

Audio file

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Transcript

00:00:00

Friends, we're turning this morning to Proverbs chapter 3, continuing our series in Proverbs chapter 3, entitled the series Pondering Proverbs.

00:00:11

We're coming to the end of this chapter, and we're just looking at the last few verses, verses 31 to 35.

00:00:20

Proverbs chapter 3, verse 31.

00:00:25

Envy thou not the oppressor,

00:00:28

Choose none of his ways, for the froward is abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous.

00:00:39

The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

00:00:47

Surely he scorneth the scornors, but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

00:00:53

The wise shall inherit glory.

00:00:57

But shame shall be the promotion of fools.

00:01:02

And this morning with the Lord's help, I'm going to look at this section under the title, Wise or Foolish.

00:01:12

Wise or foolish.

00:01:13

It's found in the last verse.

00:01:15

The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

00:01:23

Now this chapter is all about wisdom.

00:01:26

So is the whole book of Proverbs.

00:01:28

It's one of the books of wisdom.

00:01:32

We have discovered together certain things from this chapter.

00:01:37

We learned together something about the word of God, the wisdom of God, being written on the heart.

00:01:46

It's found in chapter 3 and verse 3.

00:01:50

And then we discovered that we can trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

00:01:56

And that's not easy.

00:01:58

But that's what the Lord wants us to do, to trust in him.

00:02:03

How easy it is to be led astray by so many, by voices, a crowd in upon the mind and upon the heart, by inclinations and desires, to trust in self, to trust in

00:02:24

something else with all our hearts.

00:02:26

It's not wrong, by the way, to trust in those who are reliable and faithful and trustworthy and dependable.

00:02:38

But here it's so important.

00:02:42

All our hearts should not be given to anyone or anything else but the Lord.

00:02:50

Trust in the Lord.

00:02:52

And we saw how this worked out in the original language, and we worked it through.

00:02:58

And I want us to take that and to really cement that in our souls.

00:03:05

And then thirdly, we looked at perspectives on godly living.

00:03:10

And this in many ways was a subject, and it's a topic that's hardly spoken about today, even in the churches.

00:03:21

Godly living?

00:03:23

What a strange concept.

00:03:26

Wherever did you get that concept from?

00:03:29

God's word.

00:03:31

Godly living.

00:03:33

Living for the Lord.

00:03:36

It comes out of that trust in the Lord and not leaning on our own understanding.

00:03:42

But it comprised of acknowledging him, not being wise in our own eyes, and we saw that we should honour the Lord.

00:03:51

Godly living.

00:03:53

How necessary in the 21st century, how tragic that we have to emphasise it.

00:04:02

It's plain from the whole of reading of Scripture that God's people live godly.

00:04:10

And if they don't live godly, then a question mark needs to be put upon those who claim to be God's children.

00:04:19

Because when we're converted, God puts a new principle as well as giving us a new heart to live for his glory.

00:04:31

And you read throughout the New Testament of the Lord's people who live differently.

00:04:37

Those who are living unholy lives will lead holy lives.

00:04:41

Those who are living for the world and the flesh and even serving

00:04:48

Our wicked master, they sought to live godly.

00:04:53

This is so important.

00:04:55

When you're converted, you desire to serve the Lord and to live for Him.

00:05:03

Our language should change.

00:05:07

Our attitudes should change because our hearts have been changed.

00:05:14

And then if you remember, we looked at some practical outworkings of this.

00:05:19

And we looked at biblical perspectives on health and wealth.

00:05:31

Another practical approach.

00:05:34

Just because somebody's very wealthy doesn't mean they're very blessed.

00:05:40

That's the way some people think of Christianity, but it's not true.

00:05:46

Just because somebody's very wealthy doesn't mean they're Christians.

00:05:52

In fact, it's often the opposite.

00:05:54

Not many rich will enter the kingdom of heaven.

00:05:58

Thankfully, it's not any rich, but it's not many rich.

00:06:03

Because the love of money is the root of all evil, as Paul writes to Timothy.

00:06:10

But we also saw health important.

00:06:14

Yes, it is.

00:06:17

But people have this wrong idea that if you're a believer, then you'll never have an illness.

00:06:23

How strange.

00:06:26

You read about Job.

00:06:28

You read about Paul.

00:06:30

You read about the great servants of the Lord throughout the ages.

00:06:35

Many of them were unwell.

00:06:39

I don't know what they would have said to this generation of so-called health, wealth and prosperity preachers.

00:06:46

They would have just pointed to their wounds and to their sicknesses and saying, there's nothing of this in the Bible.

