

I. The Key to Happiness and Fellowship

Last time we were together, we really focused on a lot of different good principles, but I think the outstanding thing that came out of all of it was the key to happiness. So many of God's people are just caught up in depression; they are caught up in not being happy, not being satisfied, not being fulfilled. It used to be that God's people had something to live for and to be happy about, but it is a terrible time today.

We talked about and kind of walked it back through what we had been looking at in the weeks before: the key to happiness will be the joy of our fellowship with the Lord Jesus. We looked at 1 John 1. What a great concept that was. We build our relationship of always loving Him no matter what. We talked about Matthew 22:37, that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, and all of our minds, and all of our soul.

Then we added the aspect about fearing God always, not being afraid of Him that He is going to hurt us or what He can do to us, but rather fear of a broken relationship or fellowship that will rob us of our joy. I told you as parents, and this is so true, as you build into your kids the right way, the right things through the right process, as they grow up to put the Word of God in their life in the right format and everything, you just need to realize that the key that you want to do is when they do something wrong—and all kids are going to do something wrong—when they do something wrong and you have to deal with them, the thing that you want to hurt more. Sometimes you have to spank them; I get that. Corporal punishment, I get it. But the thing that you want to hurt them more than the whipping is the fact that fellowship trust is broken between you two. That always wants to be the catalyst with your kids that they would rather not do something wrong and keep the fellowship with you as mom and dad than do something wrong and break that fellowship. That really starts with us and our relationship with Christ, and then we train that into our children.

I showed you how important it was to guard our attitude of heart, that we do not get a hardened heart and develop against the things of God, which you see so much today. I showed you the prime example of that in the Bible was Pharaoh, king of Egypt. We always take the verse that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and try to prove the point that Pharaoh did not have a choice in it. But I showed you very clearly last week how that before he ever got to that point, he purposely hardened his own heart five times, the Bible tells us. Then God just took the heart that he already had and used it.

Another great principle is how God will use everything in our life for His honor and glory. That is a great illustration and a principle for us. God always is going to get the honor and glory out of everything. Everything that God created is for His honor and glory. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. Everything that God does, He gets the honor and glory out. The Bible talks about in 2 Timothy 2:20 that He has vessels of honor and He has vessels of dishonor. Do

not be deceived. He will get the honor and glory out of somebody not doing what is right, just like He will get the honor and glory out of somebody doing right.

Then we talked about the man who was an oppressor, somebody oppressing somebody. I showed you the two aspects: the roaring lion and the ranging bear. Doctrinally, that will be the Antichrist and all of this is. But inspirationally for you and for me, there will be anybody who tries to oppress you, who tries to take advantage of you, and how people who want what you have will, through covetousness, oppress you to try to get it. All in all, these are some great principles that we can add to our list of things that we are learning.

II. Proverbs 28:17-20: Contrasts in Life

Last week, as all of these things in Proverbs kind of go together, I use a little bridge to get into today. Today we are going to look at Proverbs 28:17-20. Again, we will move down through a few more verses here and we will glean some great practical principles of life for our learning.

Let us pick it up in reading here in verse 17.

Proverbs 28:17-20

A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

You are going to see today that Proverbs, especially today, but we have seen it all through Proverbs, is about contrast. He will give you one thing that is positive, and in the same verse, He will give you the alternative negative to it. I have said it many, many times: contrast is an incredible way to learn your Bible because the Bible is built on contrast. You do not go through four verses in Genesis 1 that it is light versus the darkness. That is a contrast. The rest of your Bible is simply that. You will want to remember that as we look down through these things.

Along with that, the key to any book of the Bible is to, first of all, understand who the book is aimed at. You will want to realize what He is saying or trying to say and to whom He is trying to say it. Once you get that, then you set up a context that you can work from. That is what we want to do today. I want to show you the contrast, but at the same time, I want to be able to show you fundamentally who He is speaking here, but in everything, we want to see the practical application to ourselves.

III. The Murderer and the Pit of Corruption (Proverbs 28:17)

Let us look at verse 17. "A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person" is what He starts out. This will be basically a man who murders someone based on, He says here, the term "violence to the blood of any person."

You go back to Genesis 9:6, you will find where this begins to be laid out where He says:

Genesis 9:6

Whoso shedeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

The key word is blood here because we know from Leviticus 17:11 that the life of the flesh is in the blood. God looks at you killing somebody or somebody killing somebody as doing violence to them, to their blood. Of course, it is a key part of understanding how this whole thing works.

Historically, this will be under the law of Moses that was given to the nation of Israel and dealing with someone who murders someone. For those of you who want to take it a little bit farther, all this will be laid out in Numbers 35. Numbers 35 is the great definitive chapter on murder, capital murder. In fact, in that chapter, He lays out three ways or talks about three kinds of persons who were involved in taking somebody's life. It is very important if you are going to understand how the whole thing works.

- 1.) A man slayer
- 2.) Manslaughter
- 3.) Premeditated murder

There are three types of taking somebody's life here that He defines for us in Numbers 35 and in other places in the Bible too.

In history, and even today too, there are a lot of religions who think that under any circumstances it is wrong to take somebody's life. Of course, we have a whole crowd of people today across this world who are now against capital punishment. In America, for a while anyhow, most of the states did not practice capital punishment; it was life in prison. Now some of the states are coming back that they are executing them, but it is way on a slow basis. It is a thing where across the world, you will find that most nations, or in European nations anyhow, have all done away with capital punishment. They think it is immoral that you would kill somebody and that in a modern-day society you would not take the life of somebody who took the life of somebody else.

