get to that stage in their life where they are right by your side in ministry. You want a real joy that unsurpasses joy? Wait till you are 80, 90 years old and you cannot do the ministry anymore. Wait till you are 70 years old and you cannot get around like you used to. Wait till you are 80 years old when you cannot get around and you cannot do the ministry anymore. Then you watch those boys and those girls pick up the mantle where you left off and carry on the ministry that you started in their life. You want a joy beyond joy? There it is. There it is.

The hardest thing in the world for a father or a mother, and I have seen it with pastors, I have seen it with Christians, you just have to pretend that everything is okay when your kids are nowhere to be found in the middle of the Word of God and in God's work. You have no process to ever get them back. All you have is strife and contention. All you have is one problem after the other. There is no commonality of a bond based on the Word of God. It is just they are doing their thing and you are doing yours.

VI. The Merry Heart, Broken Spirit, and the Word of God

Look at Proverbs 17:22.

Proverbs 17:22

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

The first thing I want you to see here as we come down through these individual proverbs is that the Word of God is likened to a medicine. Back in Jeremiah 8:22 and again in Jeremiah 4, it talks about the balm of Gilead, and it is likened to the Word of God. Israel had some severe issues and needed to be healed spiritually. It says back there in Jeremiah that there is a balm in Gilead. Gilead was east of Jordan, and it was a very rich, fertile land that was great for raising cattle and great for everything. Just everything about it was really good. But there was a plant, a balm, a plant that grew there that was good for physical healing, and it made a salve out of it or a balm, and when somebody got whatever, they would put it on. It was called the balm of Gilead. The Bible likens that balm of Gilead to the Word of God for the nation of Israel. Israel needed to be healed. In the context here of Proverbs 17:22, it will be used to heal the broken spirit. I want to talk about that for a moment.

Of all the aspects of you and me as a human being—you have a body, you have a soul, you have a spirit—I want to tell you something. The hardest thing to fix when it gets busted is the spirit. Guys, there comes a time in a woman's life when you crush her spirit so bad it is never going to get back. There comes a time in a guy's life when you get to the point where your spirit gets so broken it is really tough to get back. The spirit of man or a woman is the hardest thing to fix. You know why? Because it is the most fragile thing that we have. You can go out and you can play football all day long and never break a bone if you are really in good shape, and you can go all day long. Your soul, if you are saved, is sealed unto the day of redemption. You are good there. But your spirit is the most fragile aspect to you. Your spirit is your emotions. Your emotions can turn you upside down in just 15 seconds. You can have the greatest day of your life and get one phone call, and your day goes south from that point on. That is your spirit. That is your spirit.

In a context, "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." In the context, it is talking about how to heal a broken spirit. Psalm 51:17 says:

Psalms 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

When we start to talk about a man's spirit and man's broken spirit, there are two aspects for a Christian. Not even talking about an unsaved man. Unsaved man has nothing to do with it. But for a child of God, for a Christian, his spirit can get broken two ways. I want to examine it for a moment.

- Broken by the World First of all, obviously, the world. A life of sin, a life of worldly living, will drain you completely and leave you empty. Sin will never leave a man or a woman any

