

(Proverbs) ch.14:4 - 15:5

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the necessity of enduring inconvenience and maintaining honesty to achieve spiritual richness and wisdom as outlined in Proverbs 14:4 - 15:5.

Duration: 1:01:08

Scripture: Exodus 23:25, Deuteronomy 15:11, Proverbs 14:4, Proverbs 14:21-22, Acts 20:35, Hebrews 10:24

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Godly Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on various verses from the book of Proverbs. He starts by discussing the concept of having oxen and the importance of keeping the stable clean, relating it to the idea that spiritual growth requires effort and inconvenience. The preacher then highlights the common bond of guilt among all rebels and unbelievers in God's eyes. He contrasts worldly laughter with the joy that comes through the cross. The sermon also mentions the word 'backslider,' noting that it is only found in this particular verse in the Bible. Lastly, the preacher emphasizes the importance of kindness and truth, stating that those who devise good will receive these qualities, while those who devise evil will go astray. The sermon references Hebrews 10:24, which encourages believers to provoke one another to love and good works, and emphasizes the significance of entering the most holy place through the blood of Jesus.

Transcript

Let's turn to the book of Proverbs in chapter 14. We finished in our last study at verse 4. Proverbs 14, verse 4 reads, Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much increase comes by the strength of the ox. Which really means that if you are too lazy to keep the stable clean, you would rather have no oxen at all, but that way you will never become rich.

In the Old Testament that was in a material way, but that applies to us in a spiritual way, in the sense that if you want oxen, you've got to suffer a certain amount of inconvenience to keep the stable clean as well. And if you want to become spiritually rich, it involves a certain amount of inconvenience. And if I'm always thinking of a convenient life and no disturbance to what I want to do in my life, then of course I am like that man who doesn't want any oxen because it's too much nuisance to clean all that dung and to clean up all the mess they make in the stable, but the end is the man won't be rich, he'll be a poor man.

And that is the reason why many people are spiritually poor, because when it comes to a little bit of inconvenience in their life, they avoid going that way. They like to have spirituality if it does not disturb their ambitions in life and their basic convenience. And I believe more and more that this is the fundamental

reason why the vast majority of believers remain spiritually poor.

Because they're always thinking, how will this disturb my convenience and my comfort? If I go wholeheartedly for God in this, if I do this and I do that, it's going to make life a little difficult. And so they avoid that difficult path and they remain spiritually poor. And the sad thing is that they'll wake up in eternity and discover what a fantastic loss was theirs just because they sought a little comfort and convenience in their earthly life.

That'll be a sad day. And that's why the word of God warns us now, it's better to have a little inconvenience in the stable and be rich. Verse 5. A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness speaks lies.

We speak about faithfulness in the church, but one tremendous area of faithfulness is absolute honesty. And the book of Proverbs has a tremendous lot to speak about absolute truthfulness. And if we speak about being faithful, that means being absolutely faithful in the matter of speaking the truth.

A faithful witness will not tell lies, but if a person speaks lies, he's a false witness. This is the test of our faithfulness. So let's not think in terms of faithfulness in other things if we are being unfaithful in this matter of speaking the absolute truth.

Verse 6. A scoffer seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge is easy to him who has understanding. A scoffer is one who is arrogant and proud. And Jesus said that the things of God are hidden from the wise and the intelligent, not because they are wise and intelligent, but because they are proud of their wisdom and intelligence.

And you find people like that even among Christians, who are inwardly a little proud of the fact that they are clever and they are smart and they are sharp. And invariably I have found in my life that such people never have spiritual revelation. Simple people have revelation which these clever, smart, sharp people never get.

They remain spiritually blind year after year. Because of their arrogance, God refuses to give them wisdom. They seek wisdom, but they don't get it.

Of course, they think that they are very spiritually wise, but anyone who is mature can make out that they are just deceiving themselves. But one who comes like a little babe, knowledge is easy. It's easy to understand the scriptures if we come to it like a little babe, without any cleverness of our own to lean upon.

And this pride is the main reason why many people never get wisdom. It's impossible to get wisdom, which the book of Proverbs speaks about, if we don't approach it with humility. In verse 7 it says, let me read this to you in the Living Bible.

If you are looking for advice, stay away from fools. And that means, if you really want godly wisdom, don't go to a man who is clever in earthly things. He's a fool when it comes to spiritual things.

We can't go to wisdom to an earthly wise man. No, leave the presence of a fool, because from him you cannot get advice that will lead you in the way of God. Verse 8, the Living Bible again, the wise man looks ahead.

The fool attempts to fool himself and won't face facts. That means the wise man is one who considers, as it says here, his own way. The wisdom of the wise man is to understand his own way.

Not somebody else's. He seeks to see the way ahead for himself. In other words, he judges himself, so that he can find the right way for himself.

