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Proverbs: God Conscious Living (Part 3)



Proverbs - Steve Gregg

In this God-conscious living discussion, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of being aware of God's presence, judgment, and sympathies. He encourages listeners to lean on God instead of worldly structures for security, and not to mistreat people economically. Gregg also discusses the significance of justice and the need for rulers to punish evildoers and praise good behavior. Overall, being conscious of God and trusting in Him allows for a fearlessly secure future.

Transcript

In our last two sessions, in Proverbs, we were talking about the theme that comes out in a lot of different ways in Proverbs. That the wise life is the God-conscious life. Aware of God's presence, aware of God's judgment, aware of God's sympathies.

Obviously, if God has certain sympathies and you want to be in harmony with him, you need to adopt his sentiments and live according to them or else you'll be going against his grain. And the fear of the Lord is essentially the healthy and wise fear of the possibility of going against God's grain. You want to go along the same path that God's thoughts run or else you'll run up against them.

And you don't want to run up against God any more than you want to run up against a freight train. So, learning what God is like, what his sympathies are, are an essential part of living a wise life in harmony with God. And part of the consciousness of God that we need to know are what he favors and what he disfavors.

The next thing we want to look at in Proverbs is how God sympathizes with the poor. In fact, this is true not only in Proverbs, we find that in the Prophets a great deal, even the law makes special provision for the poor to be fed and encourages, even requires, the Israelites to be sympathetic toward the poor. But it's not just that the poor are necessarily better people, but the poor look to God more consistently because they have nothing else to look at.

They don't have money to lean on, they don't have the normal structures of security to lean on, so they lean on God more naturally. Now, that's not true of every poor person.

You can be poor and wicked, you can be poor and godless.

But, all other things being equal, being poor tasks a person upon God more than having plenty. In Proverbs chapter 19, in verse 17, it says, He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and he will pay back what he has given. That is, God will pay you back for what you do for the poor.

He counts it as a loan to himself. If you give to the poor, you're giving to God. That's what Jesus said, of course, in the story of the sheep and the goats, in Matthew chapter 25.

He said, when I was hungry and you fed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and in prison you visited me, and they say, when was all of that, that that happened? And he said, well, when you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. In that case, his brethren being fellow Christians, what's done to the Christians is done to Christ. But in the Old Testament, Israel was what the Christians are now.

They were God's covenant people, and where there were poor among them, to give to the poor was to give to God. Or, in this case, Solomon said, it's like lending to God. Usually when you give something, you're not expecting to get it back.

When you lend, you expect something back. And Solomon is saying, if you do give to the poor, you're essentially lending to the Lord, because he will repay you for it. And so, this agrees with Jesus' teaching that you should, when you throw a feast, invite people who can't pay you back, rather than the ones who can.

Because he said, if you invite people to a feast who are able to invite you to a feast at their house, then they will, and you'll be repaid. And he said, that's not really desirable. He said, then you have no more particular reward to look forward to.

But if you give to those, and you invite those to your feasts, and you, you know, extend courtesy and generosity to the poor, then there's a debt owed you that God counts, that he owes you. Because the poor can't pay you back. Therefore, he said, you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.

So, to say that God will pay back what has been given to the poor does not mean that in this life, you'll be paid back. Jesus said, you'll be repaid in the resurrection of the just. Now, in some cases, you may be repaid in this life, too.

But that's not necessarily implied here. And many people have had the impression that if they just want to get rich, all they have to do is start giving more. And that God will have to give them back, you know, a hundredfold or whatever.

And that's, that's not really what the Bible teaches on the whole. You may give to the poor, and you may remain poor for your whole life. All the better if you do.

Because Jesus said, you don't want to be paid back in this life. He said, if you invite your friends and they invite you back, you'll be paid back. That's not good.

You don't want that. You want to be not paid back in this life so that you'll be paid back in the resurrection of the just, Jesus said. I've made reference to that in an earlier lecture, too.

And now this is the second time, but I have not given you the reference to it. So, I probably should. That's in Luke 14, 12 through 14.

Then Jesus also said to him who invited him, when you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back and you'll be repaid. He makes it sound like that's really disastrous. You don't want that to happen, that they'd invite you back and you'd be repaid.

He says, but when you give a feast, invite the poor, the lame, the blind, and you'll be blessed because they cannot repay you. For you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just. So, he makes it sound like if you give to the poor and you get it back, you get repaid now.

