

(Proverbs) ch.20:6 - 21:8

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the rarity of true faithfulness and the importance of honesty, integrity, and diligence in spiritual and everyday life.

Duration: 1:00:30

Scripture: Proverbs 20:6-12, Matthew 7:16, Hebrews 10:22

Topics: "Diligence And Work", "Honesty And Integrity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of diligence and hard work in both earthly and spiritual matters. He references the book of Proverbs, which repeatedly teaches that laziness has no place in God's kingdom. The preacher also highlights the need for honesty in our speech, cautioning against deceitful tactics used in bargaining. He draws a parallel between the hardworking farmer who receives the first share of the crops and the person who diligently sows righteousness in their spiritual life. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to stay awake, work hard, and be honest in their dealings, both in the physical and spiritual realms.

Transcript

Proverbs chapter 20, we look at verse 6, Proverbs chapter 20 verse 6. It says, Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man? And that is not something that we necessarily do to others, in the sense that it would be very crude if we went around telling other people what faithful brothers we were. I don't think anyone is so stupid as to lose his reputation for humility by saying such things. But it's mostly to ourselves, it's to ourselves that we proclaim that we are faithful brothers or we are faithful sisters.

We are true and really faithful. And it's generally speaking true that most believers have a higher opinion about their own faithfulness than is actually the case. And this is, I believe, one of the biggest hindrances to spiritual growth when we don't have a sober estimate about our own spiritual condition.

Most men will proclaim their own faithfulness, but who can find a trustworthy man who is really honest before God and who is faithful in secret and who seeks to judge himself and see himself clearly in God's light? It says, Who can find one? That is rare. And the very fact that the Holy Spirit, through the word of God, says who can find a trustworthy man shows that it's not easy to find someone who is really got a sober and sensible estimate of his own spiritual condition. And that should be our desire, brothers and sisters, to be among those few who are really whom God can say are really trustworthy, who've got a

sober, sensible opinion about their own spiritual condition, the same opinion as God's.

That should be our longing, to see ourselves as God sees us. Verse 7, I want to read this from the Good News Bible, Children are fortunate if they have a father who is honest and does what is right. The book of Proverbs and a lot of the New Testament too places a great value on being honest.

And it's really the first step towards spirituality to be honest about our true condition. And of course, honest in all areas of life. Righteousness blesses our children.

And the word of God says that your children are really blessed if you are an honest father. Not if you're a clever one or a rich one or one who's got a big job or can give them many things, but if you're honest and you do what is right and that your children can see in you as they grow up that you always do what is right according to your conscience. How blessed children are who have such a father.

Verse 8, the king, let me read that in the Living Bible, chapter 20 and verse 8. A king sitting as judge weighs all the evidence carefully, distinguishing the true from the false. We can see that as a responsibility that we have wherever we have in any area that we have responsibility. We can begin as parents in the home.

And it speaks here of the necessity of having discernment. A father is a king in his home. And often he has to sit as a judge in situations and the great necessity of being able to discern the true from the false.

And that applies even in our work situations too. Wherever God gives us responsibility, and in a church too, the great need is to be able to discern as to what is true and what is false. A king sitting as judge weighs all the evidence carefully and distinguishes the true from the false.

Verse 9, who can say, I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin. In the Old Testament, where the book of Proverbs is found, no one could say that. No one could say, I have cleansed my heart.

In the Old Testament, you don't see the distinction between the heart and the flesh. The Holy Spirit had not come and they did not have light in this area at all. But it's quite foolish for someone who is living in the new covenant age to go back to Proverbs chapter 20 verse 9 and to say, who can say, I have cleansed my heart.

Because it is the will of God today that we have a clean heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And that we have a heart which is sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, as it says in Hebrews chapter 10, cleansed by the blood of Christ so that there is nothing that defiles our heart.

That's important that we see that distinction, even though in our flesh there dwells no good thing, that we can keep our heart clean and our heart pure from all sin. Verse 10, differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the Lord. That refers to any type of cheating in buying and selling.

It's interesting to see how many times in the book of Proverbs, it speaks about being unrighteous in buying and selling. And there's a lot of it in the world. And we have to be very careful that as believers, we never are involved in any type of unrighteousness in this area of differing weights and differing measures.