He's not a busybody in other people's matters. And because, that doesn't mean he's not concerned about others. No, but he knows that he cannot help the others unless he's found the way for himself.

And as he finds the way for himself, then he can help the others by being a forerunner for them. So the wisdom of the wise man is to understand the way God wants you to go. Never mind about all the other people.

If you're wise, gradually others will have confidence in you, and they will want to follow your example. But the fool, he does not face facts. He wants to fool himself that he's alright, and deceives himself.

The New Testament speaks a tremendous amount of how easy it is for believers to deceive themselves about their spiritual condition. My own conviction is that 90% of believers, or more, are thoroughly deceived about their own spiritual condition. They think they are much more spiritual than they really are.

And they wake up in eternity to get a terrific shock when they discover what God's evaluation of them was. And you find that in us. With all of us who have heard so much about the New and Living Way, you know how easy it is for us to have higher thoughts about our own spirituality than is really true.

I would say with most of us, we have higher opinion about our own spirituality than is really true. There's a tremendous need of deliverance from that type of deception, where we live before God's face. That's the thing that clings to us so much.

To have a high opinion about our own spiritual condition, even though we clothe it with words of humility and all that. That's the folly of a fool. Not to face facts.

Verse 9. The common bond of rebels, in the Living Bible, is their guilt. The thing that makes all people the same, all the rebels in the world, and that's all the unbelievers, and all the rebels in the world, exactly the same in God's eyes is their guilt. They're all guilty, to a greater or a lesser degree.

And it says here, the common bond of godly people is their goodwill. In other words, the mark of a godly person is, he desires good for other people. And if you are one who desires good for the others, then you have a bond with other godly people.

But if you are jealous of somebody else who's got something better than you, then you don't have any bond that binds you with godly people. The common bond of godly people is that each of them has goodwill towards the others. He desires good for the other person.

He's happy when it goes well with somebody else, materially or spiritually or any other way. And that is what brings a bond among the truly godly people and makes them one. Where that thing is lacking in a person's life, he doesn't have any bond with other godly people.

Verse 10, only the person involved can know his own bitterness of joy. No one else can really share it. A stranger cannot share your joy.

And that is really true, that the joy of the Lord is something we can only experience personally. It's not something that I can experience merely because I sit in an assembly where there are some people who have come into this experience. It's something which I can experience personally if I have really and truly forsaken all.

I'm convinced that when there is no joy in a person's life, it is an indication that there is something in his life which he has not forsaken. Usually some earthly thing, some ambition, something which is not forsaken. That robs him of his joy.

But those who have forsaken all, they experience that joy in its fullness. Verse 11, the house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish. Jesus expanded on that in the Sermon on the Mount when he said that the wise man who obeys what Jesus taught builds his house on the rock and that will remain forever.

But the one who built on sand is the one who hears and does not obey. That's the house of the wicked which will finally be destroyed. Verse 12, there is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

And Jesus spoke about the broad way and the narrow way. The broad way is what most people think is right, but its end is death. So the narrow way is what leads to life.

And we can look at it in many ways and I just want to mention one of the possible ways. You know what Jesus said to Peter, your mind is set on man's interests and not God's interests. We can say man's interests are the broad way and God's interests are the narrow way.

And what are man's interests? My comfort and my convenience. God's interest is my character. When I seek my comfort and my convenience, I'm on the broad way.

Even if I appear to be spiritual. When I seek my character, that it will be what God wants it to be. Then I go through the narrow way.

There is a way which seems right to a man. It looks alright, I'm not committing any sin, I'm not doing anything wrong, any harm to anyone. But, you see, why does it seem right to a man? You can't commit adultery and it seems right to you.

You can't go and generalize and it seems right to you. You can't do evil to somebody else and it seems right to you. What is this way that seems right? Where I'm not harming anybody.

Where I'm not doing anything consciously evil. And it seems right. But underneath, I'm seeking my own.

I'm seeking my own. My own honor. My own convenience.

That leads to death. That's the thing we've got to be careful about. Verse 13.

Let me read this in the Living Bible. Laughter cannot mask a heavy heart. When the laughter ends, the grief remains.

Laughter is something which is never spoken of in the New Testament. In the world, they speak about laughter. In the New Testament, it speaks about joy.

And joy is different from laughter. You never read once in the Gospels that Jesus laughed. But you do read much about the joy that he had.

And there's a world of difference between joy and laughter. People go to some entertainment and they laugh. But it says here, when the laughter is finished, the grief is still there.

They have to go for another entertainment the next day to forget about their sorrow. That's not the godly way. Laughter can mask.

You can try and cover up a heavy heart with laughter. But when the laughter is over, you come back from that entertainment. The heaviness is still there.

It's like a man who goes to a drinking saloon. And a lot of charismatic meetings like that, where people go and feel very happy and laugh for 2-3 hours, and then come back home and they're still heavy. They haven't understood to rejoice in the Lord always.

