

Sovereignty of the Lord Over Human Rebellion

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[0 : 00] In Proverbs chapter 19, verse 23, right all the way to chapter 20, verse 12.

Can you read out loud for us? The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests to satisfy.

He will not be visited by honor. The slugger buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth. Strike a scoffer and the simple we run up to him.

Reprove a man of understanding and he will gain knowledge. He who does violence to his father, chases away his mother, is a son who brings shame and reproach.

Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge. A worthless witness mocks at justice, and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity. Condemnation is ready for scoffers and beating for the backs of fools.

[1 : 08] Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion. Whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his life.

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be poorer. The slugger does not plow in the autumn. He will seek an harvest and have nothing.

The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw him up. Many a man proclaims his own step-by-step love, but a faithful man. The righteous who walks in his integrity, blessed are his children after him.

A king who sits on the throne of judgment, minnows all evil with his eyes. He can say, I have made my heart pure. I am praying for my son. Omniple weights and unequal measures are built for my own foundation to him.

When the child makes himself known by God, by whether his conduct is pure or not good, the hearing, ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made me.

[2 : 14] This is God's glory and glory to the Lord. Please excuse the noise and different things we're dealing with. It's sitting on a second Sunday here, so I think we're still working out some of the things.

And thank you guys for making this possible. People who are serving on the sound and live stream and all that. In some ways, those are really thankless jobs because people only notice when something's not working.

And then they're fiercely contacting people who are in charge and whatnot. But you don't notice it many times. It's broken seamlessly. And a lot of people serve together to make this service possible.

Just to remind you guys from last week's passage, it concluded by saying that it's better to be poor than a liar. And our passage begins in chapter 19, verse 23, by saying this, The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied.

He will not be visited by heart. So using the imagery of resting satisfied, this is an image of being contented after a wholesome, tasty meal.

[3 : 27] And verse 23 reiterates the fact that it is not luxurious banquets and abundant feasts that ultimately satisfy. It is the fear of the Lord that ultimately satisfies.

Because people of this world think that they can buy contentment with enough worldly goods and experiences, enough money, enough boyfriends and girlfriends, enough parties, enough power, enough food.

But the truth is, they are never enough. Just as hunger indicates that there is such a thing as food, just as thirst indicates that there is such a thing as water, our spiritual hunger, the persistent feeling of emptiness, that feeling of being unfulfilled, that lingering sense that something is not quite right about this world, that longing for eternity, that every human being innately knows, can only be satisfied by one thing, and that is the fear of the Lord, being restored to proper relationship with God, between the Father and the Spirit, between the Creator and creatures, between the King and His subjects.

So the fear of the Lord is the main theme of this passage, and really, if you can whip us throughout this series, is to put the problems, the theme of every passage in the book of Proverbs. And the main point that this passage teaches us this morning is that those who mock God's ways will be judged by the Lord's anointed King.

So we see the fool's mockery in chapter 19, verse 23, and chapter 20, verse 1. And then the King's judgment, in chapter 20, verse 2 to 12. Let me know if there's anything I need to do here.

[5 : 16] So let's look at the fool's mockery first, chapter 19, verse 23, to chapter 20, verse 1. Verse 24 is continuing that image of being satisfied with food. It says, The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

This is true on multiple levels. The sluggard who spurns the diligence commanded by God, it's God's wisdom, as a way of gaining and being satisfied.

This sluggard who spurns that is depriving himself. And the image is really ridiculous, if you think about it. The image of a sluggard burying his hand in the middle.

He's burying his hand in the middle of a dish with food, but he's too lazy to actually lift his hands and feed himself, bring it to his mouth.

But it appropriately captures the plight of the sluggard. It's not that work is not available to him. It's not that the means of satisfying his hunger is unavailable to him, but he's unable to make use of the means that are afforded to him.

[6 : 30] He has food, but won't feed. And this indictment is true also about the sluggard who refuses to be satisfied with the fear of the Lord, the wisdom of God.

It's not that God's wisdom is withheld from him. He has access to it. It is presented to him, but he is too lazy to receive it. And this is a sobering warning to all of us who are busily satisfying our bodily appetites to the neglect of satisfying our spiritual hunger.

Even in dire situations, times like ours currently, we are all going to grocery stores or having groceries delivered to us by people who may or may not have contracted the virus.

We are visiting hospitals for urgent treatments. Even with the threat of COVID-19, we're still meeting with and spending time with family and friends that we deem essential to our well-being.

But can we say, as Job did in Job 23, 12, I have not departed from the commandment of his lips. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

[7 : 42] When people around us observe our lives, will they say his values, her values? He or she values God's word more than food. Will they say so-and-so treasures eternal life more than temporal life?

