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Proverbs: Matters of Heart (Part 2)



Proverbs - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg's discussion on the matters of the heart continues in this segment, focusing on the correlation between moral behavior and mental illness. According to Gregg, when people behave in a particular way, it is not a mere metaphorical reference to a sick heart, but rather a literal illness of the mind. He emphasizes the importance of moral responsibility and choices based on the goodness or evil in one's heart. While medication can be a temporary solution to chemical imbalances, Gregg argues that addressing the root cause through spiritual healing is the key to permanent relief.

Transcript

In our last session we were looking at what Proverbs says about the heart, because we have turned now to the general topic of attitudes and moods, the inner life, the thought life, and the emotional life, I guess we could say. In a sense, the spiritual life, because the term spirit and the term heart are often used somewhat interchangeably in scripture. But in Proverbs, we read often of the heart and how that it is the wellspring of everything that we do and think and say.

It's the condition of our heart that dictates our behavior, and for that matter, even when our behavior does not conform to what's in our heart because of deliberate hypocrisy, it is the heart that is viewed by God as defining who we are. And we are warned to see other people that way as well, to recognize that it's what's in their heart, not what they're saying sometimes, that needs to be heeded. Now, you don't always know what's in somebody else's heart, of course, but he said that if a person is known to be a miser and he acts uncharacteristically generous, then know that his heart is not really with you.

And so also, while it is easy to be deceived by people if you don't know their character already, but if you do, and they act out of character for what you know them to be, then realize that their heart and their actions are not necessarily corresponding. And we saw that the heart is not something that is just static. It's not that, you know, God has just stuck in you a certain kind of attitude and a certain kind of moodiness or whatever, and you're just stuck with it.

Your heart is to be shaped and molded. Even a child's heart can be shaped by discipline, and also the heart can backslide and needs to be guarded against such dangers. Now, when we are now looking at the inward life, we come to a variety of specific attitudes, specific mood things that Proverbs discusses.

And these things on the list that I've given you, and we have Proverbs for each of them, would be things like depression, envy and jealousy, resentment, anger. These are things that are mental behavior disorders, but not disorders in the sense of sickness, disorders in the sense that we are not ordering our mental behavior properly. It's disorderly behavior.

And we sometimes in our society use the word mental disorder to mean a mental, well, we think of it as an illness. And in a sense, it's really hard to define whether we should use that term, illness, with respect to these things. In one sense, it's justifiable because moral behavior has always been metaphorically spoken of in terms of health or sickness.

For example, Jesus, when he was going to the sinners and criticized them, said, well, those who are well don't need a physician. Those who are sick need a physician. And I'm not come to the righteous, but to sinners to call them to repentance.

So he saw himself as a physician for people's moral behavior and using the analogy of sickness. And likewise, in the Old Testament, it's not uncommon for physical ailment, physical sickness to be the metaphor for a spiritual condition. So that in the book of Isaiah, the nation in its rebellion against God and under God's discipline is seen to be sick.

In the opening chapter of Isaiah, God speaks of the nation of Israel and says the whole head is sick from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. They're full of putrefying sores and wounds and have never been mollified or treated by a physician. And of course, it's not referring to physical sickness.

There's talk about the nation's moral condition and the condition of its alienation from God. So there is a legitimacy at times in speaking of moral behavior or a moral condition by the analogy of sickness. The problem is, though the Bible does this and it's legitimate, we live in a scientific age where we actually have scientific descriptions of what we call sickness.

We live in a therapeutic society. In particular, we live in a society which is naturalistic in its assumptions rather than supernaturalistic. And although the majority of people in America, when they're pulled, say they believe in God, yet in reality, the way they live is they interpret everything naturalistically.

They don't really see the hand of God in things and they don't interpret things from God's perspective. And so behavior, especially among those who believe that humans

are simply the product of natural forces and not creation, and who deny that people have a soul that lives on, that there is such a thing as immortality. Those who deny such things, and that would be all naturalistic thinking people, and they do govern our schools.

They, of course, have to find naturalistic explanations for what the Bible would see as spiritual problems, sin, bondage, misbehavior. These things are recognized even by non-Christians as troublesome, but the nature of the troublesomeness cannot be defined by them as it would by us who follow the scriptures and who believe in the supernatural, who believe in the soul. See, we can say man has a soul.

That soul dictates his choices and his behavior. That's what Solomon is saying. The heart is what he's talking about there.

He's not talking about the physical heart. He's talking about the metaphorical heart. He's talking about the inner spiritual man.

That is an area we have responsibility for, and we are fallen so that it's this sinfulness in the heart of man that leads to all kinds of misbehaviors. That's what Jesus said in Mark chapter 7, and it agrees with what we've seen in Solomon. We saw that in Proverbs 4, 23, that you guard your heart because out of it are the issues of life.

As Jesus put it in Mark 7, verse 20, Jesus said, What comes out of a man that defiles man, for from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, which means greed, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man. So it's obvious that there is something in, and Jesus means when he says from within, he says from the heart.