00:06:54

Then we looked at God's loving corrections and we saw that God chastises those whom he loves.

00:07:02

If he loves us, he'll correct us.

00:07:05

This is found in Hebrews and followed further places.

00:07:10

Then we looked at pillars of divine wisdom.

00:07:13

And we then began to collect a few various texts together.

00:07:17

And over the last few weeks, we've been looking at safeguards of divine wisdom.

00:07:21

And this morning, we're just going to look at the wise and the foolish.

00:07:27

The wise and the foolish.

00:07:29

Because here in this section, we have a series of contrasts.

00:07:34

It's very interesting, from verse 32 onwards, there's a contrast

00:07:40

between the believer and the unbeliever.

00:07:45

But Solomon doesn't use those words.

00:07:48

They're not in the Hebrew.

00:07:51

What he uses is words that describe the character of these individuals.

00:07:59

And the advice is very important here.

00:08:03

Envy thou not the oppressor.

00:08:05

Now what does this mean?

00:08:08

The oppressor.

00:08:12

somebody who presses you down.

00:08:18

For the believer, there are unbelievers that don't oppress us.

00:08:24

And sadly, there are unbelievers who do oppress us.

00:08:29

They pressurize us.

00:08:31

They make life difficult.

00:08:34

But in other parts of the world, they become our persecutors.

00:08:39

They oppress the Lord's people.

00:08:42

And sometimes, even as one of the psalmists reminds us, we're told he describes the life of the wicked.

00:08:54

And it seems that they have no problems and no difficulties.

00:08:57

And yet it's only when he goes into the house of the Lord that he discovers the truth.

00:09:02

We shouldn't envy them.

00:09:05

We should pity them.

00:09:10

The oppressor.

00:09:12

And then his plain, clear advice, choose none of his ways.

00:09:16

And you might say, well, I would never want to be an oppressor.

00:09:20

I would never want to pressurize the Lord's people, even if I wasn't a Christian.

00:09:27

but you see, you may think that that's something that doesn't apply here, but look around us.

00:09:37

There's A gradual constriction of biblical Christianity in the United Kingdom.

00:09:45

The oppressors don't always come with weapons.

00:09:52

Sometimes they come with laws and regulations.

00:09:57

Don't envy them.

00:09:59

Don't choose their ways.

00:10:02

don't choose their ideas, don't follow their thinking and their instructions and their directions.

00:10:11

Because Solomon then gives us this series of contrasts.

00:10:18

And he shows us what the oppressor is really like, or the wicked, or the foolish, whichever word you want to use.

00:10:28

Verse 32, for the

00:10:32

Frauard is abomination to the Lord.

00:10:39

The Frauard.

00:10:42

Now, Solomon himself hadn't really faced many oppressors.

00:10:48

But David had.

00:10:52

And of course, Solomon had grown up in the palace of David.

00:10:58

And he'd seen the enemies he would face.

00:11:01

Solomon even saw one of David's own sons, Absalom, oppress his own father.

00:11:10

And I believe that's very important.

00:11:13

He writes about this in Psalm 57.

00:11:16

What does David say in Psalm 57?

00:11:20

And the previous Psalm as well, he speaks about oppression.

00:11:26

He says,

00:11:28

Verse 4, Psalm 57, verse 4, My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

00:11:43

That's the description of an oppressor.

00:11:48

In verse 6, they have prepared a net for my steps,

00:11:52

My soul is bowed down.

00:11:53

They have dugged a pit before me into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.

00:12:00

Selah.

00:12:03

You see, David knew what it was to be oppressed.

00:12:11

In the previous verse, that was blatant oppression.

00:12:16

But here we have them planning in Psalm 56, verse 6.

00:12:20

They gather themselves, or sorry, verse 5.

00:12:23

Every day they rest, they twist my words.

00:12:26

All their thoughts are against me for evil.

00:12:29

They gather themselves together, they hide themselves.

00:12:32

They mark my steps when they wait for my soul.

00:12:35

They're planning his oppression.

00:12:39

They're scheming.

00:12:42

And I'm afraid, friends, he goes on.

00:12:48

when he says, shall they escape by iniquity and thine anger?

00:12:51

Cast down the people, O God.

00:12:53

These are the oppressors.

00:12:55

Now, I'm not saying that we have to pray that the Lord would cast down our oppressors.

00:13:00

David was the anointed of the Lord.

00:13:03

He was a prophet of God.

00:13:04

But I believe we should be wise and observe, even in scripture, God's people are oppressed.

00:13:15

Press down.