That's not good. You don't want that. You want to be paid back in the resurrection of the just.

So, when Proverbs says, if you have pity on the poor, you lend to the Lord, he'll pay you back. It shouldn't be thought that that's necessarily going to happen in this life to you. Okay.

Now, Proverbs 22, verses 22 and 23. It says, do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate. For the Lord will plead their cause and plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

Now, oppressing the afflicted or the poor at the gate, the gate of the city is where business or legal transactions were made. So, this is referring to how people would take advantage in court of the poor. Extremely commonplace in corrupt societies that the judges will rule on behalf of whoever can bribe them.

And obviously, the poor are not able to bribe. And therefore, they often would lose their case, even though they had the righteous cause, because their oppressor could bribe the judges because he was rich. And so, it says that if somebody oppresses the poor and robs the poor, that God will plead their cause and plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

So, again, God is on the side of the poor, at least the poor who are unjustly treated. And He's so much on the side of the poor that if you give to them, He counts it a gift to himself or a loan to himself. Now, with reference to this and connected to it are other

ways that you mistreat people economically.

It may be that the people you mistreat are not poor, but it is possible to exploit people economically, whether they're poor or not. One of those is through corrupt business practices. And of course, shrewd businessmen often become richer by compromising their integrity, lying about their products or lying about other things or falsifying invoices or doing all kinds of things to just increase their bottom line at a sacrifice of their integrity, really.

And Solomon advocates strongly for pure, clean business practices because these things really matter to God. And this is something that Christians need to remember, that God's not just paying attention to you when you pray or when you worship. He's paying attention to you when you're doing business day by day.

And it's a delightful thing, really, to find businessmen who actually govern their businesses according to integrity and godly practices. And there are some who do that. But it's also very common for people to cut corners any way they can at the expense of their clients or their customers in order to increase their bottom line.

And that's something that God detests, that kind of dishonesty. In chapter 20 and verse 10, it says, diverse weights and diverse measures. They are both alike an abomination to the Lord.

Now, what's diverse weights and diverse measures? Well, in an agrarian society, when people did business at the marketplace, they usually did so by weighing out quantities of grain or quantities of oil or something like that, which is what those are the products they were selling. And if they were taking gold or silver, probably silver in most cases, as their medium of exchange, they would weigh out silver as well. And they'd have these balances, these scales.

And if they say, OK, this is so much grain. They weighed it out. They'd also weigh out the silver that was being paid to make because they didn't have coin money in ancient times.

You know, we don't weigh our money anymore because it's made of paper or something, you know, or its value is not determined by how much it actually weighs. But before they had minted coins and minted currency, they had to weigh the quantity of silver to know how much was being paid out. But a corrupt merchant would have some false weight in his bag and say, OK, let's see how much silver you're giving.

Let's pull out this ounce weight. And it's not really an ounce. And he falsifies the amounts in his own favor.

Sort of like the old stereotype of the butcher with his finger on the scale. You know, when the customer is not paying attention, he's pulling the scale down a little bit to

make it look like the meat weighs more than it really does. I remember seeing a joke in Mad Magazine when I was young, it was Don Martin cartoons.

And a woman was buying meat from the butcher and she says, don't try to cheat me. I see your finger there on the scale. And next to show his fingers cut off was on the scale with the meat.

He was surprised he didn't know it was there. But to falsify the weights and give the impression that the customer is getting, you know, a larger quantity than they are. That's what false weights and false balances are about.

Those things are an abomination of the Lord. They're just the means by which people cheat in business. And he says it twice, actually, in the same chapter in chapter 20, verse 23.

He says diverse weights are an abomination of the Lord and a false balance is not good. So that's important enough to God that he says it twice there. So God detests corrupt business practices and he stands for the poor.

In most cases, the poor will be those who don't practice corrupt business practices, at least by comparison. The people who do cheat often do so that they'll prosper and it often works. And so they end up getting richer by by cheating and their victims become poorer.

So God is on the side of the victims in all these cases. And he finds it detestable and loathsome that people practice such corrupt things. Now, in chapter six, among the things that are listed that God hates would also be violent crimes.

Remember the six things God hates? He hates seven are abomination to him in Proverbs 6, verses 16 through 19. Well, in verses 16 through 18, it says, among things he hates are a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies and one who shows discord among brethren. Some of those things have to do with violence, shedding innocent blood.