He's talking about the spiritual nature of man. The corrupted spiritual nature of man causes man to do things that are wrong, but also the spiritual nature of man is able to be reconciled to God, is able to turn to God, to put trust in God, to love God, to choose the good and refuse the evil. That's what we can do, and we have moral responsibility to do it.

And so those who have believed in God and in the soul of man have always believed there's a moral responsibility that we have, because the choices that we make are moral choices based upon goodness or evil in our soul or our heart, corruption or righteousness in the heart. But those who don't believe in a non-material part of man believe that all of our thoughts and all of our behavior proceed from simply the random collision of molecules inside our brains. Just these electrical synapses that take place between brain cells.

It's an amazing thing that people can think that, because it would mean, of course, that

if I'm thinking 2 plus 2 equals 4, I'm thinking that only because there's sort of a randomness of brain activity, it's electrical, not spiritual, that is leading me to that conclusion. But of course, why I should trust that conclusion, no one can say, because after all, my brain cells might randomly come up with different answers, and who's to say what's right or wrong, or how would I know? Because my soul is not really something that is in the image of God, they think, but it's simply what's generated from the combined activities of all my neurons acting upon one another. So that the thoughts I have are just as much a natural product of physical activity of my cells in my brain, as digestion is a natural result of glands and fluids that my stomach, you know, produces.

So that if this is true, there's really nothing spiritual about man at all, it's all natural. And therefore, if man has problems that have historically been spiritual in nature, let's say depression, or anger, or anxiety, and things like that, well those have to be regarded to be natural things, not spiritual things. And to suggest nowadays that this could be a spiritual issue, and it could be managed by spiritual means rather than physical, or rather than by chemical means, is almost to sound like you're just out of the loop as far as modern understanding goes.

Because psychiatrists now and psychologists say, no, we have discovered that there are chemical causes for these things. And when people misbehave in any particular way, it's because of something that can be called an illness. Not metaphorically, but literally.

A mental illness. That a person who is a serial killer, or a repeated rapist, or something like that, that person is sick. That person needs a doctor.

Well, metaphorically, certainly we could say that behavior is sick behavior. But really, is it a medical condition, or is it a spiritual condition? Well, to the degree that we trust the Bible about such things, we have to say that it's a spiritual and moral condition. Because those things are sins, and people are held responsible by God for doing sins.

God can't hold a person responsible for having leprosy, or for having diabetes. They didn't choose that. That's not their fault.

But he holds them responsible for rape, and murder, and stealing, and gossip, and lying. These things are not sicknesses, they are choices. Now, I know that the Bible teaches that because we are fallen, it is so much easier and more natural for us to make bad choices than good choices.

It's easier to be selfish than to be selfless. That's just our nature. It's our fallen nature.

In fact, it is so much easier to do the wrong thing that the lazier we become spiritually, the more it feels like we can't do anything except the wrong thing. The more it feels like we're in bondage, the more it feels like we are addicted to bad behavior. And certainly, there is some truth in the fact that people come to the point where they really can't stop

drinking, or they really can't stop whatever sinful thing they are doing.

Because, as the Bible makes it very clear, you become in bondage to sin. But that bondage is not cured with a pill, or with a surgery, or with some other medical procedure. That bondage is a spiritual bondage, and needs to be cured by deliverance from that bondage, through whatever means that deliverance should be brought.

Whether it's a demon, in which case exorcism is the deliverance, or it may not be a demon per se, it may just be a badly disciplined soul that needs to be gradually brought around to making the right choices as opposed to the wrong ones. They may need a lot of help from other spiritual support from the body of Christ or from other things that God may provide. The question is, are these behavior issues medical issues, or are they spiritual issues? And anyone who's done the research on this, I think, can easily see that the modern psychiatric community and the modern pharmaceutical companies have a strong vested interest in the public perceiving all of these things as medical conditions.

Why? Because the psychiatrist is the only person in the helping professions in the mental health arena, as they would call it, who is a medical doctor. They are medical doctors. They are MDs.

A psychologist is not an MD. He may have a PhD in psychology, but he's not an MD. Therefore, he can't prescribe drugs.

A psychiatrist can prescribe drugs because he's a doctor. A psychologist cannot. He can only talk to you and help to steer your thinking a certain way by suggestion.

Similarly, spiritual counsel is done by speech. By speaking to people or by the word. The word comes and we receive the word and we obey the word and we change.

But, if indeed our problems are not the kind that we can just make choices to fix, but they are chemical imbalances in the brain, then only the psychiatrist can help us. Then the psychiatrist has the monopoly on the mental health dollars because everyone has to go to him to get a prescription for a drug. And the pharmaceutical companies, of course, are the ones who make all the money.

And I'm not here to make a political statement about these people, but this is exactly what has been going on in this country for nearly 100 years now. That there's been a campaign of propaganda to convince everybody that their misbehavior is not really their fault. It's really a problem of mental illness.

