

# (Proverbs) ch.15:5 - 16:4

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of submission to authority, righteousness, and the fear of the Lord in maintaining a joyful heart and living a holy life.*

**Duration:** 1:00:53

**Scripture:** Proverbs 15:12-16

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Godly Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of possibility and how it relates to our relationship with God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of committing our works and plans to the Lord, trusting that He will establish them according to His purpose. The sermon also highlights the idea that God can even use wicked individuals to fulfill His purposes, as seen in the example of Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. The preacher encourages believers to humble themselves and accept God's will, knowing that He judges our motives and desires us to find joy in Him. Additionally, the sermon emphasizes the importance of honesty and the fear of the Lord, stating that it is better to have a little honestly earned than to accumulate great wealth through dishonest means. The preacher also emphasizes the significance of our thoughts and words, stating that God is pleased with friendly words and that dishonest money brings grief to the whole family.

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## Transcript

15 this evening, Proverbs chapter 15. We stopped last week in verse 5. A fool rejects his father's discipline but he who regards reproof is prudent or wise. We considered the Living Bible paraphrase of that which says that a wise son considers each suggestion.

Only a fool will despise his father's advice. We noticed right through the book of Proverbs the emphasis there is right from the first chapter on the submission of a son to a father. That's not only in the home but also in the church.

If we recognize that someone has more wisdom than us, it's good to submit to the authority of such a person. Verse 6. Much wealth is in the house of the righteous but trouble is in the income of the wicked. Now when it says there is much wealth in the house of the righteous, we can ask, how much is much? There was a very saintly man who said that all the wealth in the world is not enough to satisfy the greed of a greedy man.

So a greedy man, even when he has everything there is in the world, is still not satisfied. Then how does a righteous man have much wealth in his house? Because for the righteous man much wealth means enough to meet all my earthly needs. That's it.

My God will supply all your needs, not all that you want but all your needs. And when we have enough to meet all our earthly needs, then we can say there is much wealth there and it is earned righteously. But in the income of the wicked who earns it by cheating and stealing and borrowing and not returning and by all types of wrong methods, there is trouble along with that income.

And when the trouble comes, it's no use the wicked person asking God to help him because he has to reap what he has sown. So it's good to be satisfied with God providing our needs and to be thankful that whatever wealth we have is righteously earned and doesn't belong to anybody else. Verse 7, the Living Bible paraphrase here reads like this, only the good can give good advice and rebels can't do that.

We know that in Romans 15 14 it says that I know brethren that your heart is full of goodness and you're able to exhort and admonish one another. And that's what it says here too. We would all like to give good advice to others and that's a very good treasure to have to be able to help other people spiritually.

But it has a requirement and that basic requirement is that our hearts are rooted in goodness. So we see that a wise man is a man whom you cannot move out of goodness no matter what you do or say. If we can be moved away from goodness towards other people, that proves we are not wise.

So basically wisdom consists of goodness. Only the good can give good advice and rebels, they can't do that. So we see that goodness precedes, comes before wisdom.

Verse 8 in the Living Bible again, the Lord hates the gifts of the wicked but delights in the prayers of his people. Now this is a principle that we need to understand very clearly and you'll understand the reason why we stand for certain things in the church. And that is that God cannot receive a gift from a person who has not first given him his life and his heart.

That means if a person is unconverted and he comes and gives gifts for God's work, if we know that the person is unconverted, we should not receive it. Because we stand there as representing God and God doesn't receive gifts from those who are unconverted. And his representatives should also not receive gifts from the unconverted.

And that is why we see the folly of all these Christian magazines that are sent out to everybody saying, please send us your donations and gifts for this particular project we have. And all types of people send in and they're not bothered who sends it in. They just receive it.

They're very happy when they get some money and without bothering to find out, is this person who is giving this money someone who is entitled to give to God or not? In the New Testament, we read in the third episode of John and verse 7, third episode of John verse 7, it says that among the early Christians, those who were full-time Christian workers in the first century, they went out for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ and see this, accepting nothing from the Gentiles, which is a word for unbelievers. They received nothing. That is a principle of the church.

Accepting nothing from the Gentiles. We don't want anything from the unbelievers because the unbelievers are not permitted to contribute for God's work. The unbelievers are not permitted to put money into the offering box for God's work.

If they do it without our knowledge, we can't help it. But we'd like to make that clear so that people realize that we don't want their money. God wants their heart.