00:13:17

pressurized.

00:13:22

And this froward, let's look at this froward person.

00:13:28

What does it mean to be froward?

00:13:32

It's an old word, I grant it.

00:13:36

It could be translated as perverse or crooked, but our translators chose this word.

00:13:46

because it's not going forward.

00:13:49

That's important.

00:13:51

It's not saying the forward is abomination.

00:13:54

It's saying the forward.

00:13:57

It means simply to go counter to what is right.

00:14:03

They're unreasonable, perverse, difficult to deal with, hard to please, and ungovernable.

00:14:15

That's what the wicked are like.

00:14:20

The fraud word is abomination, is detested by the Lord, is obnoxious to the Lord.

00:14:30

They may think they can say what they please and act as they please in God's own world and there will be no recompense.

00:14:41

But God detests it.

00:14:46

hates it, and one day will judge it.

00:14:53

What a thing to be froward, to be completely perverse, to live as if there's no judgment, and even worse, there's no God.

00:15:04

But who are the righteous?

00:15:09

This is the believer.

00:15:12

David is the example of the righteous.

00:15:15

compared to the Frauward in his generation.

00:15:18

These are God's people.

00:15:21

They're loved by God.

00:15:24

He loves them with an everlasting love.

00:15:27

He cares for them.

00:15:30

They live righteously because they are in a state of righteousness.

00:15:36

God has declared them forgiven and pardoned, and though they may fall and though they may sin, they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

00:15:48

They're the righteous.

00:15:51

They're not self-righteous.

00:15:54

They're clothed in God's righteousness.

00:15:57

You read about this in Isaiah, the garments of salvation.

00:16:04

Righteousness.

00:16:06

What a contrast to perversion.

00:16:12

That's really what Solomon is doing.

00:16:16

They fear God.

00:16:18

They love Him.

00:16:20

They treasure His word.

00:16:24

Ha, but there's something else.

00:16:26

Notice this little phrase, but His secret is with the righteous.

00:16:33

They are strangers and pilgrims, as Peter tells us in his epistle, in this world.

00:16:40

But they know, as Paul tells them in Philippians 3, that their citizenship is in heaven.

00:16:46

They have an everlasting inheritance, awaiting them, not because of their own righteousness, but because God has declared them righteous.

00:17:00

And they are rewarded

00:17:02

though we don't deserve it in the life to come.

00:17:09

But this little phrase, secret, it's an intriguing word.

00:17:15

It can be translated as friendship.

00:17:19

It speaks of a closeness, of an intimacy that only the Lord reveals to those who are his.

00:17:30

How rich this is.

00:17:33

How precious this is.

00:17:37

In Psalm 25, verse 14, we're told, as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.

00:17:51

The secret of the Lord are for the Lord's own people.

00:17:58

He has revealed himself to us

00:18:01

in grace.

00:18:03

It's been manifested to us in our regeneration, in our election, in our regeneration, in our redemption, and in our preservation.

00:18:15

God has done something absolutely wonderful.

00:18:19

He has revealed his gospel to us, his grace to us in Christ.

00:18:28

Our Lord Jesus,

00:18:30

Says to his disciples.

00:18:33

When he was in the upper room, in John 15, verse 15, he says, I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends.

00:18:43

For all that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

00:18:47

What A privilege to be a child of God.

00:18:52

God has unveiled to us something that the world knows nothing of.

00:18:59

His secret.

00:19:03

Let me share a few things.

00:19:05

I drew this from some of the worthies of the past.

00:19:08

First of all, it includes a clear knowledge of God's being and a revelation of his will.

00:19:16

Second, it includes the full saving understanding and grasp by faith in the gospel of his dear son, Jesus Christ.

00:19:30

And third, the old writers really love this truth.

00:19:36

Another secret of God is the sweetness of his comforting presence and his abiding peace.

00:19:48

When Paul writes about the peace of God that passeth all understanding, that's God, as it were, revealing to us a secret.

00:20:00

Coming so close to us that even in our troubles and trials and in our anxieties, when there's a sea of anxieties overwhelming our mind, we can say, our Lord, a secret is with the righteous.

00:20:17

Thy secret.

00:20:21

So we've looked at the froward.

00:20:25

And then verse 33,

00:20:28

Then the Lord, as it were, zones in.

00:20:32

He's described the froward, and he's described their state before him, their abomination to him.

00:20:39

But then he goes one more.

00:20:41

The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.

00:20:45

The curse of the Lord?

00:20:48

I didn't think, says one, that God would curse the wicked, would damn the wicked.