We don't do business like that, but what it means is that we are to give a person, if you're a businessman selling something in a shop, that if someone is buying one kilo, you give him one kilo. Now we are not

selling things in a shop, but it speaks in James chapter 5 about giving what is due to those who have worked for us. It says in verse 4 of James 5, the pay of those who have mowed your fields and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you.

And the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. And that teaches us that it's possible for even believers not to be righteous in paying what is due to those who have worked for them. Of course, that's a very common thing in the world, where people try to get work out of people and pay the minimum possible.

But God is a righteous judge who sees whether we take advantage of the poor who work for us. And if we do that, it says in James 5 verse 4, their cry of our unrighteousness against them reaches the ears of the Lord with whom there is no partiality. So we have to be very careful, like the businessman has to give one kilo to that person who is buying one kilo, we have to be careful that we give what is due to those who work for us.

And it's better to err on the side of giving a little less when we think of the seriousness of our accountability in the day of judgment in this matter. Verse 11, the character, this is from the Living Bible, of even a child can be known by the way he acts, whether what he does is pure and right. And that's basically what Jesus said in Matthew 7, 16, that by their fruits you shall know them.

That even of a child's character is known by the way he behaves. By their fruits you shall know them, right from childhood onwards. Verse 12, the hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made both of them.

Or as the Living Bible says, if you have good eyesight and good hearing, thank God who gave them to you. Because there are many people in the world who do not have good eyesight and who do not have good hearing, that which we can take for granted. It says, thank God who gave them to you and of course the implication is, use that eyesight which God gives you for his glory.

And use that hearing ability which God gives you for his glory. When we are tempted with our eyes particularly, it's good to ask ourselves, supposing God had struck me blind, like there are many blind people in the world, how would it be? But he hasn't done that. He has given me eyesight, not for me to lust, but for me to use for his glory.

If God has given you good eyesight, remember it's God's gift. He has given you good hearing, thank God who gave them to you. Don't take that for granted.

Thank God for it and remember that he gave it to you that you might use use them both for his glory alone, for no other purpose. Verse 13 reads like this in the living Bible, if you love sleep, you will end in poverty. Stay awake, work hard and there will be plenty to eat.

This is one of the many exhortations in the book of Proverbs towards diligence and hard work, emphasized so many times in the book of Proverbs. It teaches that God has no place for lazy people in his kingdom, either in earthly matters or in spiritual things. There is no place for laziness.

Spirituality does not come if a man is not willing to work at it. Just like in the earthly realm, a farmer cannot have a crop if he does not work hard, even so spiritually. You remember what Paul told Timothy in 2nd Timothy chapter 2. He says, 2nd Timothy chapter 2 and verse 6, the hard-working farmer has to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. That is only righteous, that a hard-working farmer gets the first share of the crops. And spiritually too, there is a spiritual lesson.

He is not telling Timothy how to farm a field. He is talking about spiritually, if we work hard in this matter of sowing, then that person will receive the first share of the crops. The one who is really serious about plowing up his fallow ground and sowing righteousness.

So this exhortation in Proverbs is one of the many about diligence and shows the great importance of this in our spiritual life. Verse 14 is a verse that speaks about the deceit that there can be in our speech. It's a very common technique employed by people when they want to make a bargain with people, with shopkeepers or vendors. The buyer says, it's bad, it's bad, it's useless, it's good for nothing.

And thereby he beats the person down to a lower price. And then when he's got it for that low price, he goes back home and says, see what a bargain I got for this wonderful thing. There was a deception there.

Now that's all right for worldly people to engage in that type of deception. It's not teaching us there that we shouldn't bargain. It's not teaching there that we should give any price that people ask.

By all means, get the price down. But all it's saying there is, don't tell a lie in order to do that. Don't tell a lie saying it's useless when you know very well it's not useless.

And just because you want him to bring the price down, you say it's bad, or you can get a better thing somewhere else when you know very well you can't. It's not worth it. And there we can find how believers can be so careless in their speech, in little things.

Their motive may be good in trying to get a person to come to a reasonable price for an article, but the method they adopt is sinful in saying something which is not really true. And when the Bible says that we are to love the truth, it means that we are to love the truth in all areas, particularly in our speech, to cleanse ourselves from all lying even in this area of buying and selling. Verse 15, there is gold and an abundance of jewels, but the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing.