Of course, all of that comes to the fact that the farther we get from the Bible, Genesis 9:6 talked about the fact that if anybody sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. In fact, capital punishment is not only taught in the Old Testament, it is also taught in the New Testament. It is a doctrine today that should be followed, but we will talk about it a little bit, but it is not followed.

Then you have those who, what we would classify as conscientious objectors. We have a society full of people who think that capital punishment for a man who committed some terrible, horrible crime, he should not be killed, he ought to be put in prison forever. Then you have people who think that it is immoral to go to war, that if you go to war, that my religion says that "thou shalt

not kill," so therefore going to war and killing somebody violates my spiritual principles, so therefore I am not going to fight and go to war, I am a conscientious objector.

Two great ironic situations in that is one that I am sure everybody knows, is back in World War I in 1917, you had a guy by the name of Alvin York. Alvin York was the most decorated soldier in World War I, and he was a conscientious objector. If you study his life, and there is a great movie out on it with Gary Cooper playing his part simply called *Sergeant York*, it is a great movie. The first part of his life, he was born in the latter parts of the 1800s, he was just a drunken bum. One guy in the Cumberland Gap Mountain there in the Palmetto, Tennessee, moonshiners, just wild stuff.

In 1915, he went to a revival service and got saved. You have to remember that back then, in that time period in the mountains anyhow, they were not all doctrinally correct. It seems to me from what I could find in researching him that he actually truly got saved. It certainly changed his life. He became a Sunday school teacher, he became an elder in the church, he began to teach people the Bible; it completely turned his life around. It is all laid out in the movie, and you have to watch it, it is worth seeing it. He was a tremendous crack shot. He could hit anything because he was raised in the mountains, and they all did that.

Anyway, in 1917, World War I broke out, and he was drafted. He told them that he was not going to pick up a gun, he was not going to kill anybody. It was a thing where he went through his own struggles, and his commanding officer, he was such a good shot, that they wanted him to be promoted a corporal to teach the other guys how to shoot. He himself said he would teach them, but he would not kill anybody himself. He went back home to give him a three-week leave, and in fact, his commanding officer told him, "After three weeks, if you do not feel any different about it," he gave him a book on American history, and how we have had to fight for our freedoms, or somebody would take it away. He said, "At the end of that two-week leave, if you still feel the way you are, I will sign your release and put you out of the army."

Well, he went home and got in his Bible and found out that he needed to defend his country. So in World War I, he is in the Battle of the Argonne, which is a terrible, bloody battle. His platoon is sent up to take out some machine gun nests, and they get trapped. All his NCOs were shot, half his guys were killed, and now he single-handedly killed at least 35 German soldiers. He captured single-handedly 152, knocked out 18 machine gun nests. I mean, incredible what he did. When somebody asked him, when his commanding officer after it asked him, "Why did you do what you did when you were so opposed to war and killing people?" his answer was an amazing answer. He said, "I was out there and those machine guns were killing hundreds and hundreds of people. I am against killing now, just like I was before, but them guns were killing hundreds and hundreds of people, and the only way I could stop the killing was to stop those guns." It was an amazing statement. Obviously, he won the highest French declared the Croix de Guerre medal. He won European, but he was also awarded the Medal of Honor. Here is a guy who wound up starting with a conscientious objector, but wound up just an incredible feat.

One that we are probably more familiar with just came out in the movie a couple of years ago was Desmond Doss, who on Guadalcanal saved 75, Okinawa, saved 75 men. He was a medic.

Again, he was a Seventh-day Adventist who was against war. He would not fight, would not pick up a weapon. They almost tried to court-martial him. Yet the general stepped in at the last and said that he had a right to do that. So they let him be a medic. It was not that he did not want to go to war; he just did not want to kill anybody, wanted to go as a medic. So they let him be a medic, and on Okinawa, which was one of the bloodiest battles of World War II in the Pacific, it was incredibly bloody. He was trapped on a ridge, and he actually lowered. They had to pull back, and he stayed up there with all these wounded. The Japanese were all over the place, and he lowered 75 men down one at a time to be saved. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for that.

It is a thing where that is ironic because both of these guys were conscientious objectors that thought when the Bible says "thou shalt not kill," that it pertained across the board to everything and everybody. Of course, that is not true. The Bible is a great book to interpret itself. Many times we fail to let the Bible interpret itself in our church, our religion, or just what we want to believe interpret it for us.

Two great verses that really explain what Jesus is saying. In Exodus 20:13, when He is given the Ten Commandments, He actually says:

Exodus 20:13

Thou shalt not kill.

That is where Alvin York got his doctrine, and that is where Desmond Doss got his. They just took that at face value that He is talking about all killing. Of course, evidently, they missed Sunday school when they talked about Numbers 35. But when you go to Matthew 19:18, you will find how the Bible defines itself. Jesus Himself here is talking to a young guy, and the guy says, "I have kept the law." Jesus tells him to keep the law. And Jesus says, "Which one?" And Jesus says to him, He quotes Exodus 20:13 that says "thou shalt not kill." But in Matthew 19:18, Jesus defines that for us, and He says:

Matthew 19:18

Thou shalt do no murder.