better than it finds them. It will always take its toll. You always will pay the price. Now understand that the spirit of man will be his desire. It will be his passion. It will be his motivation. It will be his drive. It will be his fortitude. It will be his emotional makeup. It is what will make some guys be able to get to the top of Mount Everest when nobody else can, because the spirit of man will drive him, his goals, his passion. But that same spirit will take a man and completely destroy him. When he focuses on going to Mount Everest or he focuses on going down into the drug world and all the stuff that is against the things of God, he goes that way, and his spirit gets destroyed. When he gets out of fellowship with God, the Holy Spirit of God within him, the Bible says in Ephesians 4:30, becomes grieved. That puts tremendous burden on your spirit. There is no joy in your life now. You have to pretend everything. You have to pretend you are spiritual when you are not. You have to pretend you want to be at church when you really do not. You have to pretend that you are right with God around your friends and family when you really are not. When your spirit gets grieved, it is grieved because you are not doing right with your spirit. The Holy Spirit gets inside you, and He is grieved because of where you are at and where I am at. That will cause your human spirit to suffer. With all the weight of the things of the world that will tear it down, that man will become broken in his spirit. Your spirit and my spirit needs to be cleansed daily. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 7:1: 2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. When a person comes to that broken spirit, that spirit is broken by the world because they have lent their spirit to the world, and the world for a Christian will only do one thing: it will destroy and break your spirit. Then you know what happens? See it all the time. Now you have guilt. Now you have anxiety. That grieving of the Holy Spirit of God, it produces these things. If you are a child of God, God separated you from the world. When you try to go back to the world and take your spirit back there, you are going to have anxiety. You are going to have fear. You are going to have in time depression. You are going to have a time in your life where you start to get paranoid about everything around you. You are going to come to the place where you start to get in total denial. You are going to come to the place where after a period of time, it looks like there is no way out. It always goes to the same place. Whether you do or you are not, you get those suicidal thoughts that you think that you are going to end your life. A complete breakdown of the spirit of man. A complete breakdown. He goes from the spirit that can get him to the top of Mount Everest to the spirit that can take him down so far where he has to think the only way out is to take their own life. These things will enter into a man or a woman and break their spirit until they are completely destroyed. You add to that the things that expedite it: booze, drugs. Then you do not sleep, then you do not eat. All of those things start to lend to the same area and the same problems, and it all comes down that will destroy your spirit. The greatest example of this in the Bible, and we use it in people ministry all the time, is found in 1 Kings chapter 18 with Elijah when he is up against Ahab and Jezebel. It is your first case of bipolar in the Bible. It is your first case of manic depression in the Bible. He is a saved man in the sense of a righteous man, and he struggles with all the same things. You find all the things that you find today in dealing with people. He does not sleep, he does not eat, he starts to get away from God, he starts to complain, he starts to get nervous, he

starts to get paranoid around him, he goes into depression, and now he is sitting over here and he just wants to die. The greatest prophet that Israel ever had now sitting over here asking God to take his life because he is lost in his spirit and down as low as he can get. No sleep, no food, no fellowship. All the wrong things have been put into his life that has crushed his spirit. What do you expect? I had a lady one time, she said to me, she says, "I do not feel like myself." I said, "Who do you feel like?" She says, "I do not know. I just do not feel like myself." I said, "Well, how do you feel when you feel yourself?" She did not know that either. But when you start to get depressed, you lose all touch of reality. You will do some of the stupidest, dumbest things you ever saw in your life because your spirit is out of control. Proverbs 25:28 says: Proverbs 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. Your spirit is the most dangerous part of your body. It is the most fragile part of your body. If it is not bolstered and encased in the principles of the Bible, you are going to have some problems. Elijah did. The second great case in the Bible would be Jonah, who was running from God. You know the story with Elijah. An angel shows up, and he gets his meds. He gets what he needs. I have told you this before, the four steps of coming out of depression: He got ministered to. When I say that, that sounds like a generic term. You do not get ministered to your way. You get ministered to God's way. Your way is not going to work. I do not know how many times I have told somebody, "This is what you need to do. You do this, you do this, and you do this." Suddenly somewhere in the translation, they decided they did not want to do that and wanted to go back and do it in the real thing. That is what got you into the problems in the first place. Elijah got ministered to. He did not do it his way. He went God's way. He changed what he had to change. The next thing that he did, he got a fresh vision. He got his perspective back on what God was doing with him. People who get depressed have tunnel vision. All that they are, they are the most selfish people on the planet. Because all they see is themselves. They do not see what God is doing in their family. They do not see what God is doing over here. They do not see what God is fixing here. All they do is want to sit in a corner and whine about what God is doing and whine about where they are at. He had to get a fresh vision. Then the third thing, he had to get back in the fight. He had to get back into work. He had to go get something done and get involved. I will tell you what. You have problems today? You have issues today? You think you have big problems? You think your anxiety and all this and you just struggle with the stupidest stuff you struggle with? You are going to have to go through a great therapy for you. Go down to Children's Mercy Hospital. Walk up and down those halls and go into the rooms with the moms and the dads that are sitting there with their little kid dying of cancer, seven or eight years old, and see if your problem is as bad as theirs. Go into the burn ward with those little kids, third, fourth-degree burns on their bodies, going to have to go through God knows how many skin transplants. Go see if their problem is as bad as yours. The problem with people who get into depression and get all broken spirit is because their life has all become around them. You are the focus and the center of your world, and you see nothing around you. You do not see what God is doing. You do not see the consequences of what is going to happen. If you do not pull it out, you do not see anybody else's suffering. All you see is yours. And the fourth thing, start cataloging those principles 24/7. I mean, you get those things on those three by five cards,