Or will they say that we are sluggish with regard to satisfying our spiritual appetite, which is of the utmost importance? People respond in various ways when confronted with this truth.

In verse 25, the scoffer and simple both belong to the category of fools. But the scoffer is the worst. Scoffers are those who are too prideful to listen to or to submit to anyone else.

They have an overinflated confidence in their own opinions, and so they sneer, they mock, they express their disbelief and disapproval toward others in ways that make them feel small.

And they feel superior to others, these scoffers. And to others, to many people, they come across as intelligent, even sophisticated, but in reality, the Bible describes them as fools.

[8 : 50] And because they're immune to correction, they're not known to change their minds on issues. Proverbs 9, 7 to 8 warned us, Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abused, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury.

Do not reprove a scoffer or he will hate you. So there is no use trying to rebuke the scoffer. It's a waste of time. And the scoffer only understands one language, and that is a flogging, literally, or striking, it says.

The word strike refers to the standard method of punishment that was used in these days by the authorities who were given the charge to execute those things.

And so, this is not talking about, you know, if you find a scoffer, start a fistfight with them because that would be a foolish thing to do. But that's what's appropriate for a scoffer.

The flogging, however, is not merely punitive. It's not just punishing. It also has a pedagogical purpose. It's intended to teach. Verse 25 continues, Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence.

[9 : 54] The second category of people is the simple. The simple refer to the ignorant and naive. Their minds are not closed like that of the scoffer, but they are empty.

So what they need is learning. And one of the ways that they learn is by seeing the wicked scoffer hunt. And then there's the final category of people, a man of understanding. Reprove a man of understanding and he will gain knowledge.

In contrast, the scoffer who does not learn even after flogging, and in contrast, the simple who only learns after watching a wicked person flaw. A man of understanding learns only after a word of correction.

Unlike the mind of the scoffer that's closed, unlike the mind of the simple which is empty, the mind of the man of God, the man of understanding is open. That's the hallmark of wisdom, humility, and a receptiveness to the word of God.

The wisest among men is the most teachable while the foolish scoffer is incorrigible. But how do some people end up as scoffers?

[11 : 00] It doesn't happen overnight. Verses 26 to 27 tell us, He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach.

Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge. Their wickedness and psychomockery originated in the home. The scoffer is immune to learning and correction out in society because he failed to listen to the instruction of his parents when he was still in their home.

This is why it's so important for parents to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. By learning humility and obedience from their parents and humility before and obedience to God is also learned.

And if they don't listen to your instructions now, if you're parents, they will stray from the words of knowledge in the future and bring shame and reproach to the household. And verse 26 says that this fool does violence to his father and chases away his mother.

This could be literal or figurative but in this society where the elderly depended exclusively on the care of their children, this was an especially heinous crime. 18th century American theologian Jonathan Edwards puts it this way, a Christian family is as it were a little church and commonwealth by itself.

- [12 : 21] And the head of the family has more advantage in this little community to promote religion than ministers have in congregations and magistrates in the commonwealth. They being always with them and having them at continual command and having always opportunities of instructing them.

For the children who are listening, that means listen to your parents. The son who ceases to hear instruction, however, becomes a scoffer.

He says in verse 28 and 29, a worthless witness mocks at justice and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity. condemnation is ready for scoffers and beating for the backs of fools.

So the words mock and scoffer are the same Hebrew word translated differently and this word occurs four times throughout this first half of the passage and the word justice and condemnation are also different translations of the same Hebrew word.

And so there's a poetic word play here that expresses God's poetic justice that those who mock justice will meet his justice. And in this world there are people wicked people who instead of being sated satisfied by the fear of the Lord as verse 23 says we should do they make doing evil deeds their bread and butter as verse 28 says that the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.

- [13 : 41] In this world they scoff at the righteous and mock justice imagining that they will never be held accountable. But don't be disheartened when that happens around you when the wicked seem to thrive because God's justice stands ready for scoffers.

In the last verse in this verse chapter 20 verse 1 again the word occurs mocker wine is a mocker strong drink a brawler and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

By personifying wine and strong drink as a mocker and a brawler Solomon graphically portrays the tendency of over consumption of alcohol to draw out the folly in all of us.

Even a typically demure person when drunk becomes a brash mocker. Even a typically timid person when drunk becomes a swaggering brawler.

Proverbs often warns about the dangers of alcohol. 21-17 warns about the addictiveness and the expensiveness of alcohol and how it impoverishes people. Chapter 31 verses 45 warn us about the tendency of alcohol to blur our judgment.

- [14 : 54] But on the other hand some verses in Proverbs such as chapter 3 verse 10 speak of abundant wine as a sign of God's blessing. And this tension between seeing wine as a blessing from God and seeing it as a dangerous substance to steer clear from that tension runs throughout the entirety of scripture.