You see how the Bible works? You do not just read back there in Exodus 20 and decide that that means across the board. First of all, you have to go get a context for that, which is Numbers 35. Then if you get a secondary opinion on it, which is always good, sometimes you do, sometimes you don't, but Jesus is certainly a great secondary opinion. He took the verse over there in Exodus 20:13, it says "thou shalt not kill." And when He quoted it in the New Testament to this young guy, He told you exactly and defined what He meant by "thou shalt not kill." He says "thou shalt do no murder," which shows you that in war, killing people is not murder. The Bible talks about you being a man slayer. Killing somebody in war is not murder. There is a reason for that, and we will talk about that here when we just get into it a little bit farther.

So when He says "thou shalt not kill," He is talking about capital premeditated murder. The Bible makes it clear in the book of Numbers 35 there that it is somebody that you have enmity against.

That is a fixed, rooted hatred for somebody as defined in Numbers 35:16-30. Deuteronomy 19:11 takes it a little bit farther and talks about that a man who commits murder is someone who hates somebody premeditated in their heart. When you are in war, you do not even know the guy you are fighting. You cannot hate him. You may hate his country, you may hate what he stands for, but you cannot hate him. You do not even know the guy. So it is a thing where this is, this verse 17 is a man who does violence against the blood of somebody else by being a premeditated murderer and hating him because of hatred in his heart.

The last part of verse 17 says, "he shall flee to the pit. Let no man stay him." The word "stay" there is an old English word. It means to stop. So He is basically saying, "he shall flee to the pit; let no man stop him." The key word there is "to stay." That is because in Numbers 35:31, there is to be no satisfaction taken for a murderer that premeditatedly killed somebody. There is no reprieve. There is no sacrifice that he can bring. It is only death. There will be no stay of execution. The law is very clear that if you have hatred in your heart and enmity towards somebody, that you kill them premeditated, not accidentally like manslaughter. It goes through the whole thing. If you are out there in the woods someplace and you are cutting down a tree and your axe flies off and hits somebody, that is not murder. If you wait for that person like Cain did Abel, that is murder, premeditated. So he has to be killed.

Of course, the only example of this, which is a great example, is David. David committed two offenses by which there is no sacrifice for, that the only thing is death, but yet God gave him the sure mercies of David, which is an incredible picture of our New Testament eternal security in Christ. You had a picture in the Old Testament long before it ever showed up. Of course, that in itself is a great study.

The Bible says that he has to be killed. In Numbers 35:33, it says that when he is not killed, then the land suffers for the blood.

Numbers 35:33

So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

It all comes back to the blood. This is why, in putting your Bible together, this is why back in Genesis 4 when Cain killed Abel, God said, "your blood cries to me from the ground." People say, "What does that mean?" Numbers 35:33, his blood shed on the ground.

Capital punishment today, as I said, is a New Testament doctrine. It is an Old Testament doctrine. Even though the farther we get from the Bible, we do not do it anymore. From 1700 to what, 1950, 1960, capital punishment was the standard for premeditated murder and other things that this country equated with that. It was the thing where back in the day, it was hanging. They hung somebody. Now they would shoot somebody. Back in the 20s, there was the electric chair, which would be a terrible way to go. Then they came up with a gas chamber, which was a little more humane as far as being fried in Old Sparky. But it is a thing where it still kills you.

Now they did away with all of that. As our society got farther away from the Bible, the real victims get treated like the criminals, and the criminals get treated like the victims. Now a guy

can go out and kill, what, five or ten young girls that are unsuspecting, and dismember them and do all kinds of terrible things to them. They can be alive when they are being tortured and going through all of that stuff. When we finally catch the guy, we finally convict the guy and are sure that he did it, then we worry about putting him to death that he does not suffer. When the victims that he killed and mutilated suffered horrendously, but we want to make sure that he does not suffer. So now we are worried about lethal injection, that it may cause him undue harm as he is passing from this life to the other. I hope it really does. I mean, it is one of those things where, but that is where our society is. I think the French had it the best way with the guillotine. That is a good way to get it. Or burning at the stake would be good too.

Somebody asked me one time if, if I was going to have to be executed, would I rather have my head cut off or get burned at the stake? I said, "Well, easy, that is easy. Burn at the stake." They say, "Why is that?" I said, "Because a hot steak is better than a cold chop any day." Put that for a while and you get it.

Doctrinally, all of this will deal with the Antichrist, our hidden man of a couple of weeks ago. In the tribulation, he wages war with the nation of Israel and kills them down to a small remnant. You will find this in Revelation 12 and Revelation 13. When he is finally destroyed at the second coming of Christ, this will be Revelation 20:1-3, also Isaiah 14:19 and Isaiah 14:15. You will find there, this is where he goes down to the pit.

Revelation 20:1-3

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

So that is doctrinally what the reference is to. But as we know, everything in here, even though it may be written, as I said, you have to figure out who it is written to. It may be historically to Israel, doctrinally in the future. There is always a practical application to it. We do not want to miss that because the other stuff is important. But what really is important is you getting what it means to you.

It will be a reference to inspirationally to 1 John 3:15. The New Testament application will simply be what that verse says: "Whosoever hated his brother is a murderer." In the New Testament, you do not have to actually kill somebody to be a murderer. You can just hate somebody in your heart. If you hate another Christian, if you hate another brother, another sister in Christ, the Bible says that unless you fall under the category of the, which most would not, that you are a murderer. It is just that simple.