And to rejoice in the Lord always is not a question of clapping the hands and raising the hands and speaking in tongues and singing in tongues. It's a question of taking up the cross and die. The cross is the secret of joy.

And that's the only way. In the world they speak about laughter, in the church we speak about joy. And that joy comes through the cross.

Right? Verse 14. It's very interesting. It's a word that we use very often.

The backslider. Now I'll tell you something. This is the only place in the entire Bible where you find the word backslider.

It's just something interesting that we can bear in mind. And the Living Bible paraphrase is very beautiful. It says here, The backslider gets bored with himself, but the godly man's life is exciting.

How is the godly man's life exciting? Because every day, each situation he says, Ah, it's wonderful now to see how God is going to sanctify me through this situation now. This complicated situation here, it's very wonderful how the Lord's brought that across my path. I didn't expect that today.

But it's come across my path, that which would depress the person in the world. But the godly man takes it as a challenge. There is something, some new opportunity for me to take up the cross and the Holy Spirit to work mightily to deliver me.

This is my quota of evil. Jesus said, Every day has God its appointed quota of evil. Matthew 6.34. And this is part of my quota of evil that's come today.

And I have to convert it to glory in some way. And so life is exciting because each day, the godly man looks forward to how he can take up the cross and overcome. But the backslider, the person who has gone back, you know it speaks in Hebrews 10, about if anyone draws back, my soul will have no pleasure in him.

That's in a sense the backslider. The person who draws back in the moment of temptation. In the meeting he is very zealous.

Oh, praise you Lord for this meeting. Though all men deny thee, I will not deny thee. And all that.

But then, before the cock has crowed twice, he has already denied the Lord three times after he has gone out from the meeting. In the moment of temptation he draws back. That's the backslider.

The man who pulls back from suffering and denying himself in the moment of temptation. Though he praises God loudly in the meeting. His life is really boring.

Out there in the world they say, we want to have fun. I tell you, you can never have as much fun, real fun, as being a godly man. His life is exciting.

The type of fun they have out in the world brings disease, it brings problems, it brings difficulties, it brings depression. Occasionally they have spurts of laughter. But the godly man's life is the really exciting life.

Now the reason I mention this word backslider is used only in the Old Testament. The book of Jeremiah and Hosea comes about 16 times or so. Backsliding.

The word backsliders occurs only once here. In the New Testament it speaks much more about carnal people and lukewarm people. You see, we shouldn't think that such a thing as backsliding and going forward and then backsliding and going forward.

You know, we need to understand this, that the New Testament doesn't speak about that type of life. The New Testament says if you're living like that type of life, you are carnal. You're not just backsliding and coming back to the Lord in the meeting.

You're fundamentally carnal. You're fundamentally lukewarm. There's something in your life you haven't forsaken.

There's not a wholehearted acceptance of the cross in your life. We call it backsliding, but it's not backsliding. It is, the fundamental reason is I am carnal.

I am lukewarm. There's a fire missing in my life. And I try to cover it up by saying, yeah, I just backslid a little bit there, but I'll come back to the Lord again on Sunday.

No. That's why the New Testament doesn't speak about backsliding, but it speaks about people who are carnal and lukewarm. Verse 15.

The simple believes everything, but the prudent man, the wise man, considers his steps. Now, don't think there's any virtue in believing everything that you hear. That is the mark of a fool.

When the Book of Proverbs speaks of the naive or the simple, that is speaking about a fool. A simple man or a naive man or a fool is the same thing. One who is spiritually stupid.

He believes everything. Jesus didn't do that. It says he didn't go by what his ears heard or what his eyes saw.

He listened to the Father. We hear something about some other brother and we believe it. That shows we are fools.

Particularly if it's something bad, we're quick to believe it, which shows what great fools we really are. The simple believes everything, but the prudent man, he considers, he checks to see where he's going. Am I

going in the right direction here? He's careful.

A wise man is very careful about taking a step in life. He doesn't believe everything. Verse 16.

A wise man is cautious. Why is he careful? Because he wants to turn away from evil. That's the reason why he's careful.

Because he says, I may step forward here and do something wrong. For example, I heard a brother say, whenever I have to write a letter or take a decision, I always say to myself, I have a flesh in which there dwells nothing good. Let me be careful now how I speak and how I act.

Because this flesh in which dwells nothing good can make me say things in a wrong way, write things in a wrong way, do things in a wrong way. And then he's careful. A prudent man considers because he's got a flesh in which dwells no good thing.

He's careful about each step he takes. But a fool, he's arrogant and he's careless. He's careless in his speech, careless in his actions.

Verse 17. A quick-tempered man acts foolishly and a man of evil devices is hated. Now, I'll read that in the Good News Bible.

It says, people with a hot temper do foolish things. But wiser people remain calm in the same situation. And we've considered this verse in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 9 which says that anger dwells, resides.