And he cannot take money from a person who has not first given him his heart and life. And so that was a principle the early apostles were very careful to follow, accepting nothing from the unbelievers. And we must be very careful that we follow the same principle, accepting nothing from the unbelievers.

The same principle applies to getting some heathen man to come and play a musical instrument, or to sing a solo, just because he's got a good voice. There are all types of music cassettes being produced now, particularly in South India, with all types of cinema stars and others singing and cinema musicians providing the music. Do you think God can accept that? No.

That's a gift of the wicked. It's an abomination to the Lord. Those cassettes are an abomination to the Lord.

He can't accept that. Let's see that very clearly. He hates it, but he delights in the prayers of his people.

The prayer of the upright, it says in verse 8, is his delight. Not everybody's prayer. We know from James 5.16 that the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

A righteous man's prayer has power before God in the way in which some other believer who is not so righteous, his prayer does not have that same effectiveness, because it says the prayer of the upright is his delight. So not all believers' prayers are equal in God's eyes. Everybody can pray, but if a believer is more upright and more righteous, there is more effectiveness in that prayer.

That's the principle of scripture, and we can't get around it. It's a fact. Verse 9, the way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness.

This is along with the same theme as verse 8, that the way a wicked person goes is an abomination to the Lord. But he loves, God loves in a special way those who pursue righteousness, or as one translation has it, the one who is bent on honesty. Think of a believer who is bent on being absolutely honest.

God loves him in a special way in which he does not love that other believer who is a bit of a and clever plans in his mind to seek some gain for himself. Yeah, he can sit there as a believer. God doesn't love him in the same way.

That teaches us that God does not love all people in the same way. God does not love even all believers equally. That is a fantastic deception to believe that, because not all believers are bent on honesty.

Not all believers are pursuing after righteousness, as it says here. Jesus said in John 14 and verse 21, he said, he who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me, and he who loves me in this way will be loved by my father, and I will love him. So there we see that God specially loves those who keep the commandments of Jesus.

And that is righteous of God, if he loves some believers more than he loves others. We have to face the fact that all of us believers sitting here, God does not love all of us equally. We might as well face up to that fact, that all of us sitting here, God looks down upon us, and he does not love all of us equally.

He loves some of us more than he loves the others. Not because he likes their face, or any such partiality, but because he sees in the hidden light what we cannot see. In the hidden light, he sees some people who

are bent on uprightness, and who are pursuing after righteousness, and he loves them more.

And you can't blame God for that. That is righteous. That's a law.

So it's a fact that he loves some brothers more than he loves others, and he loves some sisters more than he loves the others. It's a fact. He is a loving father, but he loves some more than the others, because it says he loves him who pursues after righteousness.

And therefore he does certain things for those whom he loves in a special way, which some of the others may find that he doesn't do for them. He did a lot of things for Jesus, because Jesus loved the Father supremely. But I can't assume that he will do everything that he did for Jesus for me, if I am not walking in the same way.

You see, it's very easy for me to say what God did for Jesus, he will do for me. Yes, potentially we can say he can do it for me. But for him to do it for me, I have to love the Father in the same way that Jesus loved the Father.

Then he will certainly do it for me. All it means is there is no partiality. What he did for Jesus, he can do and will do for me, if I fulfill the same conditions.

And what he has done for another brother in the church, he will do for you, if you love God in the same way as that brother loved. If you forsake everything in the way that that brother has forsaken everything, God will love you in the same way and bless you in the same way. But not otherwise.

He loves him who pursues after righteousness, who is bent on honesty, who is bent on cleansing out guile from his life. Verse 10, stern discipline is for him who forsakes the way. He who hates reproof will die.

The word of God in the book of Proverbs speaks much about reproof and correction, that if we hate correction and we get offended when somebody corrects us, then it's like a patient whom the doctor examines and says, well, I can't give much hope that he will recover. I think he'll die. That's what it says.

He can't receive correction. Then there's not much hope for that person. No, not much hope if he hates correction.

It's not a question of getting offended. I may receive it, but I may not like it. Hating, I may not say anything back when somebody corrects me, but I may still hate it.

Somebody corrects me and I keep quiet, but I can still hate that correction. Then I come under the category of those who hate correction, even though I kept quiet when somebody corrected me. The question is not whether I kept quiet.

No. The question is, do I love it as something which is keeping me on the way of life? If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. And we read in 1 Corinthians 11, 31 and 32 that when God judges us, he disciplines us so that we should not be judged with the world.