And because of this, modern people, when they read the Gospels about things like demon possession, they're not sure what to make of it. And there's a great number of Christians who, because of the conditioning of modern thinking about such behaviors, they just assume, well, those people that the Bible calls demons, I guess today we'd recognize them as mentally ill. They're probably paranoid schizophrenics or something

like that.

And indeed, I will agree on this, that if those people were in our society today, and sometimes they are, that our society would call them that. They'd give them that label and they'd treat them that way. And they'd give them medications and so forth.

That's how our society deals with such things. But the fact that Jesus didn't should be instructive to us, because Jesus knew what was in a man. He knew what makes a man tick.

He knew what man needs. He knew man's problems. And therefore, the fact that Jesus did not consider these people to be sick, but afflicted and in bondage by demonic personalities should suggest that there may be a lot of people under the care of mental health professionals today who, if they were living at the time of Jesus, Jesus would have simply cast demons out of them.

On the other hand, I'm not suggesting that all misbehavior is caused by demons or by demon possession. That the human soul has fallen sufficiently to cause quite enough problems on its own without the help of demons. And making the wrong moral choices on a regular basis becomes habitual, becomes a bondage, becomes something that people really can't break free from.

Jesus said, he that practices sin is a slave of sin. And so that's why we need Jesus. We need him to set us free from these bondages.

And that's really the stated mission of Jesus. When Joseph had not yet become convinced that Mary was still a virgin, though pregnant, an angel came to him and told him that this was the case and said, you'll call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Not the penalty of their sins.

He'll save them from their sins. Of course, the penalty. Also, we know that Jesus justifies us from our penalty from the guilt of sin.

But he came to deliver us from sin, from the bondage of sin. And the fact that he came to do that means there really was no other way out. So sinning.

And we know what sinning is because the Bible defines it. If you murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, dishonor your parents, blaspheme. If you don't love your neighbor as you love yourself, then you are sinning.

How do you stop doing those things? Well, ultimately, deliverance from sin can only come through Jesus. But even if you have Jesus, and many Christians do have Jesus, they still have, obviously, problems to overcome. Just becoming a Christian doesn't make you suddenly free from all your bondage.

It means that you now have a deliverer who you and he together will be fighting the battles to overcome those enemies that have spiritually conquered your life. It's a lifetime battle, but it's one in which progress can be made and can be seen and sometimes full deliverance from many habits that once completely dominated. So it's not really uncommon to run into Christians who were drug addicts before they were Christians, and now they aren't drug addicts anymore.

People who are in bondage to alcohol or nicotine or certain behaviors, gambling or pornography or things like that. Things which the secular world calls addictions. Now, what they call addictions are really what the Bible would call bondage, I think.

And people can be set free from bondage. I want to say this too, before we get into the Proverbs on these points. That one of the modern remedies that are suggested for what people call addictions are the 12-step programs which were begun with Alcoholics Anonymous and have many spin-offs of that.

So there's this Anonymous and this Anonymous and this Anonymous. Various what are called addictions. Groups that get together.

Many people say these are Christian organizations, but the fact is that they're not Christian. And even the founders, Bill and Bob of Alcoholics Anonymous, were not Christians. Well, they did have Christian beliefs of sorts.

They also were occultists, and they were very heavily into seances, very heavily into spiritism, and highly recommended it. These men were a mixture, a spiritual mixture. They had Christian beliefs.

They would say that Jesus is Lord, but they'd also advocate contact with demons and things like that. If you read the history of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, those who say it's got Christian roots are only looking at a very small part of the information about these men and what they really believed. But the point is, regardless whether they're Christian or not, what happens today is people who have bondage to alcohol or drugs or something else, and there's all kinds of things that people call addictions these days, even codependencies, they have 12-step programs for them where an addiction, let's say to a substance like alcohol, ends up being replaced by an addiction to 12-step meetings.

And you'll find many people who are dry now from their alcohol only because they go to 12-step meetings several times a week. And they can't really get along without the meetings. The meetings have become their addiction.

And this is not the same thing as walking in victory. This is not the same thing as being delivered. As a matter of fact, the 12-step programs encourage people to never claim to be delivered.

They have to every time say, I'm an alcoholic. What's an alcoholic? Someone in bondage to alcohol? I haven't been drinking, but I'm still in bondage. I'm still an alcoholic.

Well, that's not what the Bible says. Let me show you what the Bible says, and then we'll look at what Proverbs specifically says about these kinds of behaviors. In 1 Corinthians 6, verses 9-11, it says, Certainly people who are adulterers, there's actually a term called sex addicts that's commonly used by psychologists today, and I'm sure they have 12-step programs for sex addicts too.

But the Bible calls them adulterers and fornicators. We've talked about alcoholics. The Bible uses the term drunkards.

We might talk about a kleptomaniac, but the Bible uses the term thieves. And we might talk about someone who's got anger problems. The Bible calls them revilers.

And these are people who have behavioral problems. In fact, I should point out that these are people who are dominated by these behaviors because he says those who are these types will not inherit the kingdom. Certainly, there are people who will inherit the kingdom who have on occasion fallen to a temptation and gotten drunk or have on an occasion done one of these things that were wrong and then repented.