Now that's very similar to what we read in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 3 and 4 about the woman who is not to adorn herself with gold, or ornaments, or fancy clothes, but with a meek and a quiet spirit, which is of great value in God's eyes. And that meek and quiet spirit is far more valuable than gold. Or as the Good News Bible says, if you know what you're talking about, you have something more valuable than gold or jewels.

In other words, when we speak, if we are speaking from that which we have lived and experienced, then that is far more precious than gold or jewels. It's really referring to wisdom. Verse 16, let me read that in the Good News Bible, anyone who is stupid enough to promise to be responsible for a stranger's debts ought to have his own property held to guarantee payments.

That's again one of the many exhortations found in the Book of Proverbs against standing as a guarantee for someone who is unknown. It speaks there about a stranger, someone with whom you haven't yet come into a relationship. I believe it is right to stand for those with whom we have come to a committed relationship in the body of Christ.

And when I say that, I don't mean everybody who sits in the same assembly, because many can sit in an assembly and yet not, you may not have come into a relationship of committal to one another. It's one thing to have confidence in a person, and it's another thing to have fellowship with a person. We have

fellowship with all brothers, but we don't necessarily have confidence in all brothers, because some of them are not yet very stable.

We've got nothing against them, but they're not very steady. And so, we're to be careful that we don't, in the guise of a false love, stand guarantee for someone with whom we have not yet come to the place of confidence. And that's basically how we are to apply it in our day, that it's a stupid thing to promise to pay somebody else's debts, when the Word of God tells us ourselves that we are not to be in debt.

Oh no man, anything. Here's somebody else who wants to borrow something, and he comes to you to stand as a guarantee for him, and out of a false understanding of love you do that. Word of God says, if you're so stupid, you deserve to have your property taken away from you.

Verse 17, in the Good News Bible, it reads like this, What you get by dishonesty, you may enjoy like the finest food, but sooner or later, it'll be like a mouthful of sand. You know how it is to have a mouthful of sand. That's not at all a good feeling to have, and yet that is the result, it says here, of that which we acquire by dishonesty.

In the beginning, what you gain by cheating or dishonesty or cheating the government or any other thing, you can enjoy like the finest food for a while, but afterwards, it becomes like gravel in your mouth. Verse 18, prepare plans by consultation and make war by wise guidance. Or as the Good News Bible says, get good advice and you will succeed, and don't go charging into battle without a plan.

What it basically means is that we should seek for advice in our life from those who have more experience and maturity and wisdom, and that will protect us from many follies. If only those who are younger in age and experience would take some of these exhortations seriously, it would save them from a tremendous amount of folly. There are many young people who make absolute fools of themselves in many things that they do, because they do not seek for correction or advice from those who have a little more maturity and wisdom than themselves.

And then, of course, the sad thing is that they can do so many foolish things that people gradually begin to lose confidence in them altogether, when they need not have to become like that. If only they had been a little humble and sought for advice. Prepare plans by consultation.

It's good to consult and take advice before we take a step forward, particularly in marriage matters and things like this. Such a lot of folly in boy-girl relationships. Perhaps I've seen the maximum amount of folly among young people more than in any other area, just because they won't take advice.

Because they think they know everything, and then they make fools of themselves and everybody loses confidence in them. And we could speak of many other areas, even in the church. So it's good to seek for advice.

It's good that we lack wisdom in so many areas. And then we can look at verse 19. It says in the Good News Bible, a gossip can never keep a secret.

So stay away from people who talk too much. That's a very good exhortation. If you find a person who is always talking and who talks too much, it's good not to keep company with such person.

Because he will only defile you. He can never be a help to you, he or she. No, it says stay away from people who talk too much.

Because when they talk so much, they also sin. In the multitude of words, it's impossible to avoid sin. Seek fellowship with those who don't talk so much.

Those are the people who have more wisdom. A fool's voice is known by his much speaking. And in the Living Bible, it reads like this, verse 19.

Don't tell your secrets to a gossip unless you want them broadcast to the world. See, this is an area we have to be very careful about. Because I have found through the years that in spite of all the exhortations we have about gossiping and backbiting, there are very few who take it so seriously as to eliminate it completely from their lives.

Most people don't take it seriously enough that they have to give an account to God in the final day about every idle word they speak. And therefore we have to be particularly careful when we find someone is not taking this matter too seriously, that we don't share things with such people. Because many, many people do not know how to keep a secret, how to keep something confidential.