That's a violent crime, devising evil. We're not sure what kind of evil that is, but some kind of crime is talked about criminal behavior, violence, deception. These are all things God hates.

And a person who's living conscious of God and aware of God in all their behavior has got to be aware that God is assessing on these principles of God's preferences, what he is favorable toward and what he's not. Now, one of the things that Solomon brings out in quite a few of his Proverbs is the justice of God. And that's related to what we've been saying, unjust business practices, crime.

Those are injustices. But the main thing that underscores God's hatred for those things is that he loves justice and he hates injustice. This is a major theme of the Bible.

So that in Micah 6, 8, he says, he's shown you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you that you do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Justice is one of the primary things. It's at the top of the list.

Jesus said so, too, in Matthew 23, 23, when he said the Pharisees pay their tithes of mint and anise and cumin, but they neglect the weightier matters of the law, which he listed as justice and mercy and faithfulness. Matthew 23, 23. So both the Old and the New Testament indicate that when God makes a short list of things that matter to him, what Jesus called the weightier matters of the law, that justice is at the top of the list.

There's other things on the list of importance, too, but justice is right up there on top. And that's why a person who lives conscious of God is going to be scrupulous about doing the just thing. And I might just make clear, since not everyone has a real clear idea of what justice is.

Justice does not mean equality. In our modern age, people think it's not just that some people can afford health care and other people can't. It's not just that some people live more comfortably than others.

They think that's not justice. Well, that's not really what justice is about. Justice means that nobody's rights become violated.

Now, I have a right to my life. Therefore, if you murder me when I've done nothing worthy of death, that's an injustice. My right to my life is being violated.

I have a right to my property. Therefore, if you steal from me, that's a violation of my right. That's an injustice.

You're violating my property rights. I have a right to be, if I'm a good person, I have a right to having a good name rather than having someone slander me and tell falsehoods about me and ruin my reputation. I have a right to be known for who I am.

As opposed to slandered and lied about, so bearing false witness is an injustice. The Ten Commandments are very concerned about justice. You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness.

All have to do with justice, not violating someone's real rights. Now, I don't particularly have a right, for example, to health care. Everyone might think, well, everyone should have health care.

Where's that should coming from? On what basis do we say that? Because it's desirable? Well, a lot of things are desirable that I don't have the right to. It might be desirable for

me to have a new car every year, but I don't have a right to it. We aren't born with the right to those kinds of luxuries.

Even health care is a luxury. The reason we know that that can't be my right is because it requires somebody else to provide it. I mean, I don't have the right to health because health is just not guaranteed to people.

And when it comes to health care, we're talking about a doctor providing his services. I don't have a right to make somebody provide his services to me because I want to be healthy. That's violating his rights.

And so, I mean, if somebody wants to pay for my health care, that's showing mercy to me. But that's not justice. Justice is observing somebody's rights.

And injustice is when you violate somebody's rights. I don't have the right to have as much money as everybody else. Just because there's not a right to prosperity.

Prosperity comes usually from hard work. And lots of times people work hard and they get prosperous. Some people don't work as hard and they don't get as prosperous.

There's not some kind of right that everyone has to an equal standard of living. And so, when we talk about justice, we're not talking about what some people think of when they think of social justice. A lot of people are thinking of equality.

Everyone being equal. There's nothing in the Bible that says that everyone has the right to all the same things. But everyone has the right to their life, to their property, to their marriage being unviolated by outside interests.

That's why there's a law, you should not commit adultery. Everyone has a right to their reputation, the reputation that they've earned by their behavior. Everyone has a right to have their, if they, you know, to be treated honestly and so forth.

And therefore, justice means that I am committed to not violating anyone's rights. Now, that's not the same thing as helping the poor. Helping the poor is not a matter of justice, it's a matter of mercy.

And Christians have got to be as concerned about mercy as about justice, if not more so. Mercy is a step beyond justice. To say I'm a just person means that I don't go violating other people's rights.

To say I'm a merciful person means I actually sacrifice some of my own rights, so that someone else can have something that they don't have an intrinsic right to. If you do me harm and you ask my forgiveness, I don't owe it to you, and you don't have the right to be forgiven. But out of mercy, if I forgive you, I'm giving up my right to retaliation and giving you the right to be free from guilt, which you actually have earned guilt.

You haven't earned freedom from guilt by your actions. So, for me to absolve you of any obligation in the matter is to set you free from something that you really would be obligated by justice to do. So, mercy means that you extend rights to people that they don't have innately, and usually at your own expense.