Resides means he's got a permanent house in the bosom of fools. One way you can make out a fool is by the fact that he loses his temper. A person who loses his temper has got something that has made a permanent house inside his heart.

And that is anger. And by that anger coming forth, the person proves to everyone, I am a fool. When you hear somebody shouting and losing his temper, listen carefully and you'll hear what he's saying.

I am a fool. Did you hear it? Hear it again. I am a fool.

That's what a person is saying when he loses his temper. That which is residing inside has popped his head out of the house. He may put it back in for a little while but he's really living there.

He's residing permanently in the heart of a fool. We've got to drive it out. Otherwise we'll never be wise.

Never be wise. That's where we need to humble ourselves and ask God for grace. Don't let that wretched evil thing build a permanent home inside your house brother or sister.

It's made a permanent home in all the millions of the children of Adam. But once we become children of God, it is God's intention that we drive this thing out by the Holy Spirit. Anger has made a permanent house in the heart of a fool.

And don't proclaim loudly to everyone that we are fools. Verse 18. I'll read that in the Living Bible.

The simpleton is crowned with folly and the wise man is crowned with knowledge. You see, we can crown ourselves by our foolishness and the stupidity with which we say things and do things or we can crown ourselves with wisdom. With the peaceableness and gentleness with which we do things.

That's a crown. It's the fool's crown and the wise man's crown. Verse 19.

The evil will bow down before the good. Of course, that's going to take place in eternity. And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

That is the word that will be fulfilled when Jesus sets up his kingdom on this earth. Verse 20. The poor is hated even by his neighbor but those who love the rich are many.

Why do people love the rich? Because they love money. That's all. Those who love rich people must know very clearly that they love money.

And those who don't love the poor people must also know that they love money. That's the reason. That's the reason for verse 20.

That's why the world is full of people who love the rich and don't care for the poor because they love money. And a church in which the rich person is given a special place, like we read in James chapter 2, and the poor person is despised because of his poverty, we can say that is a church whose God is money. It is.

Even though they speak about Jesus Christ, actually Jesus Christ outside the door, their God is money because they give place to the person who's got money. But that's a description of the world. It shouldn't be a description of the church.

Unfortunately, it is. Of a lot of Christendom today, it would be praise God that that spirit will have no place in our midst. Verse 21.

He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor. God has allowed the poor people to exist so that he can test us. If he had made everybody equal, like communism tries to do, there would be a test which God would not be able to apply to many people.

But, that's why the Lord said in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 15, let me read this verse to you, Deuteronomy 15, and it's amazing, there's a contradiction here. It says here, apparent contradiction, I mean, Deuteronomy 15, 4, it says, There shall be no poor among you. Did you hear that? That is the will of God.

In the Old Testament, it was not God's will for any person to be poor. If he honored the Lord with his substance, the Lord would bless his barns. If he dishonored the Lord, that was the reason for his poverty.

There will be no poor among you, since the Lord will surely bless you in your land if, verse 5, you listen obediently to the voice of the Lord your God. Of course, if you don't listen, then the condition is not fulfilled. And since God knew that most of them won't listen, therefore he said in verse 11, the poor will never cease to be in your midst.

Have you seen that? It looks contradictory, but it isn't. What he said is, there will be no poor people among your midst if you obey the word of God, but unfortunately, since I already know that most of you are not interested in obeying, there will be some poor people always in your midst. But, when you see that man, yeah, be merciful to him.

And open your hand and bless him. Of course, with wisdom. Don't be foolish in that.

But, that is a test for us when we consider those who are in need. Happy is he who is gracious to the poor. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Verse 22. Will they not go astray who devise evil? But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good. That means it's a question of what we scheme and plan.

The word of God says in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 24, you know that verse, that we are to consider in our minds how to provoke one another to love and good works. It speaks there in the previous verse about the new and living way, Hebrews 10.20, and entering the most holy place by the blood of Jesus. There, there being a high priest.

And then it tells us in verse 24 of Hebrews 10, what we are to do when we get inside the most holy place. What are we to do there? We are to consider how to do some good to someone else. How can I stir up some love by doing some good to someone? That's what's spoken here.

Kindness and truth or grace and truth that is the divine nature, will be given to those, will be to those who desire good and who devise good. That means we are scheming and planning something good, like God silently plans in love for us, to plan and think of something good that we can do for one another. But that is the opposite of those who plan and scheme for evil and that's the spirit in the world and that's why they go astray.

You see, when our mind is dwelling upon the good, then God is able to lead us along the right path. Verse 23 Here is a verse that tells us that there is only one type of labor in the whole world which does not bring any profit or any results. All types of labor in the world brings profit, but there is one type of labor which brings poverty and that is when we labor to use our tongue.

And the more we have the, when we have the habit of speaking and speaking and speaking and speaking and speaking and never stopping, when we have no control over our tongue, that he says is the surest way to become poor. It's the only labor in the whole world which brings no profit at all. In all labor there is profit, except in constant talking.