There are very few people, I believe, even in the church, who know how to keep something entirely to themselves. Very, very few. And so we're not to be foolish in sharing our problems or difficulties or anything with people who do not know how to keep things to themselves.

Don't share something that's in your heart to anybody and everybody, not even in the church. Because most of them don't have sense of understanding in this area. Verse 20, it says, He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness.

In time of darkness means in his time of need, there will not be a light to light his way if he curses his father or his mother. Now, that can be even behind their back. Like Ham, the son of Noah, we read in Genesis 9, he went and spoke something bad about his father to his brothers.

And there was a curse that came not only on him, but on his children. Because God took that very seriously. That was a part of the spirit of rebellion.

And that teaches us that it's a very dangerous thing, even if you see some weakness in your father or mother, to speak about it behind their back. They always need to have the sheet to cover it. If you have seen it, cover it.

Never mind. And we can say, equally, do not speak about the faults that you see in your father-in-law or your mother-in-law. Because that is your wife's parents or your husband's parents.

And there people can be less careful, who are very careful when it comes to their own parents. And there we can see that God tests each person's faithfulness. It's in so many, many, many little things that God sees whether a man is faithful.

Like we read in verse 6, everybody is ready to think that he is very faithful. But when God examines according to little, little, little, little, little things listed in the book of Proverbs, he finds that a very few who are really trustworthy, who are really faithful before his face in secret, in all these things. But the world is full of believers who think that they are very faithful brothers and sisters, who are very wholehearted and zealous and all that, deceiving themselves.

No, we have to take all these little things carefully and live before God's face, because we have to go out and finally give an answer to him. And like it says here, if we do that in our time of need, we'll find that there is no light along our path. His lamp will go out in time of darkness, like the foolish virgins who found that when the darkness came, their lamps went out.

Verse 21, it says in the Good News Bible, the more easily you get your wealth, the less good it will do you. Don't envy a man who has earned a fantastic inheritance. That's not necessarily the best way to get money.

But the Word of God places much more emphasis on working and earning it oneself. And it says, another possible translation of this can be like this, as in the Living Bible, you can perhaps make a fortune from cheating, but there is a curse that goes along with it. This is another one of those subjects that comes again and again in the Book of Proverbs.

Don't make a fortune through dishonesty or through cheating. It's not worth it. You'll find there's a curse that comes along with it, a curse that can come down to your family that inherits that cheated, dishonest money.

Verse 22, don't say, I will repay evil. Wait for the Lord and He will save you. In other words, we're not to take vengeance on anyone.

Let the Lord handle the matter, as it says in the Living Bible. Don't repay evil for evil, but let the Lord handle the matter. One of the clearest examples of this in the Old Testament is David.

King Saul was after his life, and yet he would never try to take Saul's life in return, even when Saul was at his mercy. And God handled the matter. God took care of Saul and dealt with him in his own time, and put David on the throne.

We need to see, dear brothers and sisters, that there is a great lust in our flesh to take revenge. And if you say it is not in you, it only shows you haven't yet seen what dwells in your flesh. But there is a fantastic lust, and we think it is to take revenge only on those we hate.

No, very often we can take revenge on loved ones. A husband can take revenge on his wife, not by killing her, not in crude ways like that, but in very subtle ways in the home. A father or mother can take revenge on the children for inconveniencing them in some way.

There are many ways where we can try to repay evil with evil. And we need to cleanse out all this vengeful nature that dwells in the flesh, and that's constantly seeking to come into our heart. A little delight when something bad happens to someone who has not treated you well.

What is that? That is the manifestation of that same vengeful spirit. When David heard that Saul had died, that was something bad that had happened to Saul. He had died.

And David didn't even inwardly rejoice at it. No. You see that in 2 Samuel 1, there was such a clean spirit in him, that old covenant man, who never knew anything about judging himself or the new and living way.

I say what a fantastically clean spirit he had there in relation to Saul, that he never coveted the throne, and he wasn't happy when something bad happened to one who had treated him so badly all through his life. And I say, I'm not surprised that God called David a man after my own heart. It's easy, brothers and

sisters, to think we are in the new covenant and greater.

We need to see how much more God is going to require from us in this area to cleanse ourselves from anything in this area at all. Don't take it on yourself ever to repay wrong. Trust in the Lord.