And so strong discipline, stern discipline is for the one who goes out of that way. If we are really one whom God delights in, God does not discipline those who are not his sons, but those who are his sons, he disciplines very strongly because he does not want them to miss the way so that they are not judged with the rest of the world. Verse 11.

Sheol, that is hell, and Abaddon, that is destruction, lie open before the Lord. That means even hell and the bottomless pit and all that is before the Lord, he sees it just like open. We cannot see it.

We do not even know where it is. But before God, it is all open. Then he says, if that is open before God, how much more the hearts of men.

Think of that. We say, well, there is not a very great truth in that. That is something I know, that God knows everything in our hearts.

Well, I have come to see this, that if I really believe this, if I really believe this, then I will have a hidden life of purity. That is the test of whether I believe it or not, that my heart is completely stripped open before God all the time. Morning, noon and night, the motives and the ambitions and the desires and the motive with which I say something to someone and the motive with which I write something to someone and the motive with which I do certain actions and everything is just open before the Lord.

Whatever I may say to a God sees the attitude and the motive underneath, it is stripped open before God and he sees everything. He sees the motive with which I visit people and the motive with which I invite people to my home. He sees every single thing and if I really, really, really believe it, it will make a fantastic difference to my hidden life.

And I am sure that that verse, even though people say they know it, the vast majority of believers don't believe it at all. They don't believe it. The hearts are open before the Lord.

He sees every single thing. There is not a single thing hidden in any corner which is not hidden. We can conceal it from every single brother and sister in the church, even from our own wife or husband for 50 years, but God is not deceived even for a second.

He sees through the whole thing. If I can live in the realization of that, then what a fantastic desire there will be in me for purity in the hidden life. Verse 12, a scoffer, back to the subject of correction, does not love one who reproves him.

In the living Bible, a mocker stays away from wise men because he hates to be scolded. I prefer the use of the word rebuke, scolding has got a bad connotation. James 1 says that God never scolds.

There is a difference between scolding and rebuking, even to our children. And we can understand this. There is a difference between scolding a child and rebuking a child.

God rebukes, but he doesn't scold. And so rebuking is a better word here. A mocker, that means one who is not really interested in wisdom, stays away from wise men because he hates to be rebuked.

And that's one reason some people get offended and leave the church, because they do not like to be rebuked, even in the meeting, leave alone personally. I mean, it would require tremendous grace to receive a correction personally, but there are people who can't even take it in a meeting, a correction, a word of correction, and they get upset with it and disturbed with it, and then they steer clear of wise people and mingle around with fools who will just flatter them and say nice things to them because they don't like to be rebuked, and therefore they miss the way of wisdom. And that's interesting that the book of Proverbs has got such a tremendous emphasis on this matter of receiving correction, that's good for us to bear in mind.

Verse 13, just let me say this, that if you consider any person as wiser than you, and if you find in some situation that he does rebuke you, my advice to you would be humble yourself and accept it. Either that, or you have to profess that I don't believe that person's wiser than me. Then of course, we don't have to receive correction from someone who may be carnal himself.

Of course, if you think that someone is carnal, then there's no need to receive correction from such a person because he may not know the right way. But if you reckon that someone is wiser and spiritual, then the wisest thing to do is to accept correction. Verse 13, it says here, a joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.

There's a lot of connection between the heart and the face, and we know that. You can see very often the feelings in the heart by the expression on a person's face. I mean, that's been true right from the days of Cain, when God asked Cain, why is your face fallen? Something's wrong in your life.

And it's always true that when there's discouragement and depression and the face is fallen, something is wrong somewhere. Because a joyful heart, one that has found its joy not in money, not in honor, not in earthly pleasure, but one that has found its joy in the Lord, and therefore an unchanging joy rejoiced in the Lord. A joyful heart makes a cheerful face.

It doesn't mean he'll always be laughing, but there will be a gladness in his face. He won't be in a bad mood. But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.

Discouragement breaks the spirit in a wrong way, in a bad way, so that we cannot be effective for the Lord. So this is something that we can think about. I believe you could even think of it in terms of the gift of humor.

See, this is something which we need to understand, because the Bible does speak about foolish jesting as something to be avoided. There are dirty jokes and jokes which are cracked at the expense of others, which are unchristian. But there is also a humor which is Christian, which is a gift of God.

Humor is not something that Satan invented. It's something that God gave to man. But just like all his other gifts, it has been abused so that humor is mostly now dirty jokes and jokes cracked at the expense of others.

But there is a clean humor which is a very good thing for us to have. It's the sort of thing which is very often the mark of a good relationship between people. I personally felt that you know that a husband and wife have a good relationship with each other when they can joke with one another, not necessarily when they can pray with one another.