The Bible is clear. We think that it is the action that we do that God judges, and that is never the case. That is such a limited view of God. It is never the action that God judges. It is the attitude of heart that produced that action. That is the key. You see it in the difference between the word fornication and adultery. Everybody says, "What is the difference between the two?" It is easy. Fornication is the act. But Matthew 5:28 tells you that adultery is the attitude of the heart. So you have got to see both of them and how they work through. It is the same way when you look at anything in our life. God does not come down and judge the action. He comes down and judges the attitude of heart that produced the action.

You can say you have forgiven somebody, but when you really have not, that is what God looks at, not your false pretense that you put out for everybody else's benefit. He looks at our heart. He looks and sees what we really do in our heart that produces the action. When it comes to God's definition of murder, it is premeditated based on our hatred or the enmity, a rooted hatred in our heart for somebody or something.

Based on that, and you do not have to be a Christian very long to find this thing unfolding itself. So based on that, most of God's people actually are in the same category with Charles Manson. They are in the same category with Dillinger or Alvin Karpis or Pretty Boy Floyd or Hannibal Lecter, Freddy Krueger or Jason Voorhees. They are all in the same boat. You hate somebody in your heart, and the Bible says you are a murderer. The same attitude of heart that God will judge for that will keep anybody from getting God's forgiveness in their own life.

The key is that you too will fall into a pit. It is just a different pit than an unsaved person. Look at Isaiah 38:17. Here is our pit.

Isaiah 38:17

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

You see, when you get right with God, when you make something right with somebody from God, when you do not hold the grudge, when you do not hold back, when you do not keep the forgiveness that needs to be biblically done the way it needs to be done, when you do those things, then God takes the sins and puts them behind your back. But when you do not do those things, it is a pit of corruption. Things only get worse. You do not get better. You are not willing to forgive somebody else for what they did. Good luck trying to get yourself forgiven.

What happens the longer we do not forgive, that we keep that enmity in our heart, the harder your heart gets. The love of God goes out of it. We looked at it last week in Job 9:4:

Job 9:4

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

You will not. You will not. Now I say that knowing full well that hatred is like anger. It is a God-given emotion. I would not stand up here for a moment and tell you that God does not hate. He certainly does. But the difference between His hatred and our hatred in Psalm 139:22-27 is the

fact that God hates with a perfect hatred. That is the difference. I have never met very few of God's people that ever hate with a perfect hatred. That is a study into itself. You will never understand the concept of righteous indignation until you understand that concept that God has, hating with a perfect hatred. Of course, a perfect hatred has to come back to a whole biblical concept that God's people have no understanding of.

Most of God's people go through a whole life with grudges against people that just takes them completely out of being really used of God to their full potential. It is something that time and time again, I have seen it all my ministry. You get churches where you get deacons and you get even pastors, pastors' wives. You get people in the church or in places of leadership. They get so isolated from the Word of God in its truth. They are so protective of what they have that they look at everybody out there as somebody that is trying to take what they have. Somebody will do them wrong instead of forgiving them and making it right and forgetting it.

As I said last week, God has the ability. Somebody asked a question on the little, I was not here Thursday night, but I read the little things there as they were going on. Somebody asked a question, and I mentioned that if you can forgive, you ought to be able to forget. They asked the question, "How in the world can somebody forget?" That is a great question. The answer to that is found in the relationship you have with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am not going to get into it this morning, but I am telling you right now, God's people cannot only not forgive, they cannot forget. They carry it around for the rest of their lives. They actually think that that does not have some kind of effect on what they do for the Lord. It does.

I do not carry a grudge more than 30 seconds. I do not care what you ever did to me or what you did or what you did not do or what you think about me. Let me tell you something. God has been too good to me to carry anything around against anybody. I have no reason on this planet to have a problem with anybody and whatever you do to me, for me, against me, or whatever the case may be. Because I had 19 years of my life before I got saved, and in all those years afterwards where I did some of the stupidest, god-awfullest things you ever saw in your life. God forgave me. Who am I not to forgive you? That is just the way it is.

Then the last part of verse 17, "let no man stay him." Now, stop him or help him. You see, when a child of God gets so far down that they are headed to the pit of corruption. In the people ministry, we talk about this all the time. The people we want to help, there are people that we try to help. But you know as well as I do, if you have been in this business very long at all, that there are some people that you cannot help. There are some people who just are going to do it their way. They are never going to, you try to help them, and then they get an attitude toward you. When they are really struggling, the church is great. When they get on their feet, the church is bad. We have all dealt with it.

When a person gets to that point where they are so unthankful for what God has done and they are so selfish about themselves and all that they do, and they just, they have problems with everything and everybody. The only thing you can do is get out of their way. You cannot fix them. You harden your heart to the things of God and develop a hatred for people, other Christians or whatever. It does not matter. It comes down to the place where you are okay to take

God's forgiveness for you, but you are not willing to extend it to somebody else. We wind up in God's view, the longer you go, the longer you play with that, the longer you let that stir in your heart and your soul, pretty soon you get a hardened heart toward everything that God does. Then you start to justify it. You start to rationalize it because you do not want to deal with it.

