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Proverbs

Chapter 2 - Where Your Treasure Is

Dead Wrong (vs.18-19)

Proverbs 2:18-19: For her house sinks down to death
And her tracks lead to the dead;
None who go to her return again,
Nor do they reach the paths of life.

Well, this particular passage is dealing clearly with a warning; a warning of going the wrong way. The Book of Proverbs is about getting us on the right track, thinking the right way. Naturally, we come into this world naive, simple minded, and the Book of Proverbs is to take the naivety out of us. It's to cause us to think right, to put things in perspective, to have the wisdom, the understanding, and the discernment of God. That's what it's about. How that happens, well, within this particular passage, we realized that affections have a lot to do with it. In other words, you need to love the right things. If you love the wrong things, you'll go to the wrong things. If you love the right things, you go to the right things. It's that simple. That really is about affections, and it's one of the reasons why throughout the Book of Proverbs you have this contrast and comparison of the one woman that is calling away, and the other that is calling us to God. The one that is calling us to God is literally wisdom personified. Wisdom calls. She calls in the streets, Scripture will say. Why put it in the female realm? Because it's dealing with affections, and it's letting you know that there's a relationship that you have with the things that you pursue. So, John will say in 1 John, "Love not the world." "Love? What makes you think that I love the world?" You have a relationship with the world. If it's drawing you away from God, you have a relationship with it, and you've allowed the world to allure you into its claws. So, it uses this very graphic stage in which we begin to feel the draw that comes in of these strong passions and these emotions that cause simple men not to do what they know is right, but to just act on impulse. Clearly, there's a great warning within this passage.

In fact, if you look with me in Proverbs 6, I remember as a kid, what was that phrase that we used to use? "Don't play with fire." "Danger: high voltage" type thing.

(Proverbs 6:27) “Can a man take fire in his bosom
And his clothes not be burned?”

What, do you think you can mess with fire and it's not going to burn you? So, as we come to this particular passage, what we're dealing with is the influences that come into our lives and how they allure us; how the dangers then ensue because of those pursuits. We fall in love with the wrong thing. We find ourselves embracing the wrong thing, and before long we find ourselves in a place where we can't seem to get out.

The verses that are being used within the passage puts it in the context of the woman that is the foreign woman. If you back up in the passage, to verse 16, it says that the wisdom of God will literally deliver you from these temptations that come in. The perception is that “Wow, it's really hard to get the wisdom of God.” And God goes, “It's not hard. You just have to ask.” It starts off in the Book of James as we've oftentimes make reference to that, “Look, if you lack wisdom,” in chapter 1, “ask God and He'll give to every man generously and without reproach.”

Matthew 7 will emphasize the fact that if you will just ask, He'll give. If you will just seek, you'll find and if you'll knock, it will be open to you. In that, what is interesting is the wording that is used in the Greek, which seems to convey a continual action. It's not only in the imperative, but it's in the active imperative, which means if you will keep asking, if you will keep seeking, if you will keep knocking. It's talking about the tenacity that has been revealed by your longing. God is looking for a longing of the heart. It's why you see at the very beginning of Proverbs 2 that, what we called, protasis apodosis. What is he talking about? “If you will do this, then this will happen.” It's an “if” and “then.” “If you will seek.” What is God asking for? God is asking for you to desire Him.

James 4 says, don't you understand that God jealously desires you to have this relationship with Him? God wants you to love Him back. “Well, how do I prove that I love God?” Seek, dig, treasure the things that He has. God has all these wonderful treasures, and He says, “All you have to do is ask, but you have to ask with a heart that acts like you actually really want it. I'm looking for that intent of the heart.” And God will clearly reward that.

How do we get the wisdom of God? How do we get the knowledge of the discernment, the understanding that we so long to have; that ultimately, according to Chapter 2, will put us in the path of a good way? How do we get that? Scripture says you have to ask. God will give it to you, but you have to love Him. It is that reminder that it really is about the heart. I mean, we can fool people, and we can put on airs, and we can act like we're Christians, but God knows the heart and God rewards the heart. Sometimes we look at somebody and we go, “Wow, they seem to be a good Christian. They always went to church. They always seem to be really nice people.” And then something happens, and you go, “How could that ever happen?” And I just

think in my mind, "God knows the heart. God rewards according to the heart." And though we see what's going on externally, man will fool us. I've been fooled a number of times but be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, he's going to reap that. So, God will reward the intent, as He says in Scripture, of the heart, and that's one of the things that he's saying in Proverbs 2, that it's a divine allocation. God is the one that gives it to you. "Why is it I don't have wisdom?" I don't know. Are you really longing for it? Delight yourself in the Lord and He'll give you the desires of your heart. Now, what it doesn't say is, delight yourself in your desires and He'll give you the desires of your heart. It says, delight yourself in the Lord and God can see whether you delight yourself in Him or not. It is that foundation within the passage that begins to open the book, and we realized that not only do we have through God, this Divine allocation of wisdom and understanding and discernment, but we have protection from Him.