Sometimes a husband and wife can pray with one another and still not have a good relationship. But if they can have good humor with one another, then you know there's something clear. And you know that even in personal relationships.

It's humor that is very often the test of a relationship. Seriousness all the time indicates there's something wrong. A joyful heart makes a cheerful face.

And I believe humor, I just mentioned that in passing, is something which we need to have when kept clean, not at the expense of others, and never dirty. Verse 14, the Living Bible, it reads like this, A wise man is hungry for truth, while the mocker feeds on trash. Trash means garbage.

Trash means rubbish. For example, these useless novels. There are a lot of novels that are available these days which come under that category of trash.

And that's one mark of a fool that he spends his time reading all these useless novels. And any person who is seriously interested in being wise would never waste his time reading all these useless novels that are being written these days. It's all right for children.

It's for small children. But once you've grown out of the stage of being children, we're not to spend our time with all that. A wise man is hungry for truth, while the mocker feeds on trash, particularly the types of books that are written these days.

Verse 15, again from the Living Bible, When a man is gloomy, everything seems to go wrong. It's back to what we said earlier. When he's cheerful, everything seems right.

You see, for a miserable man, every day is unhappy. Something or the other is wrong every day, because his basic attitude is a miserable attitude. And there are some people who are generally miserable most of the time, for no reason or the other.

And they haven't understood the secret of rejoicing in the Lord, of believing with all their heart the truth of Romans 8.28, that God makes all things work together for good to those who love him, to those who are called according to his purpose. So there is no need ever for a true child of God to be gloomy and sad. It's because of his wrong attitude to life that he finds everything seems to go wrong.

But when he's cheerful, because he's found his joy in the Lord and he believes that everything that happens to him is working for good, then everything turns out right. Verse 16, Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and turmoil with it. That means, if as a result of being honest, you become poor, it's better to be poor than to have that little extra money, which you got by dishonesty and all the turmoil, the turmoil in your conscience, the turmoil outside that can come into your life and into your home.

Better is a little honestly earned in a God-fearing way with the fear of the Lord rather than great treasure, much more than we need, which we try to accumulate by cheating and doing all types of things. No, there's turmoil with that and any sensible person will know this is the right way to go. It's interesting, this is another subject which comes again and again in the book of Proverbs, that it's better to be honest and poor than to be dishonest and rich.

Verse 17, Better is a dish of, it says vegetables, but in the margin it says something worse than that, herbs. You know what herbs are? It's the stuff which Ayurvedic medicines are made of. It's not very tasty stuff.

Better is a dish of herbs where love is. You see, vegetables can be made so nice that they can even taste better than some non-vegetarian dishes, but herbs, think of that, better is a dish of herbs where love is than roasted beef and hatred with it, a fattened ox. Here is this non-vegetarian husband getting after his wife for fattened ox all the time and he's quite happy to stir up problems in the house so long as he gets his beef and doesn't matter if the love disappears from the home, that's not important to him.

He's an idiot. No, better have a dish of herbs and have love than all this non-vegetarian fancy meals and all the unrest. I'm not saying that if you have non-vegetarian you have to have unrest, but what I'm saying is, what the word of God is saying is that love is more important than the type of food that your wife can cook or that you get in a home.

Speaking about a home, you see, a home and the home, there's something cooked and maybe it's not up to the mark. Never mind. If you love one another, even if it's just herbs on the table, praise the Lord, we love one another and we're going to enjoy this.

Well, that's all. My wife knows only how to cook herbs. Fine, that's okay.

We'll enjoy it and love one another. That's what the word of God says than getting this fattened ox and creating all the unrest in the house. Yeah, praise the Lord.

Far better to have fellowship with your wife than to convert her into a good cook. That's basically what it means. Fellowship, much more important.

Never mind if she can't cook so well. Verse 18, let me read this to you in the Good News Bible. Hot tempers cause arguments, but patience brings peace.

Hot tempers, all arguments are caused by somebody who's got a hot temper. And the only way to bring peace is through patience. And the only people who can bring peace are the people who have acquired patience in their life.

Patience, one of the important things that we are to acquire if we are to be men of peace. We pray, Lord, make us men and women of peace. Well, it says patience brings peace.

Then God has to teach me patience in the difficult situations of life. That's how I get patience. Tribulation works patience, it says in Romans 5. Verse 19, the way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

Yeah, that's pretty clear. That laziness, it says here, is like thorns. The laziness of a man puts thorns along his pathway and he can't walk because his laziness is like thorns.