At that point in your life, I am telling you, there is no preaching that is going to help you. There is no counseling that is going to change you. There is no rebuke. There is no warning. There is no admonition that is going to be of any value to you. No, God is going to have to come down and deal with you one on one. That is why the Bible, the verse says, "let no man stay him." Do not let him stop him. You just have to get out of the way and let God deal with it. You really do.

It is a thing where, when somebody goes into—please do not take this wrong because I am not talking about anybody here—but there are some times that I go to the hospital to see somebody that is really sick or they have been in a car wreck or they did not yesterday, did not that. I will get a phone call at two o'clock in the morning. I will get a phone call sometime and say, "Hey, so-and-so is in the hospital." And you go up and see. Now, can I be honest? I do not want to go. I will go, but I do not want to go. I will tell you why I do not want to go because I have a hard time going into a hospital room when I know the person in there is in there because they are not doing right with God and they have completely forsaken God and everything about God. I am supposed to go in there now and pretend that God is going to—God is going to guide the doctors through this. I am supposed to go in there and pretend that every—what I want to do is go in and say, "Have you learned the lesson yet? Have you got the message yet? You have not been in church for how long? You have not been in your Bible forever? You are running with the world. You are doing all the things out there. And now here you are flat on your back. I just got one question. Did you pick up the phone when God called?" You cannot do that. I would like to—that is what you need to do. Maybe I am a failure at it. Maybe I just have to go in and kick the door down and shoot everybody to the ground. I cannot—I know how that would be accepted. I would be crucified. I did not have the sweet spirit of Christ. I was not sympathetic.

Well, I will tell you what. There comes a point in all of our lives when we do not do what is right, that you can go so far and go so far, and then you are headed for that pit of corruption. The Bible clearly says, "Get out of the way." Now I will go in there and I will do my duty. I will hold their hand. I will pray, "Oh God, we thank you for so-and-so. They are so special. The devil really enjoys their company." I will go through the whole thing. But in my heart, I feel like the biggest phony on the planet. I cannot play games like that. I am sorry. I am sorry. I just—I have done funerals where afterwards I could have just kicked myself in the rear end because it is a thing where you get up there and you—everybody knows you are lying. They say, "Well, so-and-so, he was saying that he loved the Lord," and his buddies are out there saying, "Yeah, he was saying to love the Lord all right. We were just drinking, smoking dope last week." And here I am. "Oh, praise the Lord, he is in heaven today." Yeah, I never said, "Heaven, yeah, heaven—we have not got a drink out of the same bottle." I know how it goes. But I am just telling you, when it comes to a point in some people's lives when you harden your heart to God and you are not going to do anything and you are not going to fix what is wrong and you need to be fixed, you are headed for that pit of corruption. You will go to heaven. But brother, your whole world will

be miserable, and your whole life you will have just wasted what God wanted to do with you, all because we get that hardened attitude of heart.

IV. Walking Uprightly vs. Perverse Ways (Proverbs 28:18)

Now look at verse 18, going back to Proverbs here, and this is, many of God's people are here today.

Proverbs 28:18

Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

Historically, the upright will be somebody walking under the law, the law of Moses. We know that. He is being saved from going into the pit like the verse is talking about in the context. Inspirationally, it is for you and for me in the New Testament, the principles that we ought to follow that are very clear. When we walk upright through the principles of the Word of God and then God takes our sins and puts it behind our backs, we never have to deal with it. The pit we get saved from will be the pit of corruption that will so destroy so many of God's people.

The key here, whether it is the Old Testament or the New Testament, is to walk uprightly. 1 John 1:7 says:

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

That is for me and you walking uprightly. In the Old Testament, it is Psalm 1:1-4:

Psalm 1:1-4

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

That is the Old Testament principle. In either case, Old Testament or New Testament, the key is to walk uprightly. The Old Testament law for the Jew and the principles of the Word of God for you and for me.

Then the last part of verse 18, "But he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once." Historically again, this will be how God's judgment was swift under the Old Testament law. When a man, whoever, whatever, woman, child got into problems, they were brought before the elders, and they did not let it wait. They dealt with it severely if needed to, but they dealt with it very quickly.

Doctrinally, this will be the Antichrist and his crowd who gets his quick judgment at the second coming of Christ. We all know that. But inspirationally, here is another great truth. It shows that fellowship with God. We have such a delusion about our relationship with God. It tells us that fellowship with God is broken at once when we sin against God. We get the idea that it is a gradual thing. It takes nine sins before fellowship gets halfway broken and another nine before it gets totally broken. No, no, no. The Bible says that all unrighteousness is sin. It is a thing where there are not big sins and little sins. Let me tell you something. The speed limit is 55 miles an hour, and you are doing 70 in it. That is sin against God out of Romans 12. It does not matter. We like to think that. We like to set our own standards for what sin is.

Now, I am not saying that I have not, I will tell you right now, I have never went 75 in a 55. It is more like 85 in a 55. But I know that it is wrong, and those are the kind of things that may be stupid to you, but they are a reality check for me. Because, that may mean nothing to you, but it is just a stepping stone to other things that pretty soon will not mean anything to you. When are you going to decide what is sin and what is not? I hope you do not leave that to your own flesh to figure out. We have homosexuals today that do not think that is wrong. You know why? Because somebody left it to their discretion. There has to be an absolute standard that we come back to, and it is the Bible. A 75 in a 55 is sin. It does not mean you do not do it. Well, I should not say that. But when you do it, you confess it. I mean, I know the rationalization is, "Well then why did they put a speedometer in my car that goes 120?" I get it. It is a thing where I am just telling you. It is a thing where it is not a gradual thing. It is like it is lying or stealing. It is all the same.