He goes into that in particular, if you look with me in verse 10, "For wisdom will enter your heart."

That's a great thing, isn't it? Let me just say this about that, you're going to have times where you're saying to yourself, "I just can't really seem to get into the word of God. It's just not becoming personal to me." You have to come back to the original, "Do you long for it?" Because if you do, it will enter your heart, and let me say this, once it enters your heart, you'll never forget it. It'll just become a part of your life. One of the reasons why Gerry can quote Ephesians 2:8-9 so quickly is because it means something to him, and it is when the word of God means something to you, it's in your heart. Then, it's readily available. It's one of the reasons why Jesus told His disciples, "When you go before these leaders and rulers, don't worry about what you're going to say." Peter will put it this way, if you'll sanctify Christ as Lord of your heart, you'll be ready to give an answer of any man of the hope that's within you. So, it's that foundation that we have, that wisdom will literally, if you look in verse 10,

(Proverbs 2:10) "For wisdom will enter your heart
And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

(Proverbs 2:11) Discretion will guard you,
Understanding will watch over you,

(Proverbs 2:12) To deliver you from the way of evil..."

We talk about that wonderful text, "deliver us from evil," as we think of the Lord's Prayer, and God says, "Ok, I will. You love the right things, and I'll deliver you." It's an interesting work, as Paul will say, that we're working together with Him. So, as we're putting the right things in our heart and in our minds, God is protecting us from things that we couldn't even see or couldn't even know. He is guarding us.

If you look with me in Philippians 4, that familiar passage that begins to talk about that thing of anxiety that comes into our life, and how that nefarious evil will soon swallow us up. In Philippians 4, He says, "You're not to be anxious about anything." You go, "Well, how do I not be anxious about anything?" If you look at the passage, it says this and there's kind of a summary. So, we'll go to the summary, which starts off with the word, what? "Finally."

(Philippians 4:8) "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

Have you ever had somebody come to you and say, "I just can't think about the right thing." Yeah, you can. God wouldn't tell you to think about certain things if He didn't think you could do it. He says, "You think about the right things." You go, "Well, what is God going to do?"

(Philippians 4:9) "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things..."

Ok, so you not only have to think about them, you have to start doing them. Then what will happen?

"... and the God of peace will be with you."

You do what God called you to do, then God will take care of the rest. How do I protect myself from all the evils that are out there? You can't, but you can guard your mind and your heart in Christ Jesus and then He'll protect you. So once again, it goes back to the fundamental will of your heart.

If you go back to Proverbs 2, you realize that God is desiring to protect us, and the word that is used and the scenario that it puts us in is in the realm of the strange woman. Now, once again, there's a reason why he puts us into this and that is that he's really demonstrating how certain things of this world allure us away from God. So, what's the best picture to show how people are allured away? A woman. I've oftentimes thought about the Garden of Eden. The woman looks at the fruit, and she goes, "Wow, that's really pretty stuff. That looks good. I think I'll take it." So, she does, and she turns to Adam, and she goes, "Here." And he just takes it. I'm going, "He's not even looking at the fruit. He's just doing whatever the woman's telling him to do." So, Scripture is kind of revealing just how easy this is. So, it's an interesting picture because it's talking about somebody turning away, and it literally becomes a metaphor for turning away. That's why when you come to Revelation, and it talks about the city of Babylon, it uses the term "the harlot." Why? That's a city but it's personified in the harlot. The city draws us away. It's no different than when you read about Saul, and he had been so consumed and so drawn in by pride that he ultimately wants to commit suicide because he's afraid of the shame that might

be brought about by any kind of failure that he had. You begin to see all these things that draw us away, and what's the best description? So, it's talking about literally us turning away from God and turning to other things.

The way that it's put in Jeremiah 5:25, your sins will cause good to be held to be withheld from you.

Now, we know according to Psalm 84:11, that God promises, if you would just ask and if you would seek Him, that no good thing will He withhold to those who walk uprightly. You turned away from Him. Therefore, your sin causes good to be withheld from you. It's not that God doesn't want to give you good. It's that you turn to other things and longed for other things.

In fact, one of the statements that he makes in Jeremiah 4:18 is that bitterness will ultimately enter your heart. Instead of the joy of the Lord, you'll have a bitterness that comes in.