The government's not merciful when it takes someone else's money and gives it to the poor, because the government's not doing it at its own expense. It's stealing from one party and giving to someone else. So, it's being seemingly compassionate to one group, but at the cost of being unjust to another people taking their money from them wrongfully.

Um, we should be merciful and we should be compassionate. See, we have to understand that what we're doing when we give to the poor, we're giving them a right they don't natively have. They have, if I've earned my money legally, I have a right to be the one who dispenses it according to my own conscience.

The beggar doesn't have a right to my money, but if I give him some of my money, what am I doing? I'm giving up my right to that particular bit of money and giving him the right to have it and spend it as he wants to. So, I'm sacrificing some of my own rights in order to give him rights that he doesn't naturally have. This is what mercy is.

So, justice and mercy are not opposite things. They are like two steps going the same direction. The first is justice means I'm committed to not violating your rights.

Mercy means I'm willing to even give up some of mine so that you can have more than you would naturally have. And so, we need to understand what justice is because, frankly, it says in Proverbs, the wicked don't understand justice, but the righteous understands all things. And we, if anything, is a basic requirement of all human beings, it's to act justly.

And that's the top of God's short list of things that matter to him most and are weightier matters of the law, according to other parts of scripture. Now, in Proverbs, we find God is committed to justice also. In Proverbs 21, 12, it says, The righteous God wisely considers the house of the wicked, overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness.

The word righteousness and justice are the same word in the Hebrew. And the word righteous and just are the same word. So, this could be translated, The just God wisely considers the house of the wicked and overthrows the wicked for their wickedness.

That is, those who are doing unjust things, God will justly judge. He's a just God. He will overthrow the house of the wicked because that's what they deserve.

He's going to enforce justice. In chapter 24, verse 11, it says, Deliver those who are drawn toward death and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. This is often used in pro-life discussions about the need to stand up for the unborn who are obviously being

dragged to the slaughter when they're in danger of being aborted.

But it says, if you say, surely we did not know this. It says, does he who weighs the hearts not consider it? He who keeps your soul, does he not know it? And will he not render to each man according to his deeds? God's going to justly render to each one what they deserve. That's justice.

And he'll render to each one according to his deeds. And says, therefore, we need to stand up for justice too. When you see somebody that's wrongfully suffering, in this case, a death sentence, but frankly, any kind of injustice, Christians need to speak out for that.

Some Christians actually need to be involved in it. For example, Christians who happen to hold offices as magistrates, judges, or political leaders, or law enforcement officers, or whatever. Some Christians, if they hold such positions in government, have a particular duty to be just.

But all Christians have to speak up for justice because it's God's passion. And we should be passionate about what he's passionate for. Any injustice should be something that we would at least verbally stand against, even if we're not always in a position to do something about it.

Remember John the Baptist, it says he not only condemned Herod for his marriage to Herodias, but also for every other wicked thing Herod did. John the Baptist outside Herod's gate denouncing every wicked thing Herod did. Herod could hardly move without hearing a criticism from John the Baptist because of every injustice committed by Herod was being denounced by the prophet.

And Christians need to be prepared to denounce too, unjust practices, especially a victimization of the poor or victimization of other innocent people by private parties or by the government in its policies. In chapter 29 and verse 26, it says, Many seek a ruler's favor, but justice for man comes from the Lord. Ultimately, justice won't come from the rulers.

Everyone will do what they can to have the rulers judge in their favor. Some of them will bribe. Others will be more honest and hope for the judgment to go wisely for them and try to have the ruler favor them.

But you can't count on justice from the rulers. You can't count on justice from men. Now, people should be able to count on justice from believers in God.

Believers should always act justly. But most rulers are not believers. And though the rulers are, in fact, installed by God for the purpose of enforcing justice, that's not something you can count on them doing.

And therefore, he's saying, no matter what happens to you in terms of the courts, you're

going to have to look to God ultimately for vindication if you're in the right, because you can't count on the courts doing the right thing. Now, in Romans chapter 13, it makes it very clear that the governments are appointed by God for the purpose of enforcing justice. And it's a shame they don't always do that.

And that's what Proverbs is saying. They don't. But God always does.

But in Romans 13, if you'll see verse three, Paul said, for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good and you'll have praise from the same. For he is God's minister, that is God's servant to you for good.