Verse 24 The crown of the wise is their riches, that is their spiritual riches. But the folly of fools is foolishness. Similar to what we considered earlier that wisdom is like a crown.

In other words, when the New Testament speaks about our being kings and priests, it is wisdom that makes us a king. We are not kings. We can be kings, but if we act foolishly, we don't have a crown.

The crown of the wise is their spiritual wealth. And so we see wisdom is what makes us a king. Verse 25 A truthful witness saves lives, but he who speaks lies is treacherous.

Notice again the emphasis in the book of Proverbs on telling the truth. Speaking the truth is one of the things that's emphasized again and again in the book of Proverbs. And when we come across something in the book of Proverbs that's repeated a number of times, you know that that's something which the Holy Spirit is really trying to emphasize, because telling the truth does not come naturally to us.

We speak the truth when it is convenient, but in a tight spot, that's the test of whether we are truthful. The test of whether we are truthful or not is when we are in a difficult situation, and we can easily tell a lie and get out. That's the time we are tested, whether we are truthful or not.

The rest of the time we can say we are like untested Proverbs chapter 14 verse 26 In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence and his children will have a refuge. Or as the Good News Bible says, reverence for the Lord gives confidence and security to a man and his family. It's the type of thing which the life insurance corporation tries to tell you that they can give you, but it tells us here it's the fear and reverence for the Lord which alone can give a man confidence and security not only for himself but for his family.

This is one thing which comes very often in the scriptures, that when a man fears God and lives in reverence for God in his life, the blessing that comes upon his life not only affects him, it affects his whole family. It's a very blessed family indeed that has as the head of that home a man who has reverence for God who is careful to fear God in his speech and to fear God in obedience to his commandments in the home. Such a home will truly be blessed.

Reverence for the Lord brings confidence and security. There's no insecurity in the lives of those who fear God. There need not be in their families also that children have a refuge.

It says. Think of that blessing that we can bring upon our children if we fear God. Even if we don't have much money to give them.

Verse 27 The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may avoid the snares of death. Speaking about the same thing again, that the fear of the Lord is like a bubbling spring that keeps on springing up, that protects us from all the snares of death. The devil's got many traps laid out ahead of us.

We don't know all those traps. But the fear of the Lord protects us from all of them. I remember when I was in the Navy and we had these ships coming into, when our ships used to come into unknown harbors.

Harbors that we had never come to before. New harbors in some foreign country. And on the chart, there would be marked out a channel.

And when you look out in the harbor there are buoys, marking the left and the right side. And in between those two buoys is the safe channel. And then we don't need to know where all the rocks are.

There may be a rock there, there may not be a rock there, it doesn't disturb me. Because if we stick in the safe channel we don't need to know where the rocks are, where the shallow ground is. We'll never hit any of them.

Because the safe channel is marked out by these buoys and you'll reach the harbor safely. I've often thought of that. There may be a million traps that the devil has for believers.

When am I going to discover all of them? It may take me a lifetime to discover all of them, but I don't need to know where all of those million traps are. If I know the safe channel, I will avoid all those rocks and shallow grounds on which I can make shipwreck of my life. And that safe channel it says here is the fear of the Lord.

You can avoid all these traps which the devil has for us. Verse 28 In a multitude of people is a king's glory. In the dearth of people is a prince's ruin.

And that is absolutely true of people in the world. They glory in numbers, in quantity. A company glories in its output in terms of quantity, income, profit, numbers.

Churches glory in their numbers and in their offerings. That is a mark that the churches have become like these worldly companies. But that's not true for those of us who come into the New Covenant.

No. In the New Covenant, what is it that we glory over? Let me read this to you in the Good News Bible. Verse 28.

A king's greatness depends on how many people he rules. And if a king rules over 10 million people, that's a big thing. But how does that apply to us in the New Covenant? We are also kings, spiritual kings.

We can read it like this. The spiritual kings of the New Covenant, their greatness depends on how many lusts in their own flesh they rule. And that they have conquered.

It is the mark of a New Covenant king. That this lust and that lust and the other lust and the other lust and the other lust, I'm ruling over them now. And how poor a king he is who can count only two or three things he's conquered in his life.

And think of those who conquered almost nothing after being believers for so many years. In the dirt of people is a prince's ruin. Without them he is nothing.

Haven't conquered anything? Don't rule anything? You're nothing. That is what we must remember as kings. Verse 29 in the Good News Bible says, If you stay calm, you are wise.

But if you have a hot temper, you only show what a big fool you are. We already considered that before. That's another thing that the book of Proverbs repeats.

Think that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to repeat that in the same chapter again. That when you lose your temper, you're proclaiming loudly, I am a fool! Hear that? I am a fool! And I lose my temper again and I'm yelling to everybody, I am a fool! You didn't hear me last time. I'm telling you now, I am a fool.