When you think of this word, "strange," when it's defining the woman within the text, it's dealing with somebody that is detached. That's why it's using the word. So, somebody that really doesn't care for you and then it uses, if you look in the passage,

(Proverbs 2:16) "... the strange woman,
From the adulteress who flatters..."

It's somebody that's faithless. So, there's going to be an influence in your life that could care less about you and will be unfaithful to you, to help you, to be by your side when you need them the most. This is the force that we allow to draw us away.

If you look at the passage, it then turns, as we've been looking at these two verses today,

(Proverbs 2:18) "For her house sinks down to death
And her tracks lead to the dead."

This is the warning. Now, what he's talking about is not only death itself, which that in of itself is a scary thought, but "*māvet*," anything of ruin; that her house or her place of abode leads you into ruin and decay, despair, depression. The picture is literally, if you look in verse 18, sinking down. So, it gives that sinking down feeling, that sense of depression that's going on within the text.

"... And her tracks lead to the dead."

Underline that word tracks. It actually is best described as a circular thing with a rut in it. So, it gives us a picture of a rut you can't get out of, and you keep going in circles and you can't get out of it. The point is that it leads you to the dead, which later on, in Proverbs 21:16, this particular word is actually referred to as the departed spirits. But what it's talking about is it leads you into a place in which you're surrounded by those that could never or would never

help you. They're dead to the ability to help you. So, interesting picture of being trapped into depression and ultimately into death.

There was an interesting article that I was reading not too long ago of a young man that was battling something. When you begin to realize that there are just an amazing number of suicidal thoughts in our day. They actually say, I think it was in 2023, that there were 12.3 million contemplated suicidal deaths in America. Now, to put that in context, they say that 1.1 million people died of COVID. So, to put that in context now, and I'm not even sure that's even right, but the point is that you have a greater epidemic. Ironically, the CDC reports that nearly half of LGBTQ, the students, literally said that they had contemplated seriously suicide, nearly half. What that's telling us is that inappropriate desires, illicit affairs, unnatural affections will draw you into depression and that's literally what we're talking about. We're talking about things that you're attracted to, that are not only illicit, they're unnatural and inappropriate. It brings you into a sense of guilt and despair. This particular article was written about one man that was dealing with his addiction to pornography. He writes this, he says, "It creates and agitates and traps you into depression and anxiety." Interesting way of putting it. "It can create depression and anxiety by robbing you from joy from all the areas of your life. Thus, it triggers episodes of depression. It agitates depression by over using your dopamine while watching it, leaving you feeling more hopeless and helpless. It will trap you into depression by draining you of life instead of fulfilling the promise of giving you life. I had a friend pass away several years ago. Needless to say, I felt pretty awful. I remember during the week that he died, I tried to watch porn at least twice a day, every day that week. I had trained my mind to know it as my primary coping activity. My body knew it was sad, so my pleasure center was screaming, "Watch it." The crazy thing was my body couldn't respond to it. It was too sad. It was too broken. It would be like the world's worst friend finding their buddy dead and wanting their dead friend to feel better and come back to life, so they stick a syringe full of heroin into their arm. My mind wanted my body to feel pleasure, but my body was dead..." He uses that word, "dead," doesn't he? "My body was dead to it. Depression had already set in for me. My screwed up pleasure center was trying to give me something that would really just make me more depressed. My body was already there. It was dead to such things." Do you hear the word "dead"? The passage is telling us how easy it is for these things to draw us away, and whether it's that sexual thing or whether it's the allurements of the world. I mean, when you consider the different ones in Scripture, Judas was allured by money. Scripture tells us that he kept pilfering out of the money box. The thought is, "If I just had enough money, I would be happy. I could find some sign of fulfillment." But this man ended up committing suicide. Why? Because it left him empty; it left his life meaningless, and guilt and regret and all these things begin to well up inside the very thing that you thought was going to bring you life ends up bringing you death.

This is the great warning within this particular passage, that there are things in your life that are going to try to allure you. Jonah was some way allured into anger and bitterness, and he comes to the point in which he just wants to die because of that. Elijah was somehow lured into his sense of, "I think I'm better than everybody else, and I think I can do everything." And he finds out in such a disappointing way, well, that he literally disappointed himself and he wants to die. These are great men wanting to die. Why? Because they were allured by the wrong things. The tendency is to think, well, you know, it's the woman's fault or it's the situation's fault.

If you look with me in James 1, it puts it so clearly that you just can't really argue with Scripture. So, I wouldn't even try. I've tried that before, but it just doesn't work. James 1, if you look here with me, reminds us of just what it is that draws us in.

(James 1:12) "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

(James 1:13) Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

(James 1:14) But each one is tempted when..."