And notice here in verse 19 that the opposite of the lazy man is not a hardworking man, but it says the path of the upright. In other words, if you're lazy, you need to see many passages in the scriptures, you see a contrast like this. And you see here the contrast is that the opposite of a lazy man is an upright man.

And that means if I'm upright, I can't be lazy. If I'm lazy, I'm not upright. Verse 20, a wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.

That's another subject on which the book of Proverbs is a tremendous amount to say, and that is despising of parents, particularly when we are able to stand on our own feet and the parents have become old. That is the time when young people can begin to despise their parents. And a person who despises his parents, either because the parents are not cultured, you know, think of an old mother who has been brought up in a village and now she's living with you, say, and she doesn't know how to behave in a cultured way with your friends, and you despise her.

That shows that you are a fool. Or you can despise parents because they're not educated. Or you can despise parents because they are not so spiritual and wholehearted as you are.

And various reasons for which we can despise parents. It can be for physical reasons, it can be for intellectual reasons, cultural reasons, spiritual reasons. But anyone who despises his mother, that proves whatever wisdom he may talk about, he is a big fool.

He has no wisdom at all. A person who speaks rudely to his father or mother has no wisdom whatsoever. A wise son makes a father glad.

Even if he has to disagree, he will do it graciously and gently. No, he may have to disagree sometimes with parents. That may be there.

But with graciousness and gentleness, never in a harsh, hard way. Verse 21, folly is joy to him who lacks sense. But a man of understanding walks straight.

That's clear. Man of wisdom, he goes in a straight path. Like it says in Isaiah 30, verse 21, you will hear a voice behind you saying, this is the way.

When you miss the path and turn to the right or to the left. When you miss the track, you know, you're thinking of a particular course of action. And you think you'll go this way because you sense you can get a little advantage there.

And you feel something in your conscience, in your spirit saying, no, not that way. That's the voice of the Holy Spirit saying, don't go that way. Go the straight way.

And the man of wisdom will listen to that voice and walk straight. The man who ignores that voice because he sees if I go this way, I'll get a little gain for myself. He's really a fool.

I was reading the day in a magazine of a preacher who said that he was speaking in a meeting as a young man and he had on a watch, which is a very fancy type of watch for those days for the simple people who are sitting there. And that watch had been given him as a gift by his father. And the people were all the time looking at his watch and he felt a witness in his spirit saying, take that off.

And he thought, can't I wear what my dad's given me? Yeah, if it's a hindrance to other people, take it off. Small thing like that. And he said there, the Spirit of God began to teach him to be sensitive to small things that may stumble others.

And therefore, God could lead him on and bless him later in life. So that's it. A man of understanding, he hears that voice saying, no, don't do that or do this.

And he walks straight. Verse 22. Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors, they succeed.

And that's another thing which we have read a number of times in Proverbs. Be humble enough to receive advice from others. Don't think that we are so clever and spiritual that we can just go ahead.

Without consultation, our plans can be frustrated. It's good to consult others who are wiser so that they can give us wisdom. Verse 23.

A living Bible reads like this. Everyone enjoys giving advice. That part is true.

We all like to be those who give advice to people. And you find that particularly when somebody comes to you and says, brother, I'd like to ask your advice on something. And we feel a little nice.

Yeah, yeah. I'm glad this brother has come to me for advice now. So I'm really somebody.

I'm not that nobody that people think I am. Everybody enjoys giving advice. But how wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time.

That's another thing altogether. To say the right thing at the right time. That is the mark of maturity and wisdom.

You see, there's not only the matter of saying the right thing. There is also the right time. Sometimes it may be necessary to speak to a brother about something.

Wisdom is to know the right time to say that thing to that brother. To say the right thing at the right time. That's a wonderful thing.

A timely word. And that requires a great sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit says no.

And you hold back. You want to write something to someone. The Spirit says no and you tear it up.

You don't want to write that anymore. You wrote it, but you're not going to send it. Because you don't sense that it's the right time.

It is the right thing, but it's not the right time. We really need to seek God. Like it says about Jesus in Isaiah 50 verse 4, that His ears were opened from morning to here, what the Father had to say.

And so that He had a word in season for the weary person. Every day Jesus was ready because He was in touch with the Father. A word in season.

A right word at the right time for somebody who happened to come across His way. See brothers and sisters, we can sometimes think that the only ministry in the church is standing up here in the platform and speaking. That's not true.