This is not talking about people who stumble and repent. This is talking about people who practice these things. This is their life.

A person who doesn't get drunk very often but has fallen three times in his life is not a drunkard. He's a sober man who's fallen to temptation three times in his life. But a person who is regular in his habit of drinking is a drunkard.

A person who is not repentant of these behaviors is whatever it is described here. Idolaters, certainly most people who are called addicts would biblically be called idolaters. They idolize a behavior which dominates their life rather than God dominating it.

But notice what Paul said in verse 11. And such were some of you. Some of his readers who are now Christians were adulterers, fornicators, idolaters, revilers, sodomites, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, addicts.

You were, some of you look like this, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. So they've changed. They aren't those things anymore.

For them to get up and confess, I am Joe Schmo, I am an alcoholic, is to deny what Paul says. No, you were that. You're not now.

You've been cleansed. You've been redefined. You've been reborn as something else.

You might have struggles or temptations because there's a warfare that every Christian faces and your warfare might be with things that once dominated you, but you're not that anymore. And therefore, in my opinion, even though many people profess to have some help from 12-step programs, the people I know who have, have become really addicted to the programs and they really give credit to the program more than to God. Even if they say, well, my higher power is Jesus.

Well, fine, then why not just walk with Jesus? Well, no, I need to keep stepping. I need to keep going to the group. Why? I thought Jesus was your higher power, not the group.

If Jesus is your higher power, he goes with you when you're not in the group. You can miss the group and he's still there. If you really have a relationship with Jesus and you're really looking to Jesus, then that's one thing.

But if you can't function without the reinforcement of the group all the time, then it's the group, not Jesus, that you're looking to. You can say Jesus is your higher power. Churches are full of people who say they believe in Jesus, but do they live it? If you're trusting in something in reality other than Jesus, then you're not being delivered.

It's right in such a case to say, I'm still an alcoholic because you haven't been delivered yet. And by the way, some might say, well, don't Christians need fellowship even though they have Jesus? Yes, but the fellowship of the saints is fellowship with Jesus. The body of Christ is Christ.

When we're with each other, what is done to his brethren is done to him. We are in the presence of Christ when two or more are gathered in his name. You go to a 12-step group and your higher power is Jesus, but someone else's higher power is their motorcycle helmet.

You're not in fellowship with Jesus, you're in fellowship with a support group. And it's not looking to Jesus. I really don't like to be critical of Christian groups that are helping people with life-dominating problems using this 12-step program, but I just have to say, we need to look at the results.

Are these people really being delivered through the power of God or are they just being managed through another kind of a program that works just as well for those who do and those who don't come to Christ? A person who doesn't come to Christ may become dry by stepping, and that may be the worst thing that can happen to him because then he won't need God anymore. Many times the consequences of bad behavior are so tormenting that God intends to use those to bring them to Christ. But if we can relieve them without Christ, we may have inoculated them from the very work of God that he intends to drive them to the end of themselves so that they'll come to God.

But if we give them a shot in the arm through some kind of a support group so that they

say, I've mastered it, I don't need God, I'm clean and sober for three months now. Well then, even though their higher power is a doorknob instead of Jesus, it doesn't mean that they've been helped. They've not been helped to God, they've been helped to relief.

And you know, to relieve people from the consequences of their sinful choices, like I said, it may just neutralize the effect those consequences were supposed to have in the will of God to bring them to their knees. These are things that we need to re-examine. Of course, we all would rejoice to see a person who's been destroyed by alcohol cease drinking, cease wasting the family money, you know, cease tormenting his wife and children because he's no longer drinking.

That's a wonderful result. But if that's the end of it, if that's all he gets, if he doesn't come to Christ, if God is not glorified, but the man is simply, his life is made easier, then that's not a specifically Christian remedy. That's just a humanistic remedy.

And so I come to these passages in Proverbs about human moods and attitudes and behaviors with this preface, as it were. Because we have been conditioned, our society, to view behavior very differently than the Bible encourages us to view it. If a child is not able to sit still in school, we give them a drug.

If a person has radical mood swings, we give them a drug. If a person is hearing voices in their head telling them to kill their mother, we give them a drug. These kinds of things have spiritual alternatives that we find in Scripture.

Not all of these things are brought up in the book of Proverbs, of course, because there's many aspects of the spiritual world that were not revealed in the Old Testament. But Solomon was nonetheless aware of different kinds of mood and attitude orientations that are damaging. And he had some knowledge about the nature of them.

For example, depression. Today we talk about clinical depression, making it, of course, a medical pathology. And I need to make clear what I believe a Christian should and should not say.

A Christian should not say that there is no chemical cause of depression. Of course, there may be, well, a chemical cause of depression. But the question is, is the answer a chemical answer or not? We have been told that when people are depressed or bipolar or have anxiety or even people who are said to be schizophrenic, we're often told that they have a brain chemistry problem or else a hereditary genetic problem.