But if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is God's servant and avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Now, notice he says that the ruler will praise you if you do well, and he'll exercise God's wrath on you if you do evil. Well, that's an idealized picture of what governments do.

Paul knew very well that governments don't always do that. In fact, the emperor in charge when he wrote this was Nero. And neither Paul nor anyone else was deceived into thinking that Nero was a good man.

But the point Paul is making is that God has ordained rulers to do this. They have not always done what they're ordained to do. But this is what the ruler, the ideal ruler does.

He punishes the wicked and he praises the righteous. In other words, he enforces justice in society. Often rulers fall short of that ideal.

In First Peter, chapter two, Peter essentially gives the same teaching in verses 13 and 14. First Peter 2, 13 and 14, Peter says, therefore, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governors as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. Once again, rulers are supposed to punish the bad guys and praise or commend or encourage the behavior of the good.

This is this is how the government is to enforce justice. And it is the obligation of rulers to do justice, but they don't always do so. So Solomon says, well, ultimately, your justice is going to have to come from God.

Not only justice, but your security has got to be in God. And a person who's wise and God conscious in his life will recognize that he's not going to be made secure by the government or by a strong military or by money or anything else that people trust in. Only God can be your security.

And there's a number of Proverbs that bring that out as well. For example, in Proverbs 18. And verse 10.

Says the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe. Notice the next verse, the rich man's wealth is his strong city and like a high wall in his own esteem. That is.

The high wall is a security device. The idea of having a high wall around you means you're secure from invasion. You will not hurt your safe.

And it says in the esteem of the rich man, his riches are a high wall. That is, he sees them that way. He considers his riches to be a security against harm, maybe not against people, but against other dangers.

Hardships in the future, basically, you know, if there's any kind of a crisis, the man who's got money can be in a better position than the man who doesn't to buy what few resources are available or to even to pay people to do for him what needs to be done. So the man with money. Is the man who feels secure, but Solomon, who, by the way, had a lot of money himself, understood that it's not your money that provides your security, but rather the name of the Lord hiding in the name of the Lord and the name of the Lord means his character, of course.

The name is not just a reference to the word by which he's addressed, but. So I'm at the Lord's character and the person, the identity of God hiding in God, the righteous run to God. And trust in his character and his faithfulness and his commitment to what's right and hide in him rather than in their riches.

God is the source of the of the wise man's security if he's conscious of this. In chapter 20 and verse 22. It says, do not say I will recompense evil.

Wait for the Lord and he will save you. That is, you don't take matters into your own hands. Some people say if you don't look out for yourself, no one else is going to you just trampled on.

You know, you need to put up a strong defense for yourself. And if someone treats you wrong, you need to let them know they're not going to get away with that and you need to recompense them so that they don't do that again. This is how you keep yourself safe from future violation.

If someone violates you now, you get them back. Then they'll know better next time. And this is how you take care of yourself.

You don't get mad, you get even. And so he says, don't say I will recompense evil, but just wait for the Lord and he'll save you. He'll secure your interests when maybe after the resurrection.

Because many times godly people who don't depend on us end up burned at the stake or fed to the lions or otherwise, you know, getting the shaft. But the point here is that God

is ultimately the one who rectify all things. And the safety that a righteous person seeks is the safety which God provides.

Obviously, there's a New Testament corollary to this proverb in Romans chapter 12. Where Paul says essentially the same thing. He even actually quotes a proverb, but a different one in this passage.

But in Romans 12 verse 17, Paul said, repay no one evil for evil. OK, so don't say I will recompense the evil. That's Proverbs 20, 22.

Don't say that. Paul says, don't anyone repay evil for evil. Look at verse 19.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine, says the Lord. I will repay. Now, this is written is found in the vengeance is mine is Deuteronomy 32, 35.

And what God is saying is, I will take vengeance on your enemies for you. You don't have to do it. And so Paul says, don't avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath.

That means give God, give God the room to do what he wants to do in the situation. He'll avenge if you step in and avenge yourself. There's nothing left for God to do.

So you keep your hands off it. Do not avenge yourselves and leave the matter in God's hands. Give him room.

Give him place to to to avenge as he sees fit. He can do it much more effectively, and he will certainly do it much more justly. And so we leave our security and our our vengeance of our wrongs done to us in God's hands.

Our security is in God, not in our own ability to retaliate or to protect ourselves or to settle the scores on our own behalf. Another place where Solomon talks about security being in the Lord is in terms of military. Many people trust in a strong military for security.