that that is what you have got to do, and you live there. You stay with it. You follow those four things, brother, Elijah did, and he got out of it. Today, I think the number one issue that people are diagnosed with is they used to call it manic depression. Now it is called bipolarism. I do not know if you know it or not, but in America today, 70% of the adults are on some kind of antidepressants. Of course, it is called bipolar because you have mood swings, north and south, North Pole, South Pole. You are good in the morning, and then you are crying by 6 o'clock at night. Or you are crying at 6 o'clock at night, and you are good in the evening. Your mood swings back and forth. All that is nothing more than your spirit being out of control. I am telling you, in 40 years of ministry dealing with thousands of people and situations, I have never met a Christian who was diagnosed with bipolar or had those kind of depressional things, who ever really knew his Bible. They may know things about the Bible. They may go to church. I am not talking about that. I have often wondered what antidepressants Paul and Silas and Barnabas were on. I have often wondered what the Albigensians and the Waldensians were on when they went through their great persecution. I have often wondered what got Daniel through the lions' den. I have often wondered when you go back to the Old Testament, all the things that they went through, I have never saw a Walgreens or a pharmacy anywhere in the Old Testament. How come they could get through what they went through, and you and I have the littlest things in our life? The answer is your spirit. You are not taking care of your spirit. I am going to tell you right now, if you do not get your meds from God's Word, then you will get them from Walgreens. If that book is not going to fix what is wrong with you, then you will have to go to the world to get it fixed. But I am going to make a statement along with that that I want you to listen very carefully. Listen very carefully. Without getting into it, there are some of God's people that need to go to Walgreens because it comes a place in your life when you put yourself so far out of it that you just simply say, you know, I have used the illustration before, you take a little piece of thread. The Bible says a three-fold cord is not easily broken. You take a little piece of thread, you know, like your mama sews with, and you take that thread and you wrap it around your finger one time and you just snap it. Maybe two times, you snap it. You take that same piece of thread and wrap it around your finger a hundred times. You will die trying to break it. Every time in your life when you do something against the spirit, man's spirit, and you put a piece of the world into it, and you wrap the world around it, and you do not do what the Word of God says, and you do not get to the point in your life where you are going to trust God, really trust God, really get in that book, after a period of time when you add the booze to it, you add the drugs to it, you add all the other stuff to it, and now your life is all about you. One day you are going to say to yourself, "I am not going to take these drugs anymore," and your flesh is going to say, "Oh, yes, you are." I am telling you, you play with your spirit, you mess with your spirit, that spirit of man is the most fragile thing that you have. When you break it and you crush it and it gets busted, you do not just put a band-aid on it and fix it. I have seen moms and dads turn their kids into absolute drug addictions. I have seen those kids when they go to the doctor because they do not know what they are doing, and their parents have nothing to do with the Bible. I have seen them put those kids on antidepressants when they are five, six, seven years old, and they grow up 20, 30, all life on those drugs. Now you think you are just going to walk away from them. There is a way to get out of it and