Something wrong with the chromosomes in their brain. And this is theory. Not everybody who's an expert psychiatrist agrees with this.

It's simply the party line. If these things are true, then the psychiatrist can give you drugs for them. And that benefits the psychiatrist's bottom line and the pharmaceutical company's bottom line.

And the pharmaceutical companies sponsor, in a big way, the American Psychiatric Association. Most of the money comes from the pharmaceutical companies. So, there's a relationship there that has a lot of money involved with it and not a lot of conscience.

And to convince people that this is a chemical imbalance, a genetic thing, that you've got a problem a little bit like diabetes. And just like you give a diabetic insulin, you have to give a schizophrenic this kind of medication or a depressed person this kind of medication or an anxious person this kind of medication because you wouldn't deny insulin to a diabetic. So, why would you be against giving these drugs to these people? Well, of course, the parallel is not exact at all.

A diabetic has a medical condition. And sometimes people do have medical conditions that affect their moods. I mean, all kinds of things, chemical can affect your mood.

A little bit too much alcohol. Nicotine can affect your mood. Many drugs can affect your mood up or down.

No one can deny that some people have mood swings that are based on chemicals. Some of them artificially and some of them may be generated from within the body. Adrenaline, you know, hormonal things that happen on a monthly cycle, especially with women.

I mean, there's definitely chemical imbalance. They change the moods. They change perception of things.

They are, in many cases, temporary. Some people have long-standing thyroid problems or something. This is a medical condition, not a psychiatric condition.

And see, we have been so indoctrinated that we don't even know there's a difference. We think a psychiatric condition is a medical condition. No, a medical condition like diabetes or thyroid disorder is actually related to some organ of the body that isn't functioning properly.

There's some necessary chemical that your body needs that isn't being supplied or is being overly supplied. There are chemical imbalances that people have when they have medical conditions. And sometimes those do affect their moods.

They can generate higher anxiety or depression or whatever. There is such a thing as medical issues that can be diagnosed by real medical tests. What we have to understand is what's called clinical depression, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder.

There are no clinical tests to show that anything is malfunctioning here that is causing it. Now, in recent years, they've come up with these brain scans that show different colored areas of the brain. And they find out that people who are depressed, this area of their brain is less active than in normal people.

And people who have this other kind of psychiatric problem have this other part of their brain. They can see the different colors on this scan that show how active the brain areas are. Well, here we've proven there's a physical connection.

But what has been proven is that there is indeed a connection between the body and the soul. The question is, which is influencing which? That is to say, is the soul influencing the brain? Or is the brain influencing the behavior, the soul? For example, we know that if you get alarmed, your insulin levels can rise. And emotion causes a change in your chemistry.

That's the way we're constructed. There is a soul-body connection. And many times, our attitudes can cause certain chemicals to be released in our brains.

And if we're angry, if we choose to be angry, it can release certain chemicals into our brains. If we're alarmed, it can release more insulin or whatever. And if you check a person out, you can find out, wow, look, elevated activity here.

Yeah, the elevated activity may be caused by the spiritual choices the person's making and by their attitudes and their moods, rather than they've got a problem here to start with, and it results in these moods and attitudes. And it may be that the two feed on each other. The question is, what came first, the chicken or the egg? One thing we can say is there has been no proof that disorders that are called psychiatric really do have a physical cause.

But there are medical conditions. Like I said, thyroid disorder is a good one. The various hormonal changes that happen in a woman or even in men at different times in their lives.

So those things are chemical changes that change people's moods. That can't be helped. That's just a human condition.

And if it's a thyroid disorder, maybe it can be helped, because that's a medical condition can be addressed by medical science. But the psychiatric conditions are not addressed by medical science. They're addressed by drug companies who virtually, they'll all tell you, they don't know why this drug does what it does.

It just makes people feel better. They try every kind of thing in an experiment, and they find something that seems to make changes in the brain that makes someone feel better. And they say, we'll call this a cure.

They don't cure anything. They don't even claim to cure anything. They don't even know what it is they're addressing.

All they know is this pill makes you feel differently. That's all they know. They don't know why.

Well, guess what? Drinking enough alcohol makes you feel differently, too. That doesn't make it a cure for anything. And it certainly doesn't mean that your brain had an alcohol deficiency before you drank it, and you're addressing some kind of deficiency.

You know, you're adding something that changes things in your chemistry. And yeah, that does change the way you feel at times. That doesn't mean that you've addressed the root of the problem.

The root of the problem is in the heart, if we take a biblical worldview. And so talking about depression, this comes up in Proverbs a number of times. In chapter 12 and verse 25, it says, anxiety in the heart of man causes depression.

But a good word makes it glad. Now, this may seem simplistic. Obviously, people who are in deep depression aren't necessarily made glad by a good word instantaneously.

But the suggestion is that words can change the mood of somebody who's anxious or depressed. Many times, depression may be caused by anxiety. Now, it doesn't say always.

It doesn't say depression is always caused by anxiety, but it says where there is anxiety, that leads to depression. So at least some species of depression have anxiety at their root. I'm depressed because everything seems gloomy because it looks gloomy.