And from a natural point of view, that makes sense. From a natural point of view, the nation has the biggest guns and the biggest armies. Going to be the most secure against invasion.

And yet God showed that that isn't always true in the book of Judges. You know, when Gideon with his 300 men conquered an overwhelming. Large army of Midianites and many times God did that.

The small city of Ai defeated Israel in battle when God was against Israel. But when God was for Israel, he could conquer their enemies with with a small. Armed band.

Jonathan and his armor bearer alone could conquer a whole garrison of the Philistines.

And and Jonathan said his armor bearer on that side, it's nothing. It's nothing to God to say by many or by few.

In other words, when God wants to save you, it doesn't really matter the size of your military. If God's on your side, you'll be secure. If God's not, then no size military is going to help you.

And this is something that Christians in America often don't understand. Now, not that our military is so strong now, but especially when more conservative presidents are in power, we we often have depended on the size of our military. And maybe that's a good thing to do for a nation that's that's, you know, thinking so secularly that they have nothing else to lean on.

But their military, they make a big one. But a Christian knows that if if the nation's ways don't please God, we can have the we can have 10 times the military strength of any of our enemies. And we could still fall because God knocks us down.

And God just has to flick us with his finger and the whole nation will fall. And so the way for a nation to be secure is to have God on its side. In other words, to be righteous for a nation to be righteous is its security.

And I'm not saying a righteous nation wouldn't need military because God often protected Israel through military. But military alone is not going to be successful. If God is against the nation, they can have a huge military and have no success in warding off their enemies.

On the other hand, remember the Assyrians when they encamped around Jerusalem and Jerusalem was way outnumbered and in danger. Hezekiah prayed to the Lord and an angel of the Lord went out and flew 185,000 of the Assyrians in one night. Israel didn't have the military power to stop them, but God was on their side.

So if God's on your side, that's secure. If he's not, then it's foolish to trust in the military to keep you secure. And that's what Solomon says in chapter 21 in verse 31.

He says, the horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is from the Lord. Deliverance isn't going to come from the horses and the chariots. In Psalm 20 in verse 7, David said, some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God.

We will trust in him, not in the horses and the chariots. The horse may be prepared against the day of battle. Maybe that's a good thing.

If you're going to war, it's good to be prepared. But despite all the preparation you make, you have to realize that this horse is not going to save you. God is going to save you or no one is.

Your horse can't save you if God's against you. If God's for you, he might use your horses and your preparations to save you. But if he's not for you, no amount of preparation is going to save you.

And if you can't get any horses, God can still save you. You know, God is the one who's your security. Safety is from the Lord.

Deliverance from the Lord, not from the horses and chariots. In chapter 29 of Proverbs and verse 25, Solomon said, the fear of man brings a snare. Whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.

When you're behaving in such a way as to keep people happy with you because you fear their disapproval, you'll end up being snared or enslaved by their approval or lack thereof. I mean, if you're always trying to be secure by keeping the right people on your side, and you fear their disapproval, that's going to snare you. That's going to trap you.

It's going to bring you into compromises because that's what you'll have to do to keep certain people happy with you. The people that intimidate you. The bullies or the government or whoever else you're afraid of.

You want to keep them on your side? Well, if you fear them and not God, then they will lead you to do things that God wouldn't have you do. And you get ensnared by the fact that you're fearing people instead of fearing God. But he says that those who trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Actually, secure is what it means, of course. And it's hard to know really what to say about this because people who trust the Lord die. But we are safe.

Nonetheless, we are saved. And because we are saved, even if we die, we're safe. Whereas the unbeliever, even if he can prolong his life and health for 100 years, he's not safe because he's not saved.

The person who trusts in the Lord has an eternal security, an eternal safety that God gives him because of his trust in him. And the person who doesn't trust in the Lord and is making any kind of compromise he can to keep the powers that be happy with him and keep from getting on their bad side so he doesn't shorten his life by their disapproval. That person is going to die anyway, and he's not safe.

So safety is entirely from being on God's side and trusting in God. Chapter 30 and verse 5 says, Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in him.

So again, security. What Solomon is saying is you should live your life knowing that there is a place of security, and it's not where most people look for it. You know, the desire for security is a very fundamental motivation in people.

And we are often not aware of it because we live in such a secure environment. We really live in an unusual time and place in history. If you lived in most other parts of the world today, you wouldn't take your security for granted as much as you do here.