And that means we need to hold on to that tension because that's there intentionally. On the one hand those who abstain from drinking altogether should not paint those who drink with broad strokes.

And remember that alcohol can be enjoyed appropriately responsibly in the right context. On the other hand those who enjoy drinking should keep the very real dangers of alcohol always in their mind.

And be self-controlled always in their drinking. Chapter 20 verse 1 preserves this tension. Wine is a mocker, strong drink of brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

It's not that drinking in and of itself is foolish, but being led astray by it is. The word led astray has a double meaning. It means to be led astray from God's wisdom, but it also means to be staggered, so you can picture someone who's staggered by wine.

[16 : 13] So then those who get staggered by alcohol are straying from the ways of God. That's the mockery, the false mockery. Though there are many who make mockery of God's wisdom, for that reason God appoints kings to execute his judgment, and that's what chapter 20 verses 2 to 12 is about, the king's judgment of these foolish mockers.

It says in verse 2, the terror of a king is like the growling of a lion. Whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his life. This is speaking of his fierce wrath like a lion, young lion that lays claim on its prey by roaring.

And earlier, chapter 19 verse 11 and 12 paired a proverb about the king's righteous wrath with the proverb about patience. And the same thing, Solomon's doing the same thing here, because it says in chapter 20 verse 3, it is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.

People often get into heated arguments and quarrels in order to defend their honor, but verse 3 teaches us that it is an honor actually for a man to keep aloof from strife.

The wise person reserves his wrath for appropriate occasions and does not pick fights unnecessarily. The fool, on the other hand, has no restraint and jumps into the fray wherever he sees an opening.

[17 : 39] Verse 4 describes another type of fool, the slugger. While the foolish mocker is too motivated for quarreling, the foolish slugger is too unmotivated for work. The slugger does not plow in the autumn, he will seek and harvest and have nothing.

Plowing is the initial preparatory step in farming where farmers break up the fall of ground in order to make it more conducive to planting. farming. So this slugger is too lazy to take part in that first step of farming.

However, he wants nevertheless to participate in the last step of farming. He will seek at harvest and have nothing. The folly of this slugger is that he wants results without hard work.

He wants to skip to the fruit of the harvest without the toil of plowing. the slugger wants a job without acquiring the skills to do the job.

He wants to be fit and healthy without exercising any self-control in his diet. He wants to get an A in the class without reading the assigned books. He wants all the pleasures of a romantic relationship without any of its hardships.

[18 : 53] He says, such a person is a slugger who will not be rewarded. Humans are complex beings and it's difficult to tell what's really on a person's mind at times. What's really in a person's heart.

But verse 5 says, the purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will dry out. It takes a wise, discerning person to draw out the hidden impulses and purposes of a man's heart.

And sometimes we don't even understand our own hearts, right? We don't even understand the purposes that lie behind our own agenda. And so it says in verse 6, many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find him.

There's the contrast between the many and the one. Many people claim to have steadfast love, but one real faithful man who can find him. In other words, many of us are hypocrites.

We all tend to think that we are more ethical and godly than we actually are. There are more people who think that they are spiritually mature and righteous than there are actually people who are spiritually mature and righteous.

[20 : 04] We assume the answer to that rhetorical question, a faithful man who can find is no one. There is no one who has steadfast love and faithfulness toward God in an absolute sense.

But there are some who follow God even though in an imperfect way. And that's what verse 7 is describing. The righteous who walks in his integrity blessed are his children after him. they will live a legacy of blessing for their progeny.

And in all of this it's the king's job that God's appointed king to tell apart the hypocrites from the genuinely righteous. He says in verse 8 a king who sits on the throne of judgment winnows all evil with his eyes.

Who can say I have made my heart pure? I am clean from my sin. So once again the metaphor of farming comes back. The winnowing connects to when the farmers are trying to separate the kernel from the chaff using the wind.

And so the slugger who does not plow but want to take part in the harvest is like chaff that the king needs to winnow out to filter out this kind of slugger.

[21 : 13] It's the king's responsibility to do that. All the types of fools that are mentioned in this passage, the sluggers, the liars, the perjurers, the cheaters, the mockers. It's the king's job to winnow all such evil.

The king must do this because he represents the Lord who appointed him. Verse 10 says unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord. It's because the Lord upholds justice and the king sits on the throne of justice is he must at God's behalf winnow all evil with his eyes.

Verse 11 says even a child makes himself known by his acts by whether his conduct is pure and upright. How much more then can the king judge fully grown men and women by their conduct?