In any case, we have only about three meetings a week. So the maximum number of times you can stand up here in a week is three times. But if we are in the habit of listening to what the Father has to say, we can have a right word seven times a week.

Every day to someone whom the Lord brings across our path. And that is really the greatest ministry. To be able to hear and to be a blessing to those who come across our path, even if we never have the gift to stand up here and preach.

We don't have a lust to stand up here and preach. But let's have a great longing to have this ability to hear and to be able to have a word in season for the weary one who comes across our path each day. That is a far more important thing.

Verse 24, pleasant words, sorry, the path of life leads upward for the wise that he may keep away from hell below. That means there are two ways, one going up and one going down. And we know that God created Adam from the dust of the ground and the dust belonging to the ground pulls us downward.

And there are so many things in this dust which is attracted to the dust of the earth. For example, gold. That's also one type of dust.

And the dust of which our body is made is attracted to gold dust and attracted to other creatures of dust. And our attractions are earthly because we are creatures of dust. But then, God also put inside Adam a

spirit which is attracted the other way.

And now we find in ourselves this pull, one pull that way and one pull this way. And in the situations of daily life, we find this pull upward and the pull downward. And there we decide every day in our soul.

Our soul, we can say, stands in between the body and the spirit, deciding which way shall I respond. Shall I respond only to the earthly things or shall I respond to that upward pull? The path of life leads upward for the wise. That is to respond to the pull of the spirit.

Madame Guillaume once said that the life of God which he puts into our spirit has got such a fantastic power, you know, like a rocket. She didn't use that word rocket, but he's got such a fantastic power to shoot upwards to God. He has put that life in us.

And if our life is not shooting upwards to God, it's because we are allowing all types of weights to prevent it. So it's not so much that we have to try and do something to shoot upwards to God, but it's just a question of throwing out these weights. And the life which God has put in will automatically shoot upwards towards God.

That is the secret. It's because of weights that the progress is so slow with some believers. It's not a question of telling him, brother, be more zealous.

No, it's a question of throwing out some of the weights. Otherwise, even if he's more zealous, it'll still be slow because there are weights. A way of life is upward for the wise that he may keep away from hell below.

Verse 25, the Lord will tear down the house of the proud. The other day, we were considering in a meeting that God is not our adversary. As we read in Isaiah 63, verse 10, the margin, he was not an adversary to them.

But here it tells us that he is an adversary to some people, and that is to the proud. You see, a person who is proud and haughty and thinks too much of himself, we have to say that God is your enemy, brother. I'm sorry to say that, but God is your enemy if you're proud of anything because God will tear down the house of the proud.

Imagine, it doesn't just say he will ignore it and leave them to themselves. That would be bad enough. No, he tears down their house.

In other words, Satan is against that man and God is also against that man. Poor man. Not only Satan's against him, but God's against him too.

He'll tear down the house of the proud, but he will establish the boundary of the widow. The Bible speaks much about God's care for the widows and the orphans and the strangers because they are the helpless people in society. And if those helpless people in society can trust in the living God, he will establish them, it says.

That is a principle that we see right through the Old Testament and New Testament that God helps. You know, in the world they say God helps those who help themselves. That's a lie.

The truth is God helps those who cannot help themselves. Those who are helping themselves, God says, all right, go ahead, you take care of yourself. But those who come to the place who say, Lord, we've got

nobody who'll help us.

We are absolutely helpless. God is on the side of those. And he establishes the boundary of the widow.

You see, this widow has got a little plot of land and those strong, powerful men are trying to encroach into her land. And God establishes that boundary and protects her home. Verse 26.

Let me read that in the Good News Bible. The Lord hates evil thoughts. That's clear.

But he's pleased with friendly words. That means God's interested in our thoughts and in our words. The way we speak to people is important because friendly words brings God's pleasure upon our life.

We must develop the habit of speaking friendly words to one another. Verse 27. Dishonest money brings grief to the whole family.

But hating bribes brings happiness. So when there's dishonest money, we earlier saw it brings turmoil in the conscience. But not only that, it ruins the whole home.

There's no blessing in dishonest money. It's far better to have honest money. And then it says here, if you want to live, you must not take bribes.

You must hate bribes. Hate bribes and you will live. What a word! What does bribing do? It makes a man partial.

When a man gets a bribe from this person, he does some favor for this person and ignores the rights of that person. So taking bribes makes a man partial. So fundamentally, this verse also warns us about being partial.

Don't be partial whether you get a bribe or not. Don't be partial towards your children, loving one and despising the other or in any other way. Impartiality is the nature of God and that is the nature we are to partake of.