Like the world's going to hell in a handbasket or like my job is insecure. My family's got problems. I've got this anxiety about how things are going to turn out.

So I've just got this cloud over me and I'm gloomy. It's causing depression to have this anxiety. Well, what's the cure? You can certainly go and get an anti-anxiety drug.

There's plenty of those on the market. And that's the easy answer, if it's an answer at all. It may make me feel less anxious, but at what cost? At what cost to me, to my real health, to my spiritual life? If I'm anxious, that is a marker of something spiritual that needs to be addressed in me.

Why am I not trusting God? Why are you cast down on my soul? Hope in God. But if I take a drug, I won't even realize there's something going wrong. I won't ask the question, why am I cast down in my soul? I won't see there's a deficiency of some kind in my spiritual life because I'll have numbed myself to it.

My grandfather would never take aspirin. And I don't take it very often because I don't get headaches very often. But when I get a headache, I do take an aspirin.

And the reason is, I don't like headaches. But my grandfather never would take an aspirin for a headache. He said, that just, he says, you have a headache because something isn't right.

And he said, that just masks the problem. He says he doesn't want to think that everything's OK when it isn't. I'm not sure how enduring the headache is a better way to go about it.

But I mean, he's a slightly eccentric guy, but intelligent. I mean, he had reasons for everything he did. I mean, most of the things he did, he grew one of his little toenails out four inches long once just to see how long it would grow before it broke off.

But he's a little eccentric. But he was an usher in his Baptist church. And sometimes he did it in his bedroom slippers.

Everyone wore suits in those days, and he'd wear his bedroom slippers to the usher. He was, he liked to tweak people sometimes. But he just felt like it was not desirable for him to take an aspirin if he had a headache.

Because then what the headache is trying to tell him, he wouldn't be getting the message. You know, if you have a headache, there may be something medical that needs to be addressed. I mean, what if you had a brain tumor and you just kept taking aspirins? You'd never know that you had a brain tumor.

It'd kill you before you knew anything was wrong. And that's how it is in terms of our moral or spiritual lives, too, in a sense, by way of metaphor or analogy, that when there's something wrong in our relationship with God or our relationship with someone else, then we don't have a clear conscience. That's a spiritual condition.

Then we are anxious. Remember, Proverbs says, the wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion. What does that mean? Anxiety and fear often are the result of being wicked.

If you're wicked, you'll be paranoid, fleeing when no one's pursuing. It's paranoia. That's a spiritual condition, being wicked.

If your conscience isn't clear, you're always going to be in the back of your mind feeling like God's going to lower the boom on you somehow. Something bad's going to have to happen because I really deserve it, because I feel unclean in my conscience. Now, if I've got problems in my spiritual life between me and God, and my conscience bothers me, and I feel anxious and I feel depressed, and I go take a pill and I don't feel depressed or anxious anymore, then whatever the problem was is still there.

I just don't know it anymore. I've just masked it. And that's often what medical remedies do, both for medical problems and, unfortunately, for spiritual problems, too.

So, here he says, anxiety in the heart causes depression, but a good word makes it glad. Again, this is maybe an overstatement. Not just a single good word.

It's not going to lift everyone out of depression. But the suggestion is the person who's depressed and anxious, their problem is something they need instruction and encouragement about, rather than a drug. Somebody who comes with some wisdom or some encouragement and can lift their spirits can cure their depression and their anxiety, or at least alleviate it at that moment.

But the thing is, we need to be taught. We need to be informed. Words carry information and truth to us.

And it's the truth that will make us free, Jesus said. And so words are a better source of relief than something else, because words carry truth and truth is a spiritual thing that addresses spiritual problems. A pill doesn't do that.

In chapter 14 and verse 10, it says, The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy. And in the same chapter, verse 13, it says, Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief. Now, grief and sorrow, bitterness of heart, these things are matters of the heart.

They're not matters of the brain chemistry. They're matters of the heart. The heart knows its own bitterness.

Even in laughter, the heart may sorrow. A person may momentarily be amused by something that makes them laugh. Like if you're depressed and you say, Well, I'm going to go see a movie.

And it's a comedy. You'll find yourself laughing at certain things in a movie. When the movie's over, you're still depressed.

Even in laughter, your heart is unchanged. Laughter can be a very shallow relief and temporary relief, but the heart still has condition that is the cause of its grief and needs to be addressed separately. In chapter 15 and verse 13, it says, A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart, the spirit is broken.

Now, sorrow of heart is not always a bad thing. Jesus said, Blessed are those who mourn, if you're mourning about the right things. But I think this is talking about hopelessness and depression and so forth, which people feel that breaks their spirit.

And again, breaking the spirit isn't always a bad thing, either. A broken spirit is something that the Bible says God draws near to those who have a broken spirit. But again, sorrow can be good or bad.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7, There's the sorrow of the world that leads to death and a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. A person is mourning and sorrowful and their spirit is broken because they're inclining to repent of sin. That's a positive thing.