I mean, there's wars, there's famines, there's poverty, there's unchecked criminal behavior, there's criminal governments. Most parts of the world, other than a few civilized places, the world's a dangerous place. And yet we live in a society where there's plenty of food, you know, there's not much disease.

And if there is disease, there's hospitals available. We have a government that seems to be more or less becoming more and more corrupt, but they're still not endangering the average citizen that walks down the street. Instead, they'll rather take care of them.

The police are there. We've got a pretty good criminal justice system. It's got flaws.

But I mean, in general, criminals, if they get caught, get punished in some way. And so we live in a really secure place and time compared to most people in history and most people in the world. So we don't spend much of our time thinking about how our security, unless we're thinking about financial or health security, of course.

And for that, we usually have made some arrangements. You know, we've got insurance, perhaps for health. Although everybody knows that insurance doesn't assure you you'll be healthy.

It just assures that if you don't stay healthy, that they can pay for doctors. But even they might not be able to help you. But we do, you know, we have our areas where we feel insecure at times and where we are aware that we really need to trust in something.

And the tendency in America is to trust in money or government. Basically, to trust that the government will provide the money for health care or for retirement or whatever. For crisis, you know, the future is uncertain.

It always was for all people. And it is still today. It's just that we have done much more in a prosperous society like ours.

We're in a position to make, to set up more buffers against disaster, whether it's saving money, whether it's insurance, whether it's, you know, living in a country that has safe food and water. A less than average corrupt government and things like that. I mean, we do feel pretty secure compared to the way we'd feel in many other places.

And because of that, we might not be in touch with the degree to which a sense of security is a basic human need. And when people don't have it, they're very much aware that they don't have it. And they seek it from somewhere.

Because security just means looking out for your safety, for your survival. And a lot of

insecurity comes from not what's going on right now, but what is in the uncertain future. You know, I've got plenty of food now.

I've got plenty of clothing now. I live in a time of peace. All is pretty good at the moment.

But what about the future? What if the economy totally crashes? What if the food deliveries to stores are interrupted? What if there's a, you know, some kind of a plague or some epidemic of disease that kills people going through the land? What if those things happen? What if we're invaded? What if there's a terrorist attack on my city? All of those things are in the unknown realm. They may never happen. None of them.

It may be that none of them will ever happen in my lifetime. Or any of them could happen later today. We just don't know.

The future is completely unknown to us. And therefore, when people contemplate that, they often feel insecure. And therefore, they look for some kind of security systems to depend on.

Whether it's money. Whether it's literal walls around their house and locks on their doors. Whether it's voting in the government that they think will commit themselves to taking care of all our needs in our old age.

Or whatever. People look to money. They look to government.

They look to guns. They look to locks on doors. They look to the police.

They look to all kinds of things for their security. And not surprisingly, they've got to look to something. The sad thing, and what the Bible makes very clear there, is that security comes, real security only comes from putting their trust in God.

And that's something not everyone feels they can do. Because they can't see God. But the irony is they can't see the future either.

It would seem very logical that for that which you can't see, the dangers you can't see, you could easily trust God, a God you can't see. After all, you wouldn't fear the future if you didn't think it was real. And if the future is unseen, and God is unseen, there's no reason to think one is more real than the other.

God is real. And those who know that and put their trust in Him, find that there is security for them in that. Whereas it's not so with others.

Now it says in chapter 30 verse 5, every word of God is pure. He's a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Putting your trust in Him is nothing else but putting your trust in His words and His promises.

His words are pure. His words are trustworthy. And therefore, to know the promises of

God, and to know the character of God, His trustworthiness, are simply the way in which we find security in Him.

We know what He's promised us. We know who He is. And we know then we can rest in Him.

Now, does that mean that, you know, trusting in God, we have a guarantee that we won't run out of food, or that we won't become, that our nation won't be invaded by other countries, or that we won't be killed in a criminal attack in our home? No, trusting in God doesn't guarantee that those things won't happen. Those things could happen to anybody. Trusting in God tells us that even if those things do happen, we are not facing them alone without the strength that God gives.

And if we even die, we're secure about that. For us to live is Christ and to die is gain. That's a security that people can't have from any other source of security they seek.

Because God secures us forever. And therefore, death is not even frightening. Pain is frightening, and Christians sometimes have to face that.