He will make it all right. Verse 23. Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord, and a false scale is not good.

We considered this before. Again, one of those things repeated again and again in the book of Proverbs. But I want to apply this also in a spiritual way.

Jesus said that in the same measure that you measure to others, you will be judged yourself. And you know how it is with us. We, all of us by nature, have a tendency to judge others more severely than we judge ourselves.

When we do something wrong, we can tend to take it lightly. But when someone else has done that same mistake, we can be so severe in our judgment on that other person for that which we would treat ourselves quite leniently on. What is that? That is a different measure, like it says in this verse.

A different measure by which I judge that person, and a different measure by which I judge myself. That's an abomination to the Lord. If at all we make a mistake here, it should be that we judge ourselves more severely and others more lightly.

That will help us in the day of judgment, because it says in the same measure that we have judged others, God will determine how to judge us in the final day. Verse 24. Man's steps are ordained by the Lord.

How then can a man understand his way? Or as the Living Bible says, since the Lord is directing our steps, why try to understand everything that happens along the way? We can't understand everything that happens along the way, like it says in Romans 8.26. We do not know what to pray for, or how to pray as we should. But we do know, verse 28, that God works everything for good. To those who love Him.

There are many things of God's dealings with us which we cannot understand. We cannot understand. So, we don't have to understand.

All we have to do is humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. Since the Lord is directing our steps, why try to understand everything that happens along the way? It's enough to know that God is working it all out for good. Verse 25.

The Living Bible, it reads like this. It's foolish and rash to make a promise to the Lord before counting the cost. That's another tendency man has in some moment of trial or pressure or crisis, to say, oh God, I'll do this.

I'll do this for you, or I'll give this to you. And then when that crisis is over, we take it lightly, what we have said. No, it says it's foolish and rash to make a promise like that before counting the cost.

Jesus said, sit down. That's a good word he used. Don't make a decision while you're standing.

Sit down, relax, think about it, count the cost, and then decide whether you want to do that, whether you want to commit yourself, whether you want to give all of that to the Lord. And those who take their decisions in this way, you find that there's much more steadiness and stability in their spiritual life and

growth and progress, because they have really thought through what does it mean to be a disciple. And I think of all those things, and I say, Lord, I have sat down, I have counted the cost, and I want to be a disciple.

But there are many who don't sit down and count the cost. They just get excited in the meeting and say, oh yes, I have decided to follow the Lord. And you find they're always taking decisions, always.

And then year after year after year, you never see much progress in their spiritual life, because they haven't really sat down before God and counted the cost of what does it mean to be a disciple. I want to encourage every one of us to take that command of Jesus seriously. Sit down, think before the Lord of all that it means to be a disciple, and then decide whether you want to be one or not.

All this light, foolish saying, yes, I want to do this, I want to do that, can be mere empty words, which doesn't impress the Lord and actually is harmful for our life. West 26, the Living Bible says, a wise king stamps out crime by severe punishment. That, of course, refers to God, who is the wise king, who is going to stamp out all sin in the world by that lake of fire that he has prepared for the wicked.

And that is perfectly righteous of God. It's part of his wisdom, it says here. A wise king, it's part of his wisdom that he eradicates crime by severe punishment.

You know, there is a movement spreading all over the world gradually to eradicate capital punishment. That means we shouldn't hang murderers anymore. Many countries, they don't do that anymore.

Someone can murder someone, kill someone, and they don't hang them anymore. And the result is, because there is not severe punishment, you know, this human idea of love and goodness, crime increases. But in those countries where punishment is very severe and strict, you find crime is less.

So we shouldn't have any false ideas of love, even with our own children. Strict punishment is the way by which we can eliminate a lot of evil from their lives. Verse 27, the spirit of man, or the man's conscience, it says in the Living Bible, is the Lord's searchlight exposing his hidden motives.

God has given each of us a conscience, and that conscience is like a searchlight. And you know, you shine the searchlight into the corner under the bed, and you see something there which you didn't see when you looked in the corner without the searchlight. And so it says here that man's conscience is like a searchlight, God's searchlight, that exposes our hidden motives.

And it's good for us to be very, to keep that searchlight burning, to keep that battery charged, to keep that searchlight always alive and alert, so that it can help us to cleanse ourselves. It is the Lord's searchlight exposing our hidden motives. And this is why, because we have a conscience, it is very easy for us to judge ourselves if we want to, because that conscience tells us about our entire conscious area.

