

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 13

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number 13, Life with God, Proverbs 16:1-22:16.

Welcome to a session on Proverbs. In our series of Proverbs lectures, we have come to the collection that is attributed to Solomon beginning in chapter 10.

We have spent some time thinking about the motifs of the first chapters, 10-15, which have a certain kind of literary style. We want to now move on to the second half of that collection, found in chapter 16:1, all the way up until we get to the words of the wise in 22:16. Here, what we have is somewhat more collections around topics. What I'm going to do here is just look at Proverbs 16, but we're going to look at the cohesion of certain sections within Proverbs 16 and the observations that they bring to a particular topic.

The first one is about the way in which God knows our life and God knows us better than we know ourselves. I really do like some of these Proverbs. Beginning with the first one, it's so applicable to me.

A person organizes their thoughts. That's one way to put this. You know, I have spent a lot of time thinking through how I want to say something.

Sometimes I probably didn't spend enough time thinking through how I wanted to say something. But the second part of the verse is, but it is the Lord who gives the answer of the tongue. That is so intriguing because no matter how much time I spend organizing my thoughts how I'm going to say something and how clear I think it is, what someone else hears is not what I intended.

Or very often what someone else hears is not what I intended. And sometimes it gets rather badly misunderstood. And so, this proverb is kind of a reminder that even those things that we think we are really in control of, we should be praying.

Because there's another dynamic that's going on. It's called the medium and the hearer. That's not under our control.

And we want God's blessing on all of these things. So, after you've done all of your thinking and you think everything is perfectly clear, then make sure you ask God to work this out right. That's kind of the gist of that proverb.

Well, we can't spend that much time on each one of these Proverbs, but I will give you here some of the things that these Proverbs say and you can ponder them

against the words of your translation. But the second verse is just so true. Why do I do something? Why do I give money, for example? I have to ask myself that question very seriously.

Because quite frankly, there's never just one reason why I do something. And what I have to remember is that even some of the reasons that I don't know about, God knows about. So, I need to be humble.

And even when I think I'm doing really good things, I need to be humble and realize that I don't even know myself as well as I should. Verse three. I've heard farmers say this to me all the time, because farmers really know it.

You can know everything about farming and how you should plant your crop, and you can have a total crop failure through things that are completely outside of your control. You've got to trust God. So, trust the Lord with all of your works, and he will establish your plans.

Make your plans, but remember that you're not in control of those plans, and you're going to have to trust God with working through the plans that you have. You know, this verse is a little puzzling to many. Every work of the Lord has its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Now, this verse is not meant to say, oh, so God plans wickedness because there's some purpose in it. No, that's not what this verse is trying to say. What this verse is trying to say is that there is a moral order to the universe, and that what God is doing is taking all of the things that happen within the universe and bringing them to the end and to the intent that they should have.

I think the preacher says exactly the same thing in chapter three. There is a time, a time to be born, a time to die, a time to throw stones, a time to gather up stones. Some of his metaphors are a pretty clear.

A time to sow and a time to tear. In other words, all these things happen, and then the preacher concludes this, God has put the desires of the whole world in our mind, but we don't really understand why all these things happen. And that's what this proverb is saying, that God's purpose is going to come to be fulfilled, and it includes things we don't like and things we find painful.

Well, pride is an abomination that will have its price. Mercy, and this one is to me very important. We just have lost a sense of mercy, especially in a liberal society.

We've lost a sense of mercy. Liberals just don't know anything about forgiveness. They don't know anything about mercy.

And of course, then when they catch someone wrong or even one of their own is wrong, they just throw them out, punish them, do whatever they think they need to do. No, there needs to be a place for mercy. We live by mercy, and the fear of the Lord is going to try to avoid what is wrong.

The favor of the Lord creates peace, and sometimes little is much. If there is fairness and justice, little is much. Life under government.

Now, of course, government is something that is necessary. The Bible has a bit of a love-hate relationship with government. It's necessary because, as we learn from the flood story, if there is no government, we utterly enter on a path of self-destruction.

We're like Lamech. If Cain is avenged seven times, Lamech will be avenged seven and seventy times. We need some kind of controlling authority, and yet in the scriptures, the government is most often the monster.

The government is the worst of all human offenders. So, this is a whole section on government saying that you know, you've got to respect what kings say, whether you like it or not. You can't simply deny it, that justice and honesty, in the end, are really the work of God.

It's not something that humans themselves are able to achieve. And some practical things. Good government requires good people.

Good government favors good people. Wise people reconcile hostilities. The favor of the government, and this reminds me of Psalm 72 very, very much, is like a gentle rain.

And that's how Solomon's rain is perceived in Psalm 72, which at the start is the way it is described in Kings. The virtues of living wisely. The straight road is the secure road.

Pride comes before the fall. Humility with the poor is much to be preferred. The reward of clear thinking, and here we have, excuse me, a whole series of verses.

One who acts prudently will prosper. Discretion is a well of life. Wisdom informs speech.

Words well-chosen bring healing. We've had that motif before. Human wisdom may seem right, but is deadly wrong.

This verse gets chosen, and quoted many times, but it should be. This is verse 25 of chapter 16. There is a way that seems right to a person, but its destiny is the path of death.

You know, our own ideas about what is right, very often are not leading us in the right direction. And here's another one we'll come back to when we talk about work in our last session, but work can be your worst enemy. And I've heard it described that way.

When work is done because we like our work, that's a good thing. But when work is done only so that we can fulfill desires that we have, then work becomes a tyrant because the desires we have never get fulfilled. And so that's what this proverb says.

The desire of the worker compels him to work. And his desire continually drives him to it. Workaholics, we call them.

Not because they like their work, no. Because they're working for something they want, and their wants are never fulfilled. A very, very important proverb.

Avoidance of evil, the schemes of evil people. The things that need to be valued. Let me skip down here to verse 31.

Gray hair is found in the way of righteousness. We often in our society have this disparagement of growing old. We don't want to be in the category of old.

In fact, in my age and I'm old. In my age group, we're called Zoomers. You know, I find that quite frankly inappropriate because I don't zoom anywhere, and nor do I see any others, people my age, zooming anywhere.

They're creeping along. That's all they're doing. And the zooming may take place in their mind, but if they zoom outside of their mind, they really get into trouble.

Ill age is a good thing. Gray hair is a good thing because what it should reflect is a life that understands a lot more about righteousness. Patience is better than power.

Controlled anger captures the city. Patience is power. It is the greatest of all powers, and patience is so much better than other kinds of power that seek to simply coerce.

The will of the Lord, of course, in the end, is going to be decisive. So, these are some of the kinds of areas and some of the thoughts about life that we have in this very stimulating collection of Proverbs of Solomon.

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