1 John 5:17

All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Sin is sin, and it breaks our fellowship at once. God consciousness, being aware of the things of God in your life, is what brings your attention to those little things. Because it is the little things that if you do not fix will lead to the big things.

Now under the New Testament, under grace, not law, I get it. This is where we get delusional. In the Old Testament, He came down and whacked them right on the spot in many cases. In the church age under grace, you may go 5, 10, 15, 20 years without God ever coming down and really taking a hand to you. Your life will be a dead-end street obviously, and God will try to get your attention. But it is a thing where in the Old Testament God came down and killed them. If God came down and killed everybody in the New Testament and did not do it right, there would not be anybody left. Because of that, and we are so stupid with the Word of God, we think that God does not care. We think that, "Oh, that is okay." Well, He does care, and you spend all of that time out of fellowship and keep pounding up your sin and refusing to make it right and get right with things in your life or people or whatever, and it is just a matter of time that you wind up in that pit of corruption.

Last week I showed you in Deuteronomy 29:19-21 how God will separate a man unto his evil. He will take everything out of his life except the evil in his life. You do not want that in your world. The last thing you want in anybody's Christian life is for God to take His hand off of you. Even in the hands of the chastisement. When God says, "Stand back, don't stay, let him go," we

are in trouble. It is all because we hardened our heart and would not do in any given situation what the Bible says we should do. We go through like Deuteronomy last week where it says, "I have peace in the imagination of my heart. I have peace. Oh, there is nothing wrong with me." And yet if you take the way you are living and the way you are dealing with people and put it up against the Word of God, you would see it real quickly. Your heart got hardened, and it failed you. I think in the medical world we call it heart failure. Like Pharaoh, you had over and over again a chance to do what God told you to do. God does not come down and whack us because He knows there is a day coming in the judgment seat of Christ where God is going to take care of it, and God is going to lay it out. We are going to have to deal with it.

V. Tilling the Land of the Heart (Proverbs 28:19)

Look at verse 19.

Proverbs 28:19

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

Notice here it is just not, this is not talking about obviously just raising crops as it seems because you do not till the ground as a farmer and produce a loaf of bread. Corn, yes; wheat, yes; lettuce, yes; tomatoes, beans, yes, but not a loaf of bread. We know from the Bible that the bread here will be a type of the Word of God, and we know also that the Word of God is likened to seed. In 1 Peter 1:23, we were told that we were saved by incorruptible seed, not corruptible, which is the Word of God.

1 Peter 1:23

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Here is how these say, and these are our words. After salvation, when God plants the seed in your heart at the time of salvation, it is you and me's responsibility to till that ground, to cultivate that ground where the seed was planted. In time, it will bring not only fruit but you will learn your Bible, and you will have plenty of bread.

In Matthew 13:1-23, you have the famous parable of the sower where somebody went forth sowing seeds, and the seed is the Word of God, and the seed fell into man's hearts. The Bible says that some of the seeds obviously fell by the wayside, and the birds came down and ate them up. Some of them fell into stony places of a man's heart where he would not do anything with it. Some got into a man's heart, and the thorns and the thistles, the sins of this world, choked them. But the Bible says that other seed, the Word of God, putting in man's heart, fell on good ground and bore forth fruit, some 100, some 60-fold, and some 30-fold.

You and me putting out the Word of God in man's hearts like that parable says, and it gets into their hearts, and when it lands on, you see the reason why you are here today and you love the Bible and you love God and God is using you is because there was a time in your life when God

sowed the seed of the Word of God in your heart, and it found good ground, and it just did not grow itself. No crop does. You have to have the right amount of rain, the right amount of sun, the right amount of seasons. What you did is you took that seed in your heart and you tilled the ground, you cultivated it. The question is simple this morning: What do you have growing in your heart this morning? That is the question.

The Bible says the world is the field, and we sow the seed, the Word of God, in the field. What are you going to do this afternoon? John 4:35 says:

John 4:35

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

You see, the Bible starts out in a garden, the Garden of Eden, and in time, which is the literal garden, winds up in the church age of being a spiritual garden that you sow the seed in your heart, and where Adam and Eve would have produced the fruit physically back there, we produce it spiritually. Kingdom of heaven versus the kingdom of God, but it all comes back to the seed that is in your heart this morning.

Matthew 20 is a great study and a great story that is a picture of the church age in type on a 12-hour day where the Bible says that God sends out laborers into the vineyard of His field, and He starts at six o'clock in the morning, and He goes to the third hour and the sixth hour and the ninth hour and eleventh hour, and then at six o'clock He comes back and He brings those laborers in, and what they are doing through that whole day, a picture of the church age, they are sowing seed in the hearts of men. This church is not just interested in helping you sow the seed; we are helping you cultivate it after it gets sowed. We want to make you, give you the best shot to be everything that God wants you to be.

Look at the last part of verse 19. Here is the contrast. "But he that followed after a vain person shall have poverty enough." Simply, when you follow the wrong crowd, you wind up out of fellowship with God, no joy in your life, no real happiness, a hardened heart, no bread, and a pit of corruption. Vain persons have been defined many times in the book of Proverbs as simply a person who is all about themselves, wants nothing to do with God. They are laid out in the book of Ecclesiastes and vanity all through the book, and they care nothing for the things of God. They are stubborn, they are unteachable, hardened heart. Exactly again, it is the Antichrist, historically it is Israel, inspirationally it is anybody out of fellowship with God in the church age.