We don't have to worry about the unconscious area, God doesn't ask us that, but this conscious area, our conscience will tell us clearly, that is wrong. Never mind if you see some other brother do it, that is wrong for you, or you are doing that with a wrong motive. And if I can listen to that voice of conscience every time, then I can cleanse myself, and I can keep that Lord's, the Lord's searchlight in me burning brightly.

I believe this is one of the great secrets of spiritual progress in our lives, to keep that searchlight always bright, brightly burning. Don't let it dim. When you find, for example, that you are no longer convicted today about things that you were disturbed about 4-5 years ago, that means the power of this searchlight has

become dimmer.

That means once upon a time that bothered you, but it doesn't bother you now. That's an indication, something's wrong, the power has become dim, that you can do something today which didn't bother you, which bothered you once upon a time. That can happen if we, it's the beginning of backsliding, when we lose that sensitivity in our conscience.

Now we can turn to verse 28, A loyalty and truth preserve the king, and he upholds his throne by righteousness. We can think again of our position as kings in our home, and in other places where God gives us responsibility. It says that we uphold our throne by righteousness and by truth, and I can think of one aspect of this, there could be many others, and that is keeping our promises to our children.

That's a very important thing I find that we have to be careful to cleanse ourselves in. That if we have promised something to our children, that we keep our word, we uphold our throne in our home as fathers, as king of the home, by righteousness. If you have promised to do something for your child, then to do it, if of course the conditions are fulfilled.

If you have promised to punish your child, if the child does something, then you have to keep that promise and punish the child when the child does that thing, not just ignore it. To keep our word, to uphold our throne by righteousness as fathers. Verse 29, it says, the glory of young men is their strength, or their zeal, and the honor of old men is their gray hair, or wisdom.

Gray hair refers to wisdom, and the intention is that as we grow older, we should become wiser. Of course, it's easy to get gray hair on the head, you just grow old and the gray hair comes automatically even if you're wise or not. But the intention is that as the gray hair has come, that wisdom also is found in our life, and that we know cannot come overnight.

And that is why it is important to work on our salvation right from youth, so that we don't end up as fools even when we have got gray hair. What are the examples of folly? So many in the book of Proverbs. A man who is old and still doesn't know how to control his tongue, still speaks much like he did when he was young.

A fool's voice is known in the multitude of his words. Or a person who still loses his temper. Anger dwells in the bosom of fools.

He's got gray hairs on his head, but he still gets upset and irritated and loses his temper. There is a man who has not become wise yet. No, these are things that we are to grow out of, so that by the time gray hairs begin to be found on our head, that the marks of wisdom are also there.

And that's why it's important right from the time we are young to really pursue after wisdom, because it takes a lifetime to acquire it. And we have to take it seriously, otherwise we'll never make progress in it. And of course, with young men it is their zeal.

And sometimes young men can think in their strength, that strength is the great thing, and can despise those who are perhaps not so strong, but who are wise. The word of God says wisdom is better than strength. But both are needed, both young men and old people are needed in the church.

You read in 1 John chapter 2 verse 13 and 14, John writes to the children, to the young men who are strong, and to the fathers who know God and his ways. So there is a need for all in the church, for young

men with their zeal, even if they don't have much wisdom, and for older people in the church who have wisdom. And by older people, I don't mean old in age.

A man can have a head full of gray hair and no wisdom at all. There may be another young brother who doesn't have one gray hair on his head, who's got wisdom. So spirituality does not depend on physical age.

And a person can be a spiritual father when he's 30, 35. A spiritual father, much more than someone else who's 70, if he hasn't progressed in the way of patience and wisdom. But it is God's will that there will be those who have wisdom in the church, and young men with their strength.

It's very important when we are young to be zealous. It's a sad thing when young men are lukewarm spiritually. There's not much hope for them.

Verse 30, this we could apply to God's chastening over our life. In the Living Bible it reads like this, punishment that hurts, chases away evil from the heart. And sometimes that is the only way, just like we find with our own children, that we have to punish them before they learn a lesson.

God also finds with us that to chase away evil from our hearts, he has to give us a punishment that hurts us. Or as the Good News Bible says, sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways. And when God wants us to change our ways in some area, and he has spoken to us and we haven't heard him, we haven't obeyed what he's told us, then he gives us a painful experience.