That's a mark of a person who is a fool. I'll read that also in the Living Bible. It says, A wise man controls his temper because he knows that anger can make him cause many mistakes.

Can make him make mistakes. And that's why he controls it. He really learns to die here.

Because he knows that he can do so many foolish things that can ruin relationships, ruin his life, ruin the glory that can be his in eternity. And therefore he's wise. Verse 13.

A tranquil heart is life to the body. But passion is rottenness to the bones, as the Living Bible says. A relaxed attitude lengthens a man's life, but jealousy rots it away.

Passion kills you. See, we speak in the church about entering into God's rest. And when we enter into rest, it affects not only our spirit, it affects our body too.

I mean, even the doctors have discovered that when you're tense and worked up, it can work up allergies in your system, aggravate allergies and cause asthma and rheumatoid arthritis and migraine and so many things that come, certain diseases anyway, I'm not saying that's the only cause of it, but some of these things like arthritis and migraine and asthma get aggravated by passion, uncontrolled lusts. And it's good for us to judge ourselves and see whether we are at rest, so that even if we have certain physical infirmities in our body, that they are not due to spiritual causes. I'm not saying that every sickness is due to a spiritual cause, but I do say that a lot of sicknesses get aggravated by spiritual causes.

There may be a physical cause, but the spiritual cause puts some more fuel into the fire and it becomes worse. It's really true, even doctors have discovered that. And so it's good to enter into rest.

A relaxed attitude lengthens a man's life. Jealousy and passion and tension and anger against someone, that's like a cancer. That's what the Good News Bible says.

Jealousy is like a cancer. You're jealous of someone. You covet what he has.

You're not happy with what he has. You don't realize that it's a cancer eating away your life. Verse 31.

He who oppresses the poor, reproaches his maker, but he who is gracious to the needy, honors him. Here's one way we can honor God by considering the poor and the needy. Verse 32.

The wicked is thrust down, that is, into hell by his wrongdoing, but the righteous has a refuge that is in paradise, in the presence of God when he dies. In other words, it's not God who sends a man to hell. It says in verse 32, the wicked is thrust down by what? By his own sins.

He himself, his own sins push him down into an eternal separation from God. But the righteous has a refuge when he dies. Verse 33.

Wisdom, let me read that in the Living Bible, in the Good News Bible. It's a very beautiful paraphrase here. Wisdom is in every thought of a wise man.

But fools know nothing about this wisdom. Think, brothers and sisters, to be able to come to that place where in every thought I'm seeking to find out is that the wisest way to do it? Is that the wisest way to speak? Is that the wisest way to speak to my neighbor who's causing that problem? Is that the wisest way to speak to my husband? Or to my wife? Is that the wisest way to speak to my children? Yeah, that is a way, it's a good way, but is that the wisest way? That is what a wise man is always seeking to press on to perfection till wisdom comes into his every thought. That's really wonderful.

Another translation of it says that wisdom feels comfortable in a wise man's heart but very uncomfortable in the heart of a fool. He doesn't seem to find place in this foolish man who claims to be a believer and who speaks all types of stupid things and does all types of stupid things and wisdom is all the time feeling very uncomfortable because this person is losing his temper and feeling jealous about somebody else and backbiting against someone else. And here is wisdom trying to dwell in the heart of this believer.

It's always uncomfortable. We need to ask ourselves does wisdom feel at home in my heart? Does wisdom feel comfortable and at home in the way I speak, in the way I behave, the way I conduct myself and wisdom feels quite comfortable and at home in my heart or wisdom may not leave me because it still loves me but feeling very uncomfortable to be you know how it is, you go and live in somebody's house and you see the husband yelling at the wife and you feel a bit uncomfortable sitting there listening to all this. Think how wisdom must be feeling in the hearts of some people.

It's not a question of whether some other believer from the church sat there and heard all that was going on. Wisdom was there and felt unease, uncomfortable. Think brothers and sisters that we can have a heart and a home where wisdom feels comfortable.

I'm happy to live with this person. That's a tremendous thing because this person is seeking to have me in every thought. Wonderful.

Verse 34 Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a disgrace to any people. In the old covenant they said nation in the new covenant we say church. Righteousness exalts a church in God's eyes but sin in a church is a disgrace.

It's an absolute disgrace if sin is not judged and spoken against and rooted out so that sinners come into the midst of that church, they feel uncomfortable hypocrites feel uncomfortable that's the church that God loves. Righteousness exalts a church and when we speak about a church we know it's not a building, it's people and when each person in a church is righteous, that exalts a church in God's eyes. And when you speak about a nation you look at all the 200 and more nations in the world today and it's impossible to find even one where there is righteousness.

All the nations are going down. Verse 35 The king's favor, and we can think of that as King Jesus, his favor is towards a servant who acts wisely. That means the Lord seeks to bless, he's pleased with those who act wisely.