VI. The Blessings of Faithfulness (Proverbs 28:20)

Now look at verse 20.

Proverbs 28:20

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Another contrast. I cannot even begin to tell you the blessings of God that will be in your life when you have complete fellowship with Him. It is a simple thing; it is something that I have preached all of my ministry. I believe it with all of my heart, and it is the fact, it is a simple concept that God blesses faithfulness. There is no one thing that you can do that has blessings of God in it more than that one aspect: being faithful to Him. I mean, it is just unbelievable, and my whole life has just been to watch that so true that no matter what comes in your life, there will be some hard times come, there will be some bad dark times, there will be some things that come into your life that you have to deal with. Some of it by your own doing, others just because of the world that we live in. But I am going to tell you something, through every darkness, through everything you will struggle with, you will find the blessings of God right alongside of it, and it is just simply which one you are going to focus on. Are you going to whine and complain about what you are going through, or are you going to look for the blessings of God and what God is doing through it?

Now maybe because of where you are at, God is not doing anything. That is all you got. I get it. What I am telling you, I cannot even begin to tell you how the blessings of God will be there for you in your life and your family, your kids, that you can go through life in this world. I have had a lot of parents come over the years tell me, "I do not even know if we want to have kids and bring them into the world that we live in." I get that. I understand that. But that is not the way God would have it to be. Let me tell you something, the world as bad as it may seem is no different than it has ever been. And it does not matter how bad the world gets, and maybe it is getting worse, but the principles of the Word of God are the same. The world does not get to a place and then the principles cancel out. They are still the same promises back then they were back then. You can still raise a family and do what is right with them. The problem is not the world; the problem is the parents. The problem is the people that are in charge that do not want to do what the Word of God says. Faithfulness, faithfulness.

There is one little verse that I have kept in my heart and my ministry that I can literally say if somebody would say if I have any success at all, it would be this, based on this one verse. It is found in Matthew 25:21, and I have never forgotten it. I built my whole ministry on this verse. I saw it many, many, many years ago, and I believe it with all my heart.

Matthew 25:21

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

That is such a great principle. I can look back at this church, and maybe you cannot see it, and I cannot expect you to. You do not see it from my perspective; you are not a pastor. There are many people that all they see in any church is what is wrong with it. They do not see the people who get saved. They do not understand what God does. They do not see the whole big picture. I get that. I understand that. That is just the way it goes. But for me, it has been nothing more than building and being faithful in the little things, and in time, God gives you major things.

I have a great example that I want to give you this, and I have not really said anything about this because it just has come together really in the last couple of weeks, and I was not sure where it

was all going to go. We have been down at Restart now for I do not know, eight or nine years, probably something like that. It was a thing where to me, there was no question in my mind that God opened that door. We got shut out of a mission, and I remember John Busquette and I went down to look at a place, and we just looked up there and saw the sign "Restart." We went up and talked to the people up there, told them what we wanted to do, and we quit going down to the mission like we used to because we had too many people. We were looking for people that wanted to be involved, so we did the Restart, plus we did the street ministry. People were out there, still out there going out today, and we will probably feed five, six hundred people. I will drive up and down, watch you guys witnessing to them, watch you giving out tracts. I will watch you young guys and gals or young Christians getting your feet wet out there and doing it. Watch you old guys out there that hold the line down at the library and down at the mission place down there, and Will's team out on the street and down by the river, doing that thing with Darren and all that.

You go through that week after week after week, and a lot of God's people, if they do not see results pretty quick, they are out. There are a lot of God's people that way. I have had them all my ministry. They want something instantaneous. I have never felt that way. I always thought that if God gave it to us, and I am sure He did, then just stay the course, be faithful over the little things, and let God do what He does.

I say all that to say this: being down there almost nine years, I have been faithful. I had a call about six months ago from a guy who is the overall chaplain down at the Jackson County Jail, and he is a good guy, known him for a long time. He took over it here this last year or so, and he got all the other Bibles out. He is a King James man, and he works with all these organizations, and he is connected with Restart, helping them guys find a place and everything. So Restart was telling him about our church, and so he calls me on the phone, and he says, "Restart is telling me that you guys were working down there." He says, "Bob," I said, "I did not know all that." He said, "I have known you for a long time," and he said, "They tell me about your street ministry and all the people that you are working with down there." He says, "Look," he says, "I am in tremendous need at the Jackson County Jail." He says, "I am over the whole program, and I am asking you if you will give me some guys that, and I want them out of the street ministry. I want guys who have been working with these people that have, that is basically the ones that you are working with today and this afternoon will be the ones you will see in jail next week." He says, "I really," and we talked about it, and I said, "Okay, I said I will give you eight guys. Let us start with eight guys." Those eight guys had to go down, they had to get FBI background checks, they got fingerprinted, they got everything, and they are all set to go.