Maybe a sickness, maybe a trial, maybe a testing in our home, maybe some painful experience in some area. And that's exactly like a father disciplining his children in such a way that it pains, that our father is chastening us with the intention that we may change our ways. Now we come to chapter 21, chapter 21 and verse 1. It says here about the sovereignty of God over all people, and it refers to the king, because in those days the king was the most powerful person in a country.

Not like today, where the kings have got no power. But in those days, the most powerful person in a country was a king. And it says here, even the most powerful person in a country, the Lord can make him change his thoughts.

And in the Living Bible, it reads like this, just as water is turned by farmers into irrigation ditches. You know, when a farmer wants to irrigate his land, there is a canal flowing nearby and he makes a little irrigation ditch connected to that canal and he can make that water flow into any part of his farm. North or south or east or west, he's just got to slope that canal, that irrigation ditch in such a way and the water will come.

And it says, it just as easily, the Lord can make powerful people in the world change their decision. He controls their thoughts and he can turn them wherever he wishes, wherever he wants. I don't know whether there's any verse in the whole Bible which speaks of the absolute sovereignty of God over world authorities as this verse.

It's one of the most powerful verses in the entire Bible on this absolute sovereignty of God, how he can turn people, the most powerful people in the world. And when we are in connection, in living connection with such a God, that eliminates all fear from our hearts completely. God can do amazing things with your boss in your office.

He's much smaller than the king and with the landlord and so many people there are. We must have faith in a living God, in a loving father who has control over all these things. He can remove people, put people in and turn people's opinions and decisions.

And this is the God we worship. This is what makes us more than conquerors in all situations. There are many instances of this in the Old Testament of how God made Pharaoh release the Israelites from Egypt, how God made in the book of Esther, the Persian king turned the decision so that the Jews' lives were spared and so many, many, many things.

It's been very interesting for me to read something of the history of the Second World War and read at different points in that World War how God worked in answer to prayer to turn the armies of Hitler into defeat, that demon-possessed man. How God worked in all these things, made them take foolish decisions so that they would lose. It's amazing to see God's hand in history in all these things.

Verse 2, every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. So the Living Bible says, we can justify our every deed, but God looks at our motives. Now I'll tell you something, this is a very, this verse cuts in two directions.

It's a two-edged sword. We can justify our every action, but God looks at our motives. First of all, let me tell you the encouraging part of that verse.

The encouraging part of that verse is that when we have done something and it may be right to us, but someone else feels that it was not right and then we are disturbed because some other brother or some other brothers felt that was not right. There is no need to be disturbed. It says here, God sees our motive.

So, go to God and say, Lord, that brother, those brothers don't understand, but you know with what motive I did that. Yeah, and you can be free. You don't have to live in condemnation or depression anymore.

That's the encouraging part of that verse, that God sees the motive, never mind what other people thought about your action. The other side of the sword is, and that is a warning, that it's not enough that we can prove to other people with this verse and that verse and the other thing and to prove that there was something right in what we did because God sees the motive with which I did it and the motive may have been bad. There may have been some corruption in the motive.

So, that verse cuts in both ways. And I just want to say this, dear brothers and sisters, we have to be very careful in this area of motive. It is in the area of motive that we sin the most.

It is in the area of motive that ultimately our judgment will come. 1 Corinthians 4, 5 says, in the final day, the Lord will bring to light the hidden motives of men's hearts. And then every man will have praise from God.

That man did not understand what you did, but in the final day, God will show him and everybody else, this person did it for my glory. I don't care what your opinion is of what he did. And likewise, it will also be sad for some people that so many good things which appeared good before others, that finally when the motive is exposed, it will be quite sad.

And I believe it will be because of the motives that many who are first will be last and many who are last in the eyes of others will be first. So, we need to watch our motives at all times. That is the thing.

Particularly in matters that we are in doubt about. Is it right or is it wrong? Can I do this? Can I not do this? Ask yourself, what is my motive? Can I do it for the glory of God? Can I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? Then, you are right in doing it even if everybody else thinks you are wrong. It makes no difference to God.

According to your light, you are right. Of course, as time goes on, we will get greater light. But God judges us according to the light we have at a particular moment.

He does not judge me by the light that I am going to have ten years from now. Praise God for that. That He judges me today by the light I have today.