You might want to underline it in case you want to blame somebody else.

"... each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust."

Be careful what you love. Be careful with your affections. Set your affections on things above, not things below. That makes all the difference in the world. You say "I can't help it." You can help where your affections are, and where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. You'll have that tendency to go there. It's a great text.

If you look with me in Proverbs 11, it begins to show us just how evil can come in and how righteousness really does protect us. It starts off by saying,

(Proverbs 11:1) "A false balance is an abomination to the LORD,
But a just weight is His delight.

(Proverbs 11:2) When pride comes, then comes dishonor,
But with the humble is wisdom.

(Proverbs 11:3) The integrity of the upright will guide them,
But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.

(Proverbs 11:4) Riches..."

Do you have a tendency to be allured by riches?

“... do not profit in the day of wrath,
But righteousness delivers from death.”

In other words, you loving the right things.

(Proverbs 11:5) “The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way,
But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.

(Proverbs 11:6) The righteousness of the upright will deliver them...”

(Proverbs 11:8) “The righteous is delivered from trouble...”

How are you delivered? Well, you have the right heart, you love the right things, you pursue the right things. Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, start thinking about the right things. Do the work of God. God has called you unto those good works, and it's by virtue of you pursuing the right things that the wrong things can't enter in, and God will come right alongside of you and the God of peace will guard you. He'll guard you.

My uncle, a psychologist, used to always say the human mind cannot occupy two thoughts at the same time. If you will put the right thoughts in your brain, God will protect you, but you have to desire the right things.

I'm going to close with this passage in Psalm 84, and if you turn there with me. It gives a wonderful clarity within this particular context. One of the reasons why I'm so drawn to the Psalms is because psalms are songs, and songs are emotions and what God is looking for is your heart. He's looking for the longings of your heart, the desires of your heart. In Psalm 84, what you hear at the very beginning of this particular Psalm is, “Man, I'd really like to be in the house of God.” You can almost see him sitting outside the temple, and he watches this little bird and the bird flies in. He goes, “Even the little bird feels safe here.” You think I'm making that up? It's right here in the text.

(Psalm 84:1) “How lovely are Your dwelling places,
O LORD of hosts!

Psalm 84:2) My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

(Psalm 84:3) The bird also has found a house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.

(Psalm 84:4) How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! ...”

Even the bird, if the bird would just dwell here, the bird is going to be happier here in Your house.

(Psalm 84:5) “How blessed is the man whose strength is in You, In whose heart are the highways to Zion!”

You know what he's talking about, don't you? In your heart, you long to head towards Zion. That's the longing of your heart.

(Psalm 84:6) “Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring...”

“Baca” is another word for passing the valley of weeping; of sorrow.

You see, the tendency of man is to try to find gratification through the allurements because he has to find some kind of relief from all the pain and all the sorrow and all the hurt that's in the world; all the disappointments and all the failures that he has created. He's trying to find some sort of relief. It's one of the reasons why Paul says to the Thessalonians, “Look, God hasn't called us to live in this way of degradation. I know what your problem is.” As you read on in 1 Thessalonians, you realize what the problem is. So, he states it this way, “We are not as those who have no hope.” The fact is that when a person has a sense of hopelessness, they go towards something that will somehow give them some kind of relief, and God says, “It's Me. Set your affections on Me. Watch. I'll take care of these things.” And how wonderful it is to see God's power in transforming our lives.

Scripture tells us in James 4 that God is opposed to the proud. The proud are those that take it upon themselves, “I think I know how to fix this problem myself.” But He gives Grace, He gives His favor to the humble. It says this, “Therefore, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.” Now listen to the phrase, “and He will exalt you.” I've had people come up to me, and go, “I don't want to be exalted. I don't want to be exalted.” I say, “I don't think you understand the verse.” What it literally means is He will lift you up. You've been depressed? You're sinking down, aren't you? If you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; Scripture says if you'll howl and weep over your sin, if you'll come before God and ask for forgiveness, He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins, He'll cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and He'll lift you out of that miry clay of despair and hurt. Isn't that a better solution?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your promises. We claim them. We come to You, and we open up Your word and we realize, “You're talking about me. This is me.” How easily we are drawn

away from the things that are so valuable; how easily we are drawn away from You, but Lord, we come today to set our affections back on You.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, that's just simply what we're asking you to do. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. Now, to be perfectly candid with you, you can't do that, but you can cry out for help, and God hears the cry. It's the Spirit of God that will answer, and He'll give you a heart of gratitude; He'll give you a heart of zeal for all the things that are right. You'll find yourself loving not only the things that are right, but God himself. It begins with crying out for help, admitting you're wrong; turning to Him.