That's why God could say about Jesus this is my son in whom I'm well pleased because he watched him for 30 years and he saw that in everything Jesus sought to do it in the wisest way. He had a flesh with lusts and desires just like you and me but he mortified those lusts when they tempted him to say something or do something in a wrong way and he sought the spirit for wisdom and he did things in the wisest way and the father was pleased. The king's favor is towards a servant who acts wisely but his anger is towards him who acts shamefully.

It's not an easy thing to be a servant of God. A whole lot of people who claim to be servants of God, claim to be servants of God. The most important thing about a servant is that he has some wisdom.

Otherwise he'd be an absolute disgrace to this God whom he claims to represent. Wisdom in his words and his actions and that can't come unless there's wisdom in our heart and in our thoughts. Now we come to chapter 15 verse 1 A gentle answer turns away wrongs but a harsh word stirs up anger and I think all of us have enough experience in this area so that we could have written that ourselves that when someone is angry, the easiest thing to do and that's what a fool does is to be angry in return and to speak a harsh word and sometimes we can be good Buddhists and control ourselves and control ourselves and control ourselves for all the 25 things that that person said against me and then speak one sentence, oh that's enough to make up for all that I control myself in the 25 sentences I heard from that person.

That one sentence is concentrated poison at the end of the dart flung. Sometimes it can be one word yeah, a harsh word. There we need see our great need to die to go into the dying of Jesus so that when people are upset with us and angry something's not boiling it's cool inside it's cool.

That person cannot switch on my stove it's impossible for him to switch on my stove and make me boil and why in the world do you let him turn on your stove? No. If he wants to turn on his stove, that's his business but mine, I'm going to not let it boil. I'm going to enter into a death here and not that where I keep quiet.

Keeping quiet can be another type of Buddhism. Christianity is to speak and I'll tell you when somebody is angry with you, it's much easier to keep quiet than to speak you try that. To speak a gentle good word in return is a hundred times more difficult than to keep quiet.

When you keep quiet you treat him like a dog I'm the great godly man here you're a dog. But humble yourself brother, humble yourself that person's also got a flesh just like you humble yourself and speak a

good word and speak gently, softly when the shopkeeper loses his temper or the boss in the office loses his temper to keep quiet and be arrogant and go away that's not the thing. Speak a good word there good word, a humble word that shows whether we are eager to walk in the way that Jesus went but a harsh word stirs up anger and the opposite of a harsh word is not silence the opposite of a harsh word is a good word, a gentle word and that's what turns away Rob.

Verse 2 in the good news bible it says when wise people speak they make knowledge attractive but stupid people spout nonsense and we must not imagine that everyone who claims to be a believer is wise it says here when a wise person speaks he makes knowledge attractive he doesn't make the word of god boring and since we all have opportunity to share the word of god in the church here is a word we must take to heart that whether I speak for one minute or one hour I must not make myself boring to people.

That totally proves that I am a stupid fool and in every church I think in the whole world there are people who don't have light on this I remember when I was in Switzerland church there somebody asked me brother do you have any brothers in your church who get up and just bore everyone with what they say because I realize that is a universal problem you know but the thing is the people who do it themselves don't have any light on the fact that they are boring everyone with a whole lot of nonsense even though they are quoting the scriptures here and there and we must not get a reputation for being boring and sometimes you may not know what reputation you have because the brothers and sisters are so good and they are bearing with you and they don't tell you the truth then you need to go and

ask your wife because she is a little more honest and probably tell you you are a bit boring today and you spoke a bit too long or go and listen to the tape and see was that attractive what I said and when is it that we become boring I'll tell you when we become boring when we go outside of our calling if God has not called us for example to teach we begin to teach then we go outside of our calling or when we go beyond the level of our experience and our faith it says prophesy according to the proportion of your faith and we don't do that we want to try and show that we are mighty whole hearted great men of God just next to Peter and John and all that and then people are bored they are not fool they don't think us next to Peter or John any such thing they just sit and bear with us till we

get some light on ourselves and brothers and sisters the number of such people must get reduced in our midst we must have light that what we speak must it says when there is wisdom it makes knowledge attractive and when I don't have grace to speak any more than say two minutes in an attractive way that's enough for me then I sit down and as we grow God will be able to give us more grace and if we are really earnestly desiring the gifts of the spirit especially to prophesy then God will give us grace because we are lazy to seek God for spiritual gifts and we are not whole hearted about bearing the cross in our daily life then of course we will have nothing to say but if we are not bearing the cross in our daily situations then also we don't have wisdom it is those who bear the cross in