But a worldly sorrow, Paul said, leads to death. People often, when they commit suicide, have come to that point where they're so sorrowful they see no way out. It's all hopelessness for them.

They just figure, you know, things just cannot get any better. I can't stand this sorrow. It's too much for me.

Their spirit is broken. That is, their will to live is gone and it leads to death. But a merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.

That means your face is brighter if you have a merry heart. So, a merry heart will affect your face, but a broken heart will affect your spirit negatively. If you reach the point where you're hopelessly depressed, sorrow of heart is healthy enough if we can keep it in perspective.

When you lose a loved one, when you realize that there's some, when you're sympathetic towards someone who's suffering, sorrow of heart is a wholesome thing. But if you are wallowing in sorrow or depression because you just can't see any hope, there's no brightness at the end of the tunnel for you. And you're anxious about the future.

You don't have any positive hope about it. Well, of course, you've lost sight of God in a case like that. Hope in God, oh my soul, why are you cast down? Your spirit can be broken.

Depression can lead you to death and to loss of will to live. That's the kind of thing I think he's talking about there. In chapter 17 and verse 22, Solomon says, a merry heart.

That was the beginning of the last verse we looked at too. But this time it says, a merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones. Now, here's a case where physical health is used as an analogy or metaphor for spiritual well-being.

It does good like a medicine to be cheerful. And it may not be merely an analogy. It may, in fact, be what I was talking about earlier.

When you find there is some kind of correspondence to a person's mood and their brain chemistry, it may be that their mood has dictated their brain chemistry rather than their brain chemistry dictating their mood. A merry heart is a spiritual condition, happiness. It does good like a medicine.

It may change things physically for you for the better. People sometimes just become generally healthier when they choose a more happy and optimistic mood. It's good for you to be happy.

It's good for you physically. But this is not just a positive thinking kind of a thing. A merry heart comes, according to Scripture, from having a clear conscience.

David said in Psalm 32, when he talked about how he had sinned with Bathsheba and he had not yet confessed it, he had not yet gotten it clear with God. This is what it says in the beginning of Psalm 32. This is written with reference to his repentance from that sin.

David said, Blessed is he, which means happy, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed or happy is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. In whose spirit there is no guile.

He says, When I kept silent, this is before I confess, he means when I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long for day and night. Your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into drought of summer.

I acknowledge my sin to you and my iniquity. I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgression to the Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Now he begins by talking about how happy the person is whose sins are forgiven. Then he talks about how unhappy he was before he confessed his sin and obtained forgiveness. But that unhappiness, he felt it was he felt it in his bones.

His bones felt dry. He felt his vitality was drained from him. Why? Because he was carrying unresolved guilt.

His heart was depressed and his body. Felt drained of energy. And this is, you know, this isn't real.

This is true to life. This happens to people that their physical health suffers because of spiritual compromises they're making. Just because of psychosomatic things, psychosomatic illness, of course, is an illness that isn't really caused by any organic cause.

It's caused by the mind. It's caused by the condition of the mind. Many doctors believe that the patients that they serve really don't have any organic problems.

That's why they give them sugar pills sometimes. That's why there's such a thing as a placebo effect. That when you give a patient who doesn't really have an organic problem that's in their head, give them a placebo, they feel better because they think it's been fixed and their brain tells them things are OK now.

And the sugar pill did nothing for them except to change their mood. And it didn't change it chemically. It changed it psychologically.

It made them think that something is being done and that things are fixed now. And then suddenly they get better. Many times the state of mind or the state of the heart will determine the health or lack thereof of the body so that Solomon says a merry heart does good like a medicine.

And a broken spirit, which was spoken of in the previous verse we looked at, it dries the bones. And David said, my bones were dry. So here's the thing.

If the spirit of a person is broken to the point where they're just totally hopeless and depressed and have lost their will to live and so forth, that person is not trusting God. That person no doubt had issues with God that he's supposed to be resolving and he's neglecting because David said, once your sins are forgiven, how happy you are, how unhappy I was, how sick I felt when I was not dealing with my issues with God. Now that I'm forgiven, I'm a happy man.

And I'm healthier, too, because a merry heart, the state of your spirit, therefore, does have an impact on your health. It says in Chapter 15, verse 15, all the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast. Now, all the days of the afflicted, the word afflicted has a lot of different uses in scripture.

Obviously, affliction can be persecution from outside. So the psalmist says, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word. That affliction was external trials coming into his life.

But also, when the Bible talks about people fasting, they are afflicting their souls. That's in fact the euphemism for, not very positive, but for fasting. Fasting is referred to in the scripture as afflicting one's soul.

So it's like self-affliction. And obviously, a person can be torturing himself, not in a good way, can be afflicted inwardly so that it ruins everything about life. He can have a charmed existence, but he's inwardly afflicted.

And all of his days are evil, no matter how good his external circumstances are. But whoever has a merry heart has a continual feast, whether he really has food on the table or not. He's satisfied.