Absolute impartiality that all are equal. And in the King James Version, this verse 27 reads like this, the last part, he who hates gifts will live. That is really something to come to the place where we hate gifts.

Because as children of Adam, we love gifts. We love gifts. That is in our flesh.

We love it. We love to receive. We hate to give but we love to receive.

We love gifts. And even when we say we don't want gifts, yet we are disappointed if nobody gives it to us. That is how it is in our flesh.

But there we can see how it was in Jesus. We can't say Jesus never received any gifts. People poured an alabaster box of ointment on his feet and he didn't say, no, no, no, no, I hate all that.

He was normal, natural. He could receive but he never loved it. It's not a question of receiving or not receiving.

It's a question of loving or hating. God may put us in a situation where we need to receive but if we are in that position, we have to ask ourselves. It's a very good thing to do and it's good for all of us to develop this habit whenever we receive a gift.

We don't have to reject it but we have to ask ourselves this question. Do I love this? Is there a delight in my heart in getting this? And I need to work out my salvation. Even if I keep the gift, I need to work out my salvation so that as time goes on, I don't find that same delight after some time when somebody gives a gift.

That's the way of life. He who hates gifts will live because it's a law of God that it is more blessed to give than to receive. I cannot change that law.

Nobody can change that law. There is a blessing in giving and there is no blessing in receiving. So when I receive something, I have to say, yeah, okay, somebody has given me this, I'll take it but let me remember there's no blessing in this.

There's no word of God which says there's any blessing in this. I can take it but I shouldn't love it. But there is a blessing in giving.

Jesus himself said that. It is more blessed to give than to receive. There is a blessing there.

He who hates gifts will live. Think that God can change us so thoroughly from the race of Adam that we have become the exact opposite of the race of Adam. That is a fantastic position to come to and we should not think easily that we have come there.

No, it takes quite a bit of working out our own salvation to be able to come there where I do not think in terms of getting, getting, getting, getting. But I can reverse my way of thinking. Verse 28, the Living Bible says, a good man thinks before he speaks.

That's really good advice for a lot of people. That before you speak, think. Or like a modern paraphrase of it would go like this, put mind in gear before opening mouth.

Something like that. Don't just open mouth before the mind is in gear. That means you need to think.

What do I need to think? Now this thing that I'm going to say, is it kind? Is it a kind thing to say to this person? Is it really true or is a little bit of exaggeration in it? Is it just something I heard? Let me think. Yeah, then I might find that when the mind is in gear, I may have to keep my mouth shut. A good man thinks before he speaks.

But the evil man, he pours out his evil words without a thought. It just keeps on coming. Words, words, words, words, words, words, words, words.

The mark of a fool. The Bible's proverb speaks much about that. That he can keep on speaking.

He's got an opinion about every single thing. And you find particularly when people are young, they have that tendency to think. They have an opinion about everything under the sun.

And they are quick to express it also. That is the mark of a fool. A good man, he thinks and he asks himself before he speaks whether this is necessary.

He thinks before he speaks. Verse 29. The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

That proves that the Lord is not near everyone. The man who's living in sin, the Lord is not near him, even if he calls himself a believer. The Lord is far, far, far, far from a wicked man.

But he hears the prayer of a righteous man. There again, the same truth. That everybody's prayers don't have the same value.

We come to a prayer meeting and everybody can pray. But there is a difference in the way God hears each person's prayer. That's good for us to remember that.

We can come here on Sunday morning and lift up our hands and praise God. But God is not listening to all of us in exactly the same way. No.

Because he says he listens to the prayers of the righteous. And there he sees the life behind that man who's raising his hand and raising his voice. And then he decides how much he can listen to him.

He is not the same to everyone. He listens to the prayers of the righteous. Verse 30.

Bright eyes, glad in the heart, and good news puts fat on the bones. That basically means that our physical health is dependent on good, righteous attitudes. And on having clean eyes.

Eyes that don't lust. Eyes that are bright and clear. And a righteous life that even affects our physical health.

Stop criticizing and speaking evil of others. Have good attitudes towards all people, no matter what their attitudes are towards you. It will affect our physical health as well.

And deliver us from a lot of things which doctors can never heal us from. Verse 31 and 32 is back again to the subject which Solomon, the wisest man of the Old Testament, never got tired of speaking. And that is the year that listens to the life-giving reproof or correction will dwell among the wise people.