their daily lives who God gives them wisdom so that they can speak and present what knowledge they have got in an attractive way let's remember this verse wise people speak they make knowledge attractive I have often thought of this word which two verses in scripture that come to my mind many times when it comes to speaking the word of God and I want to share that with all those whom God calls to speak the word in the meetings, take this seriously dear brothers, I don't want to condemn anyone but I want to encourage everyone that we press on to perfection in this area one is Luke 24 you know the story of Jesus after his resurrection he walked with those two disciples to Emmaus and after he left them, you know what they said he had been speaking to them for a long time, I don't know how

many hours he spoke to them but it wasn't boring it says in verse 32 after Jesus left they said one to another didn't our hearts burn within us while he spoke to us wonderful word, when Jesus speaks people's hearts burn and when Jesus speaks in the church people's hearts burn and when Jesus is not speaking but just some man who thinks too much of himself is getting up and airing his ideas then people are bored you can't be bored when your hearts are burning and dear brothers, particularly the brothers who have ministry in the responsibility in the church, we have to really pray that God will give us such grace that we'll humble ourselves and recognize our limitations and that God will give us such grace that it will be Jesus speaking that people's hearts will burn when they hear and the

other word is 1 Samuel 3 1 Samuel 3 verse 19 these are two words I can't remember for how many years they've been in my mind, certainly more than 10 years, maybe 15 or more years I've thought much about these verses and I've cried out to God and prayed and said Lord grant that it will be like that with my words I want to humble myself stupid idiot that I am please let these words be true in my life that when I speak people's hearts will burn and 1 Samuel 3 verse 19 like with Samuel that when we speak our words it says in the margin do not fall to the ground it's a tremendous thing that if I speak 10 words and not even one word falls to the ground that's quite a standard to come to every word hits home we've got to humble ourselves seek God and be faithful in our hidden life when wise

people speak they make knowledge attractive but stupid people they just spout nonsense that is a lot of ideas which don't help anyone in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 10 there's a very beautiful paraphrase in the living bible that says about the preacher Ecclesiastes chapter 12 and verse 10 it says the preacher was not only a wise man but he was a good teacher Ecclesiastes 12 verse 10 he was not only a wise man but he was a good teacher he not only taught the people what he knew but he taught it to them in an interesting manner the mark of a good teacher even if it's in secular teaching that you can teach your students in an interesting way and that should be our desire wherever God gives us the opportunity to minister to the word that we not only teach but teach in an interesting way

that people are gripped very important a wise man makes knowledge attractive let's covet that more and more let's covet it dear brothers and sisters we got to work with it we got to be wholehearted and diligent to meditate on the word of God to work out our own salvation and then God will give us grace no man can do it on his own but God can give us grace verse 3 Proverbs 15 verse 3 the Lord sees what happens everywhere he's watching us whether we do good or evil and that is a wonderful truth for saints it comforts the saints that he knows every detail of what is happening to me like it says in Job 23 verse 10 in the living bible he knows every detail of what's happening to me and that's my comfort that he hasn't forgotten about me in my trial and my sorrow my difficulty he knows the

Lord's eyes are watching and it's also something that helps me to live before God's face but it's the same truth which brings terror into the hearts of the sinner and the hypocrite when he realizes that God is watching however much he may fool the other believers that he's a wholehearted person God sees the hypocrisy in his life God sees the unrighteous things he does in his private life God sees the Lord is watching in every place watching the evil and the good verse 4 a soothing tongue is a tree of life think of that a tree of life in the garden of Eden and a tree of life right inside our mouth it's wonderful if we can have a tree of life inside our mouth but it need not be a tree of life it can also be like James says the fire of hell two possibilities with the tongue it can be the

fire of hell or it can be a tree of life think of that brothers that God's own nature can come forth through our tongue through the words that we speak and all it says is a healing tongue a gentle tongue think of that it's

not a some great clever revelation from the scripture that you have to say before it becomes a tree of life but that you develop the habit of just speaking a little more gently saying the truth but with a little more gentleness and desiring to bring healing a healing tongue you're seeking to bring healing not just to make the wound worse a healing tongue is a tree of life it's amazing how much the book of Proverbs has got to speak about the tongue it's good for us to read it again and again so that we see something of the importance given to it but perversion in it

crushes the spirit when there's a perverted tongue that can crush the spirit of other people and finally ruin my own spirit as well that's a good verse for us to think about a soothing tongue is a tree of life perversion in it crushes the spirit verse 5 a fool rejects his father's discipline but he who regards reproof is prudent or as the living bible says a wise son considers each suggestion of his father the mark of wisdom again is to be willing to receive correction and advice from earthly fathers, from spiritual fathers and to consider each suggestion and to think about it seriously that requires humility but it says that is the way to wisdom but a fool, a foolish son, he doesn't care for his father's discipline, he just thinks about the fact that he knows everything himself well

that's maybe a good verse with which to close we'll continue our study next week he who considers reproof and who regards it means values it he who values correction will become wise value correction brother, sister that's the way to wisdom many have not become wise because they have despised words of correction

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