But dying itself is not frightening to the believer. I remember hearing Billy Graham say that. He was doing his crusade in Los Angeles in 1963.

And my grandparents were, I think my grandmother was in the choir, and my grandfather was an usher there, and I went with them to the Billy Graham crusade. I had already gone forward at an altar call when I was four somewhere else. But I remember hearing Billy Graham say a sermon in Los Angeles in 1963, that being a Christian, he has no fear of death.

And I remember thinking at the time, I had never thought of that. I don't know why I hadn't. I guess being young, you don't think about death that much.

I was only 10 years old. But I remember thinking, wow, that's really a tremendous thing, to not have to be afraid of death. And I actually went forward that night, again, just to make sure, but I remember that being, becoming a governing motif of my thinking.

That now that I'm a Christian, I don't have to be afraid of death. Now, it seems so childlike simple. I mean, isn't that really kind of the one of the main benefits of Christianity, is that you have security bail on the grave, that you're not going to go to hell and so forth.

But, and yet there are Christians who don't remember that. They're not conscious of that. They live their lives fearing death.

They're afraid they'll get sick and die. They're afraid there'll be a terrorist attack. As far as I'm concerned, if there's a terrorist attack, anywhere within 100 miles of me, if it's

nuclear, I hope I'm at ground zero.

You know, I mean, to die is gain in situations like that. And frankly, in any situation, we feel it more when our lives are in a state of misery. And we sometimes go through such misery, we don't want to live any longer.

And yet, when we're comfortable and happy, we need to, we forget that dying is even better than this for us. Not that we have a death wish, but we don't have a death fear. We don't have a death dread.

And Christians, therefore, who are conscious of this fact that they can trust in God, can live their lives fearlessly with a sense of security in God. And Solomon brings that out. They don't have to worry about whether the horses are adequately prepared for battle or not.

Don't have to worry about the economy, whether there's plenty of money on hand or not. Now, Solomon makes it clear in a couple of other places, which we'll see later on. You know, he says, the wise man perceives the evil and hides himself.

Being fearless doesn't mean being stupid. Because the fact is that one reason we can be fearless is because we have responsibly done all that we know to do and we leave the rest in God's hands. If we know things that we should do and can do.

For example, if I know that my children are going to need food tomorrow, but I do nothing that's in my power to do to provide it. And I just say, well, I'll just trust God for the angels to bring the food tomorrow. But that's not wisdom and that's not taking my responsibilities properly.

In other words, what God enables me to do to secure my future for my children and for myself and so forth, whatever really is truly my responsibility, I need to do. But I do it knowing that once I've done all I can, there's nothing more I have to worry about. I've done what I'm supposed to do and God has to worry about the rest.

He'll take care of the rest. You just keep doing your best. Pray that it's blessed and He'll take care of the rest.

And that's the attitude. He'll take care of the rest in more sense than once because you'll be resting in Him. You'll be not nervous and insecure, but you'll be resting in the knowledge that you've done all that God expects you to do.

And that's not enough. But it's the part that you can't do, the insufficiency of yours is what God will take care of. And so to live conscious of God in the fear of God, knowing God with a full confidence in the sovereignty of God and knowing that He sees everything, He's omniscient and that He has certain sympathies, that He detests wickedness and liars and evil thoughts and a proud heart.

He detests those who condemn the just and who vindicate the wicked, that He favors the cause of the poor and He's against corrupt business and corrupt courts and crime and so forth. To know the things that God is for and that He's against are the things that a God-conscious person lives, is guided by in his choices and his values. A lot of these things are very basic for us who've been Christians for a long time because these are real basic considerations.

But we have to remember they're not intuitive for everybody. There are a lot of people who don't know these things and they don't live their lives by them. Solomon, of course, is writing to people who have a lot less biblical revelation than we've become accustomed to.

And we even know we're from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, which make these ones seem mighty fundamental, like, wow, this is stuff I learned years and years ago when I first became a Christian. Right. But not everyone that Solomon's writing to is what we call a Christian.

He's trying to inform people who aren't conscious of God in their lives that if they're going to live a wise life and a secure one, they need to live with the awareness of God's presence, of God's sovereignty, of His, of course, security in Him lies, what He's going to approve of and not approve of and so forth. And of His justice. These are the things that we've looked at in this category of God conscious living.

The next time we come to Proverbs, we're going to actually take a turn and look at a series of Proverbs on an entirely different set of subjects. But at this point, we'll break.