He's happy in life because his heart is right. The person's heart is wrong, and they are wallowing in self-pity or unresolved guilt or anxiety that they should be trusting God about. Their hearts are afflicted, and all their days are evil days.

That doesn't mean they're doing sinful things every day. That's not kind of evil. Evil means like awful.

You know, life is awful day by day for a person whose heart is in an afflicted condition. But if his heart is merry, a person will always feel satisfied, like they've got a continual feast before them. In chapter 18 and verse 14, and this is the last verse we'll look at in this session.

Solomon said, The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness. But who can bear a broken spirit? Again, the broken spirit is that depression that's so deep that you just have lost all

will really to live. You've lost all direction.

You've lost all hope. You just feel like, I wish I could just die. There's no reason to go on.

My spirit is totally broken. I'm just moping. I'm just in deep depression.

What would probably be called clinical depression. And they would call it clinical so they could give you a drug for it. But this is not a clinical problem.

This is a spirit problem. It's a broken spirit as opposed to that spirit of a man that can sustain him in his infirmity. A person who has a healthy spirit, a healthy spiritual life can bear up even under great affliction.

The spirit of a man will sustain him in his sickness. And you do meet people who are very sick and yet are buoyant. And I've mentioned before, but maybe not here in this summer's program, but I've certainly mentioned on many occasions because it's a striking example of a woman named Janie, who I knew in Santa Cruz, who was a young woman in her 30s, a married woman of two little daughters, a beautiful family, beautiful woman with a handsome husband and cheerful, godly people going to a Baptist church.

They were godly. They were attractive. They were popular.

They had everything going for them except that she had cancer to her whole body and the doctor said she was going to die. And so she had gone home to bed. And I was running a school in town at that time in 1975 in Santa Cruz or 78.

This is 78. And we heard about her because her church was right across the street from our school and some of our students met her at the church. And we went to her house as a group to cheer her up.

Well, we didn't mean to do that. She was as cheerful as any Christian I've ever seen. Radiant even.

In fact, she didn't want to be cured. She said, no, don't even pray for me to get better. God has shown me I'm going to die.

She even mentioned the date God had revealed to her. And some of you know how this story ends because I've told it before, but she didn't die on that day. She, in fact, on the day that she felt God had told her she would die, she went to the hospital and they found no cancer in her.

Her body had been filled with cancer and she'd been given up to die. And she was good with it. I mean, for a woman who had two little children to raise and a husband who was a loving and wonderful husband, she just had this inexplicable joy about going to see Jesus.

And she expected to die. And she even knew the day. And that was the day she was found to be cured.

There was no cancer in her body. And I met her and her husband again five years later. I'd moved out of town, but I came back to town and looked him up and still cancer free.

And they were in ministry together and stuff. And it's just a really remarkable case. Here's a case of a person whose spirit could be said to have sustained her in her sickness.

I mean, it may have even led to the cure of her sickness. Who knows? We don't know. No one knows.

But I mean, if God just touched her and miraculously took the cancer away or if the state of her spirit may have just kind of enabled her immune system to drive it out, I don't really know. But certainly it's not unthinkable that a person's trust in God, and that's what it was. She was trusting in God and love for God.

You know, she had a healthy spirit. Though her body was dying of a physical condition, she was sustained by her spirit. And some people who don't have a bit of cancer in their body, they have a broken spirit and it just dries their bones and it's a broken spirit.

They can't even bear it. You see, your spirit is in a sense independent of your body. But your body's condition is not independent of your spirit.

Your spirit is who you are. Your body is what you manage. Your body is your vehicle.

And if your spirit is right, it can have very positive effects on your bodily health. If your spirit's not right, it can have negative effects on your bodily health. And that's what Solomon's saying.

But it's not the body that's making you, your spirit go bad. And it can't be. Because people in all kinds of horrible physical conditions, whether, you know, they're born without arms and legs, there's one famous Christian man that many of us know about, or whether you've had an arm bit off by a shark, or whether, you know, you've got cancer, you're paralyzed from the neck down.

Johnny Erickson-Todd, she's been paralyzed from the neck down since she was 19 years old, and now she has terminal cancer. If you listened to her on the radio, you wouldn't know it. You know, she's as buoyant and as happy in the Lord and as cheerful and encouraging as anyone can be.

The spirit of a person can sustain them in their infirmity. That's a choice. That's a choice you make.

You're not the victim of your bodily condition. Your bodily condition has got to either, it

either can, it will not prevent you from having a good spirit, or it may even be improved by your good spirit. A merry heart does good like a medicine.

So, the thing that we have from Solomon about, in this case, depression and what he calls a broken spirit, which I think would be the same thing as what we would call depression, is that this is not something that's caused by physical or external circumstances. It's something that you choose, and it has more of an effect on your physical well-being, for better or for worse. That's just one of these things that we're going to talk about, and we're going to talk about the rest of it a little bit more quickly, probably.

But, obviously, I spent the first 45 minutes of this hour not even getting into the Proverbs. Just a short introduction. So, we'll pause there and take another of these categories next time.

Thank you.