But he who neglects discipline or he who rejects criticism harms himself. To reject criticism, the Living Bible says, is to harm yourself. But he who listens to correction acquires understanding.

And in one translation it says, the man who receives correction feels at home with the wise people. Wonderful to feel at home with wise people. But that is only if you are willing to receive correction.

Verse 33 tells us of what I believe are the two most important qualities for true spirituality and wisdom. The fear of the Lord and humility. Humility and the fear of the Lord.

Humility and fear of God will make you wise and give you honor in God's eyes. Chapter 16, verse 1. The Good News Bible says, we may make our own plans, but God has the last word. That means God is able to alter our plans through circumstances and through situations by which he prevents us from doing what we would normally want to do.

He has the last word, and that is good for us to humble ourselves and submit to his ways. We want a plan, we wanted to do this, and God suddenly altered our plan and according to circumstances we ended up doing something else. Humble ourselves and accept it.

Verse 2, the Good News Bible again, you may think everything you do is right, but the Lord judges your motives. You see, there is so clear what the Lord judges. Externally, I can say everything I do is right.

Yeah, that's clear to me, I'm doing it right. But a humble man, a God-fearing man, a wise man will say, even though I don't see anything wrong with what I'm doing, I recognize that I have got blind spots. I don't know whether you've ever seen one of those optical tricks where there's a little mark on a piece of paper, you can do it yourself, and as it passes in front of your eye at one particular point, you just cannot see that cross.

You can see it here, you can see it at one particular point, you can't see it. There is a blind spot even in our physical eye, and when you put the paper at that particular point, even though there's a cross on it, you just cannot see it, and there's nothing wrong with your vision. Not any eye doctor will tell you that.

That's a blind spot. And how much more in our heart, in our spirit. And a humble man is one who recognizes, yeah, to the best of my knowledge, I'm doing it right, but there may be something wrong.

Lord, give me light. He says, he prays the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 36 verse 9, Lord, in your light, I will see light. Otherwise, I won't see light at all.

It's not a question of me being a good Buddhist and cleansing my own soul through the power of my own soul. That's not the new and living way. The new and living way says, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, not the light of my own soul.

It's God's word that divides between soul and spirit. It's God's word that is the light that gives me light on what I don't have myself. I cannot judge myself if I'm not going into the word of God.

A lot of people trying to judge themselves who don't read the word of God, they're Buddhists. They may be able to cleanse themselves like the Buddhists are doing, but that's not Christianity. Christianity comes through reading God's word, walking in the light of that word, and getting light by which I can judge and cleanse myself.

So he who neglects the word of God will not be a true Christian. That's clear. And in the King James Version it says, the Lord weighs our spirits.

And that's a good word. That means the Lord's got a fine balance, like they weigh gold in. You know, these gold balances, very delicate.

And I may think, my motive is good. And I come into God's light and I discover that even though most of my motive was good, yet mixed with that was a little bit of selfishness, or a little bit of a desire to just hit that person. Most of my motive was good.

And the Lord weighs in this delicate balance my motives. And brothers and sisters, I'll tell you this, if we are humble and honest, we will recognize that there's a tremendous amount of mixture in our motives, in what we say and do things. Tremendous amount.

Even in our dealings with one another as brothers and sisters. Why does it say in Colossians Chapter 3, don't tell lies to one another? You think I'm getting up, we're getting up and telling lies to each other like that? No, but it is in the motives with which we say things to one another and do things to one another, there's a lying element there. There's a guile there.

And the Lord weighs it. And if I'm only bothered about that human being's testimony, I'm all right. But if I look at the Lord's balance, and I see it's not exactly in the center, and in God's light, I see light.

Lord, there was a bit of a mixed motive there. And if I cleanse myself, a day will come, and that balance will be straight. And it will be written of me as it's written in Revelation 14, about the 144,000 in their mouth, there was no guile.

How is that? They watch this balance and cleanse themselves. Praise God for that possibility. Verse 3, commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established, means that you submit to the will of God.

In all your life's future, marriage, job, everything in the future, commit your whole life to the Lord, and He will establish the plans for your life. Verse 4, the Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. We read that even Pharaoh, God could use him to fulfill a particular purpose, to show the greatness of God in the land of Egypt.

Even evil people, God uses to fulfill His purpose. And that is a wonderful thing that we see right through the scriptures, that God always turns the tables on Satan. The evil that people seek to do against God's children, God turns it back upon them.

And He uses everything for the fulfillment of His purpose. And one day, of course, these wicked will be judged permanently in that final day. We can stop there.

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