That's what this proverb implies. The hearing ear and the seeing eye the Lord has made them both persuade. The Lord is the creator of the hearing eye and the seeing eye. It's the Lord who grants discernment and wisdom to the king so that he's able to winnow all evil with his eyes.

Unfortunately, the historical reality is that Israel's king did not live up to this ideal. Even Solomon, the sage king, the principal author of this book of Proverbs, did not walk in integrity or winnow all evil with his eyes during his days.

[22 : 36] 1 Kings 11 tells us about Solomon's failure. It says, Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women from the nations concerning which the Lord has said to the people of Israel, You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.

But Solomon clung to these in love. He has 700 wives who are princesses, and 300 concubines, and his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God.

The king who wrote this book, who wrote chapter 20, verse 27, ceased to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge. He himself ceased at some point of his life to hear instruction, and as a result he strayed from the words of knowledge.

And the failure of kings and rulers and presidents throughout the history of humanity has meant the failure of justice. Sluggers fill their bellies. Scoppers are given platforms and microphones.

Children bring shame and approach to their fathers and mothers. False witnesses rise up to pervert justice in our society. The wicked devour in equity like it's their daily bread.

[24 : 02] And the drunkards mock and brawl. Why? Because we have kings, we have lapped kings rather, who walk in integrity or winnow all evil with desires.

And I can assure you, another four years of President Trump is not going to solve all our societal ills, nor will a President Biden make our problems magically disappear.

there's a reason why there's a shift in the balance of power between the two major political parties in our country every decade or two. Because over time, dissatisfaction grows.

Because society is still sin-ridden. Because there is still injustice. There will be no perfect justice and peace until the true King, the Lord's anointed, the Messiah reigns over us all.

And we know His name. His name is Jesus. When Jesus returns, He will make right all that is wrong about this world. That breaks your heart right now.

[25 : 10] When Jesus returns, He will meet out perfect justice against those who have mocked justice. When Jesus returns, that's when He will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

And death shall be known. The prophecy in Revelation 1, 13-16 describes this magnificent picture of what Jesus will be like when He returns.

He says that He'll be clothed with the long robe, the golden sash around His chest, symbols of royalty, authority. He says the hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow, symbolizing infinite wisdom.

His eyes were like flame of fire, a symbol of discernment and judgment so He can win all evil with His eyes and burn up the chaff, as it says in Proverbs 20-8.

And it says His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, with which to crush His enemies under His feet. It says from His mouth will come a sharp two-edged sword, symbolizing the Word of God which searches our hearts and pierces our souls.

[26 : 17] That's the King that is coming back. And He alone will rule with God's perfect wisdom. He alone can bring God's perfect justice. That should fill us, God's people, with hope.

But for some of us, the inevitable return of Christ the King is not something to cheer, but something to dread. The rhetorical questions of verse 6 and 9 express our dire situation.

It says, many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find. Who can say, I've made my heart pure, I am clean from my sin. Many people in the world think that they are good, but who can find a person who is truly characterized by God's steadfast love and faithfulness in the world who can say that?

As Psalm 53 puts it bluntly, they have all fallen away. Together they have become corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. And this is dreadful news.

Because the king who sits on the throne of judgment winnows all evil with his eyes. And as chapter 20 verse 2 says, the terror of the king is like the growling of a lion. Whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his life.

[27 : 31] We have provoked the king as sinners. And what awakes sinners in the return of the king is his fiery wrath of death. And if you want to avoid that fate, if you want to be on the right side of history when King Jesus returns, you must come to terms with what he accomplished at his first coming.

You must acknowledge your sinfulness, submit to him, and confess your rebellion against him. Because when Jesus came for the first time about 2,000 years ago, instead of ascending to a throne, which is what he deserved, he ascended to a cross.

Instead of having a royal diadem placed on his head, he had a crown of thorns placed on his head. Because he came in his first coming to save sinners like you and me.

We have provoked him by living for ourselves instead of for his glory. We have committed treason against him and deserve death, but he died in our place on the cross so that we might be spared, so that we might be reconciled to him, so we might be reinstated as citizens of the kingdom of God.

The king himself laid down his life so that we might live forever with him. Let me ask you, have you pledged allegiance to Christ the king?

[28 : 51] Have you put all your trust in him? Is he really the Lord over your life? Or are you still living in rebellion, pretending to be the masters of your own faith?

Those who mock God's ways will be judged by the Lord's anointed king. as God's people, we have pledged allegiance to Jesus, and we know he has been faithful and true, and I pray that we will be a people who wait for him, wait for him to come with his perfect wisdom and justice to consummate his kingdom.

During this time, let's take a moment to think about this message, what it is that God wants you to hold on to, take hold and take forward. After you've done that, we're going to pray together.

Amen.