00:20:58

But he's already told us he hates the wicked.

00:21:00

And so he says, the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.

00:21:06

Notice it doesn't say in the heart.

00:21:10

It's in the house.

00:21:13

But in contrast, he blesseth the habitation of the just.

00:21:19

Now I just want to cast your mind back to a time when there was no Roman Empire.

00:21:28

and no Greek empire, but there was a Persian Empire.

00:21:34

This Persian Empire was the greatest empire of its time.

00:21:42

We believe it stretched from India to the West.

00:21:50

Staggering when you think thousands of years

00:21:56

Even before the Roman Empire, there was this great empire ruled by a dynasty of kings.

00:22:07

Best known, of course, is Xerxes or Ahasuerus.

00:22:13

And in this kingdom was two individuals who we know by name, who were the righteous, who were the lords.

00:22:24

Esther,

00:22:26

and her uncle Mordecai.

00:22:32

But as well as being in that kingdom, there were enemies to God's people.

00:22:40

Not the king, not even the queen, Vashti, but a man called Haman.

00:22:52

And Haman proves

00:22:56

This truth.

00:22:59

He had schemed to destroy the Jews on a given day.

00:23:06

He had worked on it.

00:23:08

He had his own accomplices in this.

00:23:13

And to all intents and purposes, he seemed to have achieved his ends.

00:23:22

But God is sovereign.

00:23:26

And God would not allow wicked Haman to overcome his righteous children.

00:23:37

God reversed the plan of Haman.

00:23:42

Haman had planned to execute Mordecai on a gallows 50 cubits high.

00:23:54

Esther knew that her people as well as herself would be executed eventually by this wicked man.

00:24:06

So what God did was he turned the tables in his sovereignty and Haman was executed on his own gallows.

00:24:22

as well as those who schemed to destroy the Jews.

00:24:30

So when we read about this, the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, there's a biblical example of this truth.

00:24:44

One of the old writers translated this as promotion.

00:24:51

And he uses the word here to speak of somebody promoting themselves and God judges them.

00:25:04

But on the other side, the house of the wicked is a curse to the Lord, but the habitation of the just is blessed.

00:25:15

Which side would you like to be on?

00:25:19

And then one other contrast.

00:25:25

That's the wicked and the just.

00:25:26

Then the scorers and the humble.

00:25:29

Surely he's scorn at the scorers.

00:25:33

Oh, there's so much scorn today, especially regarding God's Word and God's ways.

00:25:40

Mockery.

00:25:43

Comedians.

00:25:45

if you can call them that, enjoy mocking God, laughing at God, undermining God.

00:25:55

Sometimes they curse God.

00:25:59

But even on a lesser scale, people mock God in various ways, and even on public broadcasters, they enjoy it.

00:26:14

Somebody mocks God when it comes to God's creation and God's glory.

00:26:22

Another will mock God when they take his name in vain and use Christ's name in a swearing manner.

00:26:34

Scorners, they're all around us.

00:26:39

But

00:26:40

You see the contrast here.

00:26:42

The scornful person, by the way, is proud and arrogant and full of their own self-importance.

00:26:51

And I think one of the old writers puts them like this, they're peacocks that portray their feathers and their scorning for all to see.

00:27:04

But the contrast couldn't be much different.

00:27:10

God scorneth the scorners.

00:27:16

Read about what happens to those in Psalm 2.

00:27:23

When the nation's leaders have a plan and plot to cast off God's restraints, God scorns them.

00:27:37

He laughs at them.

00:27:38

He mocks them.

00:27:39

Not in a silly, comedic way, but in a holy and just manner.

00:27:47

You see, the scorners scorn God, but God scorns them.

00:27:53

But look at this, the grace unto the lowly.

00:27:59

The scorers are proud, the lowly are humble.

00:28:05

They don't think much of themselves.

00:28:08

Believers don't often think much of themselves, especially those who know anything about the great doctrines of grace.

00:28:16

They think of the glory and the goodness of God to a mere creature like me.

00:28:24

Peter tells us something very, very lovely in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 5.

00:28:36

God resisted the proud and gaveth grace unto the humble.

00:28:42

Similar to what Solomon says.

00:28:46

But look at verse 6.

00:28:49

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.

00:28:57

We should never come to the Lord in a proud manner.

00:29:01

We're just, we're his children and we're just unprofitable servants at best.

00:29:08

But we can humble ourselves in prayer and worship and adoration in our public services.

00:29:16

God is to be exalted.

00:29:19

Men and women and children are to be humbled.