What is going to happen is that in time, they will have 24-hour access to the jail. They will be able to go in, pull anybody out of whatever pod they want to witness to them. But starting out, they are going to do a church service, and they were supposed to do it this morning, but there was a glitch with the computer. But two guys are going down at a time, and in time, it will open up to the point where we will be doing just about everything because this guy has nobody to really help him other than what he knows, but for what we did at Restart and what they said where we are at, and that is the guys and the people he wants. I will just tell you this, it is only

going to be a short hop, skip, and a jump. He is already talking, that is already in the works, both starting on women's ministry down there. I am going down and preaching to the women. It is just going to take some time.

My whole point is saying all that is, and I have not said anything about it because I just wanted to see how it was going to play out, but it is obviously we got our first eight guys, and as we develop that, we will bring more guys in, and to get the ladies going, it is going to open the thing up. My point is simply this: that would have never happened if we had not stayed at Restart, not on the street. You see, obviously, I had visions when I first started, I will be honest with you, I had visions when I first started of holding a church service down at Restart, becoming done. But that was not in God's plan, and when that did not work out, I did not quit. I did not simply say, "We are not going to do it anymore." I mean, we have people out on the street that you win to Christ, but you hardly ever get in the church. I mean, we have had some that we picked up, and they come for a while, but they are all transient people. They are all moving through life, doing their own thing. I get that. I know there are people that have said to me, "I do not see the value in what you are doing." The value what I am doing is the fact that God gave me to do it, and I am going to be faithful in the little things. Now because we have, look at what God has given us, and it is just that is the way it works.

I have always believed that all my life. I have never cared what anybody thought. "Well, I do not know if that is a good idea." Look, if God gave it to me, I really do not care what your idea is about it. I am going to follow what the Lord gives me because I have been in this verse too many times and seen God, if I am faithful in the little things, make us rule over many things. I look at this as an opportunity; it is going to open up incredibly, and it all started because of our being faithful in something that God gave us to do.

Simply, God blesses faithfulness.

- Faithfulness to the Word of God.
- Faithfulness to the ministry, to ministering to the Lord first, like Acts 13 says.
- Faithful to the ministry that God has given us in our church.
- Faithful to the ministry that God has given us through our church, the things that we do.
- Faithful to the families of our own families that we have, being faithful to them as the Bible says in 1 Timothy 5:8.
- Faithful to the people that God has given us.
- Faithful to your calling that God has called you to do.
- Certainly faithful to standing on the Book in these last days and preaching the pure Word of God, Church of the Open Door, taking your stand for the things that are right.

The last part of verse 20 says, "but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." There are two aspects here. "Shall not be innocent." For the unsaved, that will be the great white throne judgment. God will deal with them there. For us, it will be the judgment seat of Christ. God will deal with us there. In either case, we will not be innocent when we have forsaken the faithfulness that God is to us and not been given that back to Him.

VII. Conclusion: The Cost of Not Following Christ

Simply put for all of us today, we need not to have malice or hatred in our heart. Do not get to the place as a child of God that you cannot forgive somebody. It will end your career with God. I guarantee you.

Second thing He says is, "walk uprightly." That is what we teach the principles here. I know it is not going to be a perfect life. I know you are going to make mistakes. I make mistakes. We all are going to have our down, dog days. I get that. Keep short accounts with God, and you get back to where God wants you to be. Sow the seed in the hearts of men and then help them cultivate it, and you will have bread enough forever. If you want to abound with the blessings of God, stay faithful in those eight things that I just gave you: the Word of God, the ministry to the Lord, the ministry to the church, the ministry through the church, ministry to your family, ministry to the people that God gives you, faithful to your calling that God has called you, and faithful to preach the Word of God and put it out. If you will just do those eight things and work on faithfulness and walk uprightly, you will have more blessings in your life than you know what to do with.

Then you have got to come to the place when you see that through the joy of your fellowship. Why so many of God's people only focus on a negative thing? Because there is no joy in their life. How in the world can you have the joy of the Lord and the happiness and the contentment of what He is doing and the joy in your life and only see what is negative?

Now listen to me. As a Christian, you will never lose your soul. We know the Bible teaches that once you become God's child, you are in for the duration. You cannot lose your salvation. We know that. As a Christian, you will never lose your soul, but listen to me very carefully. Let me tell you what you can lose:

- You can lose your money.
- You can lose your business.
- You can lose your kids.
- You can lose your wife.
- You can lose your husband.
- You can lose your testimony.
- You can lose your joy.
- You can lose your being a disciple.
- You can lose your fellowship.
- You can lose your assurance.
- You certainly can lose your inheritance.
- You can lose your rewards.
- You can lose your health.
- You most certainly can lose your life.

Is not that enough to lose? I will tell you something else, dear brethren. You had better not only count the cost of following Christ, and there will be a cost involved in following Him. You not

only better not only count the cost of following Him, but you had better count the cost of not following Him.

He closes this section with a great promise that a faithful man shall abound with blessings. "Blessed is the man." In the book of Psalms, it is all about, I think 17 times in that book He talks about being blessed. Because God wants to bless us. It is us who refuse the blessings of God because we will not walk uprightly. We get our nose bit at a joint. We get our attitude about this or that, and we do not follow the love of Christ in our lives and the things that we do. I am telling you what, it just takes us right to the pit of corruption. A faithful man shall abound with blessings, and I am telling you right now, you can do whatever you want to do with it. God blesses your faithfulness. You will be faithful in the little things, He will make you ruler over many things. You will be faithful in the little things of learning the Bible, He will make you a ruler within a place where you really understand the Bible, all the bread you can have.