And He judges you today not by the light I have but by the light you have today. And that's why I cannot judge you. I will be a stupid idiot if I judged you according to the light I have because that may not be the light that you have.

And that is why in matters which are not written clearly in scripture, we have to give one another freedom. And I have found this, brothers and sisters. So many people who pursue righteousness end up as downright Pharisees.

That's the way the devil leads them off because they begin to judge others in areas which are not clearly written down in scripture. Give freedom. God judges that person's motive in all such matters.

Very important. Verse 3. To do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord far more than sacrifice. That's something which Samuel also said.

To obey is better than sacrifice. To do the will of God and to be righteous, to be kind and fair is much more important to God than all the sacrifices we give to Him in the meeting. To be righteous and fair, to love mercy and be upright is far more important than sacrificing time to come to the meetings and sacrificing something to do something for the church.

If I am not righteous and fair, for example, think of a husband who is not righteous and fair towards his wife at home. What is the use of doing so many things in the church if he is not righteous and fair towards considering her needs at home? No, the Lord wants righteousness and fairness much more than all the sacrifice that you say you're going to do for his church. Very important because we have a tendency to think, yeah, that was for the Lord, I made that sacrifice, so it doesn't matter if I'm not so righteous and fair there at home.

No, to be righteous and fair is more important. That's what the Lord desires more than all those sacrifices. Verse 4. Haughty eyes and a proud heart, they usually go together.

Pride in the look and pride in the heart and the lamp of the wicked is sin. We saw earlier that the lamp is the Lord's searchlight and we can say that here it probably refers to the lamp of the wicked in contrast to chapter 20 verse 27. The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord.

Here it refers to a wicked man's conscience and the standards by which he lives. A sinful which teaches that if a man's conscience is not educated by the word of God and not, if he doesn't seek to bring his conscience more in line with scripture, his conscience can even lead him into sin. The lamp of the wicked is sin.

This is why we need to align our conscience in line with the teaching of God's word. This is why it's so important to know what God's word teaches on a number of things. All scripture is given so that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Verse 5. The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty. Again, one of those repeated emphases in the book of Proverbs on hard work and wise planning that leads to prosperity and hastiness in matters which usually leads to spiritual poverty. Verse 6 again speaks about dishonest gain.

Dishonest gain will never last, it says in the living bible. They'll soon disappear and they will also lead you into the jaws of death. We have spoken about that, we don't want to stay on that verse, but just remember, the Proverbs emphasizes much on money that we make dishonestly.

It will never, never bring a blessing. Verse 7. The living bible says, because the wicked are unfair, their violence boomerangs and destroys them. That which they do as evil to other people, like a boomerang, finally comes back and hits them and knocks them out.

Have you noticed that sometimes? That you find fault with someone in some area and you judge him and one day you find yourself in exactly the same situation where you judge that brother and you find yourself doing exactly the same thing. That thing has boomeranged the way you judged that brother and you thought you were more spiritual. One day it's boomeranged and God has put you into that awkward position where you are doing that same thing yourself.

And that way God teaches us, don't judge others. You leave their judgment to me, it's enough if you judge yourself. The violence of the wicked boomerangs and finally destroys them.

And if we don't learn a lesson through these things, finally these boomerangs that come back and hit us will destroy us. I believe there are many who are sick because they have not judged themselves in this area. Now that's something we have to be careful about, that we don't have boomerangs coming back upon us.

Verse 8. A man is known by his actions, the living bible says. An evil man lives an evil life, a good man lives a good life. That of course is what Jesus said about, by their fruits you shall know them.

In other words, we do not judge the inward man or his motives. But a man is known only by his actions. We are to only look at the fruits in a man's life.

Are they good, are they bad? Never are we to go inside and say, I know why he's doing it. Well if you're God, then you know why he's doing it. But since you're not God, you don't know why he's doing it.

And it's good for us to humble ourselves and say, I'm not God. I don't want to be like Lucifer, wanting to be God. I don't know why he's doing it.

I'm only called to judge by his external actions and I refuse to judge his thoughts or his motives. Take that position, brothers and sisters, and it will save you from a tremendous amount of evil and from a tremendous amount of boomerangs coming and ruining your health, destroying your life and destroying your spiritual progress.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14951.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/proverbs-ch206-218/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net