00:29:23

That's the point of true worship, of biblical worship.

00:29:28

We humble ourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.

00:29:34

And oh, what a mighty hand he has.

00:29:38

Unlimited power, divine omnipotence that extends even to small little creatures such as we, that he may exalt you in due time.

00:30:01

Gideon was one of the least

00:30:04

in his father's house and one of the least in the tribe, in Benjamin's tribe.

00:30:11

And yet God raised him up.

00:30:14

David was the youngest of Jesse's family.

00:30:20

Who would look at him?

00:30:23

After all, he's doing is looking after sheep.

00:30:26

There's nothing in him.

00:30:28

He's not big and strong.

00:30:30

and will tower over his enemies?

00:30:35

But God does not look at the outward appearance.

00:30:39

God looketh upon the heart.

00:30:42

David was a humble man.

00:30:44

You read his Psalm, Psalm 8, and you discover there something wonderful.

00:30:49

You read Psalm 40, and you read him describing himself as coming out, being taken out of the miry clay, and his feet set upon the rock.

00:30:59

Psalm 40, verses 1 and 2.

00:31:02

He's a humble man, and yet God raised him up to be the king of Israel, the second king of Israel, a man after God's own heart.

00:31:16

So that's the thing, the scorners and the humble, the righteous and the unrighteous, the wicked and the blessed.

00:31:28

And just let me conclude with this.

00:31:32

Perhaps if I were to put to us, who would we consider the most evil, wicked type of person?

00:31:45

Who would we consider this chapter describes?

00:31:52

Well perhaps, I've been reading a book, The Hiding Place,

00:31:59

And I came across this description of a man who had been very wicked, very corrupt, very forward, and had been involved in much evil.

00:32:22

One of the types of people I would consider very wicked would be a Nazi guard.

00:32:28

in a concentration camp.

00:32:31

And Corrie ten Boom tells this story.

00:32:36

She had been speaking in Munich in 1947, and she recalls the experience of meeting someone from her past.

00:32:55

She said, This man

00:33:01

in a long coat, walked towards me.

00:33:08

And as he stretched out his hand, all of a sudden, I remembered who he was.

00:33:19

He had a leather crop swinging from his belt, and his cap wore the skull and crossbones.

00:33:28

And I froze, and my blood froze.

00:33:33

And this man came nearer and nearer, and I recognised that he was actually one of the very guards that had been involved in our section.

00:33:49

But he reached out his hand and said, I ask for your forgiveness, Fraulein.

00:33:59

You mentioned Ravensbrook in your talk.

00:34:04

I was a guard there.

00:34:09

Corey says, no, he did not remember me.

00:34:12

But since that time, he went on, I have become a Christian.

00:34:16

I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well, Fraulein.

00:34:24

Again, the hand came out.

00:34:26

Will you forgive me?

00:34:29

I stood there, I whose sins had every day to be forgiven and could not.

00:34:34

My sister had died in that place.

00:34:37

How could I erase the memory?

00:34:40

It could not have been seconds, but as his hand was held out, but to me it seemed like hours.

00:34:46

I wrestled with the most difficult thing I ever had to do, for I knew I had to do it.

00:34:52

The message that God proclaims in the gospel is forgiveness.

00:34:58

But there is a condition to know that fullness of peace with God is to do with forgiving others.

00:35:07

Since the end of the war, Corrie had started a home in Holland for victims of brutality, Nazi brutality.

00:35:18

Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were also able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives.

00:35:26

Those who had nursed bitterness remained invalids.

00:35:29

It's as simple as that.

00:35:32

Still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart, but forgiveness is not an emotion.

00:35:38

I knew that too.

00:35:40

Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.

00:35:47

Corrie prayed, Lord, help me.

00:35:51

And as she woodenly, mechanically held out her hand,

00:35:57

and said, I forgive you, brother, she cried with all my heart.

00:36:04

You see, the gospel promises transformation for those who are wicked, even in their sins, can be forgiven in Christ.

00:36:16

That's what the cross is all about.

00:36:19

Salvation through Christ alone, by grace alone,

00:36:24

by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone, so that even the wicked can be forgiven if they come and bow the knee to Christ.

00:36:35

Let us pray.

00:36:37

Our gracious God and loving Father, we're thankful for thy wonderful love.

00:36:41

We thank thee for the gospel of our redeemer, and we thank thee for the wonderful truth that thou has transformed even those who are formerly wicked into children of God.

00:36:53

Bless us today and keep us in thy care and keeping.

00:36:57

We ask in Jesus' name.

00:36:59

Amen.