get there, but it is not by you running your own spirit the way you want to run it. I have seen people play it out so long without getting any kind of help. I have seen them when they get help, they just like tiptoe through it. They take what they want and do what they want to do. Your spirit, your emotions, are the strongest force in your life. If you do not learn to control your spirit, your spirit will control you. The spirit of man is absolutely nothing to mess with. It is the hardest thing you have about you to fix. Bipolarism in a child of God is simply nothing more than that person not taking the Word of God's principle seriously, letting themselves get so far out of touch and getting themselves into so many different areas that now their emotions are out of control. It is like an alcoholic who has been drinking for 40 years, whose life in his soul is saturated with alcohol. His flesh is saturated with it. He says, "One morning I get up, I am going to quit drinking." You are going to quit drinking until that flesh jerks your chain. "Well, I am not going to do drugs anymore." Right up to the point where your flesh jerks that chain. You will be right back on the street looking for the dealer. You will be right back down trying to buy some more booze. That is what you do because you have ingrained it in your flesh, and it is now affecting your spirit. Whatever you take into your body, your eyes, your ears, your nose, your mouth, and once you drink and digest, affects your spirit.

- Broken by God Now, the second broken spirit in the Bible, and this is a good one: us coming to the end of self and yielding everything to God. This will be Psalm 51:17. You need to understand this. Here is the key. Here is the problem we have got. If you are saved here this morning, you are bipolar. If you are saved here this morning, you are a schizo. Romans 7 says you have an old nature and you have a new nature. You are going to see your friendly corner psychiatrist, and he says, "Well, you are bipolar. You have mood swings. You have good days, bad days. You have good thoughts, you have bad thoughts." If you are a Christian here this morning, you are going to have good thoughts and bad thoughts. You have got an old sin nature that wants to take you down the bad road, and you have got a new nature that wants to take you on a high road. Something has to determine which way you go. It is your spirit, where you lend your spirit to. If you lend your spirit to the things of the world, it is going to go that way. If you lend it to the things of God, it is going to go that way. When I say "lend it," I mean get into it. Do what it says. Follow it. You have an old nature and you have a new nature, and they do war together. You saw the movie *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. That is you and me. Dr. Jekyll was a gentleman of the day, very high in society, very well-esteemed, a great man, but at night he tucked into Mr. Hyde. It was despicable in what he did. That is why a child of God can be the greatest thing that God ever wanted him or her to be, or he can be the worst thing God ever wanted him to be. It is down to your spirit, where you are going to lend it. Are you going to cleanse it? Are you going to seal it with the principles of God's Word? Now here is the difference. You want to get this. You want to get this down, man. Where the first guy takes the lifestyle of the world and gets his spirit broken and his life destroyed—I am going to say it again—where the first guy takes the low road and the lifestyle and the things of the world and gets his spirit broken and his life destroyed, a Christian who is in God's Word, the second guy, can have his world fall apart around him, but never his spirit. His whole world can be collapsing around him, but your spirit will never get broken by the world because your spirit was broken by God. When your spirit is broken

by God, your body can go through it. You can go through all kinds of things in your life, but you will never break your spirit because it has already been broken. You have got to see that. Where I may weep, where I may have sorrow, where I may have pain, where I may suffer on the outward man, the inner man who is in the book will in all things rejoice.

Philippians 4:4 says:Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. When you get a headache, you take a Tylenol. When you get a stomach ache, you take a Tums. When you get down in life and through sometimes our own disobedience or just because of things in the world and it tries to break your spirit, you take the book. God wrote you a book of prescriptions written by the great Physician who was dialed out on Sunday morning by a pharmacist at a pharmacy. All I have for you is prescriptions. The prescriptions for you may not be the same for you. It is for you. Everybody has different problems and things you go through. But when you get into the Bible, the great Physician details out exactly what you need for your spirit. That is why when the world dumps on you, your spirit never gets broken because that is already broken to the things of the Word of God. I am so focused on that. We should be so focused on that. In everything that we do and say. You ought to be so focused on what God has given you and what God is doing with you. You ought to be so into Him and the Word of God, your spirit ought to be so in touch with His. You ought to be walking into work and somebody is saying, "Hey Jim, what is up?" "Heaven is up. Heaven is great." Walking into work. "Hey Mary, how are you? How are you doing?" "Oh, I am doing just good." "Hey Mary, what is new?" "New Jerusalem, Revelation 21, it is really good." You ought to be so into it that it permeates everything that you think and you do. You ought to walk into work and the guy says, "Hey pal, how is the world treating you?" "Terrible! But God is so good to me." It is your spirit. Proverbs 12:25

Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad. Proverbs 15:13

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. The spirit of man will direct him throughout his life one way or the other. It will direct him to the world and break him and destroy him by crushing his spirit, or it will lead him to the Word of God that will preserve his spirit by the unity of that book with God's Spirit and keep it where it needs to be no matter what happens to the flesh. Matthew 12:20 says: Matthew 12:20

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. Sometimes this old world will bruise us, but it will never break us. It is the ability to accept life's bad deals and see them with wisdom and understanding. Some of God's people have been through some of the most terrible times in their life, and yet their spirit was never broken. I have often thought, as I said earlier, what meds Paul, Silas, and Barnabas must have been on when Paul called all that he went through. In 2 Corinthians 6:5 he says, "in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings." In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, he talks about being beaten with rods five times, 195 stripes. He talked about being shipwrecked, being destitute, being stranded. When he got down to that thing, he says, "in all these things were light afflictions." Light afflictions, are you kidding me? Not one time in all those things did it ever break his spirit, not one time. Down through

history, the Waldensians and through some of the greatest persecutions that the world is evading, not one time was their spirit broken. Now here is perspective for you. In 2 Corinthians 4:17:2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; You see, when we look at what we go through, we see it from our own standpoint. We see what we are going through because we are so selfish and we focus on ourselves. That verse says that when you go through something, whatever you are going through, you have perspective, it is light affliction compared to what he went through. It is only a moment of time. That is the greatest thing about whatever I am going through. I have been through some hard times in my life. You know what got me through? You know what got me through when nothing else would suffice me? You know what got me through? I knew that one day there was going to be an end to it. An unsaved man cannot say that. An unsaved man can go through all his life, all her life, and pain everything out, when they die they go to hell. And it just starts. But no matter what I was ever going through in my time when it was so bad and I could not hardly bear it sometimes in my life, I would look at that thing and I would say, "You know what, this too shall pass." And there is going to be an end to it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but there is going to be an end to it. So when I compared whatever I was going through with what God went through, what Christ went through, it was light affliction. Light affliction. That is perspective. Our affliction is only for a moment when you put it up against God's suffering and affliction, and that mindset will never hurt your spirit. It will never crush your spirit or destroy your spirit. It only makes your spirit stronger. God's Spirit and your spirit becoming one through the Word of God. Listen very carefully, and I am done. Joy in our spirit, joy in our spirit that translates into joy in our life, will always be the byproduct of our obedience to God. It is just that simple. There will never be joy in a Christian's life outside the obedience to God in His Word. Nothing but sin can ever take that joy away. Nothing. Proverbs 20:27 tells us that: Proverbs 20:27

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. Ephesians 4:23 says: Ephesians 4:23

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; For you and me, the real key to the Christian life and keeping your spirit where it needs to be is simply one word: renew. Renew it every day. In some cases, renew it twice a day. In some cases, renew it four times a day. In some cases, redo it every hour. In some cases, do it every 30 seconds if you need to. But the key for you and me to keep that joy in the spirit of our mind, is to let it get crushed, is to get in that book, get into principles, and on a daily basis, an hourly basis, whatever it takes, renew it. Renew it with His Spirit. That is the key. Taking my spirit, my mind, and becoming one with God's Spirit, His mind. Renewing it every day by the principles of the Word of God. We will hold up there. Let us have a word of prayer. Do not forget if you are going to...