

Part 13: Finding the Right Provision

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Today we begin the Proverbs of Solomon here at Sovereign Hope. This might seem redundant since we've spent thirteen weeks together already in the book of Proverbs, but this is in fact where we start today.

There are five major sections of the book of Proverbs, the first part was Solomon's prologue which spanned chapters 1-9 and that prologue was really one extended discourse between a father and a son.

But now we enter into the second section which you can see at the beginning of Proverbs 10 in your Bible's is titled: The proverbs of Solomon. What this means is that we have entered into the portion which contains what we generally think of when we think of proverbs.

A proverb is a literary unit which teaches and instructs based off of comparison and contrasts. Remember our token example of a cultural proverb: "You don't tug on superman's cape, you don't spit into the wind, you don't pull the mask off the old lone ranger, and you don't mess around with Jim."

We don't need to know who Jim is, but because he shares a similarity with these other things, we now understand that he is one we don't want to mess around with. That's the beauty of Proverbs.

One commentator said it perfectly when she said that Proverbs create rhymes not with sounds but with thoughts. That's a really helpful picture.

We can actually see this thought-rhyme very easily in our text today and it is actually pulled out by contrasts. Solomon is going to contrast the wise and the righteous with the fool and the wicked.

Look at how he does this. We see to start three areas of life which are affected by your desire to either be wise or be a fool.

The first area we can see in verses 1 and 5: Wisdom's provision in your relationships. In those two verses we see the impact of folly/wisdom in the family unity. Then in verses 2 and 4 we see wisdom's provision in your own quality of life. In those two verses we see a comparisons between the economic impact of righteousness and wickedness in providing poverty or profit, riches or death. But his central point is seen in verse 5 which is where we see God's provision to the wise.

In other words your ability to find the provision of joy in your own life, and your ability to provide joy to the community around you begins with your relationship to God and how you understand his role in your own life.

So what we are going to see today in our text is this: **Seeing God's provision allows us to trust in him, turn to him, and to work heartily for him.**

Let's start by looking at **Proverbs 10:1-2.**

Was there ever a new restaurant you wanted to try or a new movie you wanted to watch, but you had a friend beat you to it and they actually had a negative review of it? When that happens we are faced with two choices aren't we?

We can either trust the opinion of the friend, or we can say that maybe our experience will be better.

In many places in life we can do this safely because we might have different tastes for food and film and perhaps the one offering the review was less than qualified to actually offer their input. But when it comes to reading God's word in the Proverbs we are hearing the input of the God who knows all things and stands as an authority over all things.

So when God's word says: "Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit," we can either do this the easy way or the hard way. We can do it the hard way by doubting that God actually knows what he is saying and taste the foolishness of disobedience ourselves. Or we can do it the easy way and trust that God knows what his is talking about and that he offers us this passage because he cares for us.

This is our first point today: Seeing God's Provision allows us to **Trust in Him**.

Solomon does something really important here that we need to recognize. More times than not what is held up in the proverbs is the general truth that it is the righteous and the wise who more often than not are the ones who are blessed with treasures.

But here he affirms that it is possible to gain treasure, real treasure by means of wickedness (or what other translations call, "ill-gotten gain"). In other words what he means is that if you choose to find treasures in this world not by faithfully relying on God, but instead thinking that you can find them in wicked or unfaithful ways you might actually find treasure. It's not that hard to get.

Remember it was only a few pages ago where Solomon showed us how easy it is to buy sexual satisfaction: the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread.

Solomon knew this full well as there was a point in time where he said to himself, "How can I get the most pleasure in this world?"

You know what he did, he used all of his wealth, all of his power, and all of his wisdom as the King of Israel to pursue ill-gotten treasures. He had more sex partners than anyone else. He built his kingdom to look more lavish than anyone else's, and he had more food and wine and threw the better parties than anyone else. And you know what he said?

It worked. **Ecclesiastes 2:9-10**.

His heart found pleasure in his toil, and reward in his labor. You and I can both make ourselves busy pursuing pleasure as we see fit, and the problem is not that we won't find it. It's that we will. But the problem which God himself wants you to recognize is the dilemma that each of our souls know but often refuses to accept: these treasures don't profit, they don't last.

We know how to work hard to find treasures in this world don't we? We know how to scheme and toil and plan, but the problem isn't that treasures gained by the world are hard to get. The problem is actually that when viewed apart from God they are hard to enjoy.

Look at what Solomon said next in **Ecclesiastes 2:11**. Though he had found a reward it faded, his pleasure waned, and he found that it was all vanity. Solomon searched for riches because he thought they would satisfy him, but his desire for treasure was the wrong prescription for a real problem.

In the book of Luke, Jesus shares a parable of a rich young man. This man had fields that were so successful that he had a wonderful problem: he had too much treasure. But look at what Jesus said about this: **Luke 12:16-21**.

And here we see the true heart of wickedness. The rich young fool didn't build his wealth in a way which was deceitful or underhanded, he was just a good farmer. But his treasures became wicked when he spoke to his soul and said: "Here is your pleasure and your provision."

Jesus' answer was a harsh one: "Tonight, your soul is demanded from you and nothing you have built can save you."

Before you start speaking to your soul about your own peace, ask yourself if the treasure you have can save you from death. You see death is so normative in our existence that we struggle to actually see it as a problem. But the biggest problem you have in life is that someday you die.

This is where we return to Proverbs to see the second half of this comparison: **Proverbs 10:2**.

We often turn the vices of this world to bring us life, but the problem is that these treasures cannot profit in this way. But righteousness delivers from death. Worldly solutions can't last past the grave, but righteousness endures through it all.

What is meant by righteousness? Well the Hebrew word means a lot of things but there are two primary senses of it. The first is a relational loyalty and the second is a moral purity.

In contrast to those who forsake God and turn to wickedness is righteousness which clings to God in obedience. It's the righteous in Proverbs 5 who clings relationally and faithfully to his spouse and not the deceitful comfort of the seductive woman.

But as we know, our problem is that we are fickle and full of failure. We cannot walk well enough on the path of righteousness to be spared the death that our sins deserve. We are the dummies whose lives show a blatant lack of trust in God.

Our problem is not only that sinful treasures don't satisfy, but it's also that we lack the righteousness needed for deliverance. But look at what Jesus does for us: **Romans 3:21-24**.

We don't get our own righteousness, we get Jesus' righteousness. The Jesus who was relationally faithful to his Father and did nothing but trust him perfectly.

Because the gospel shows us Jesus' righteousness we can look at this text and trust in God.

If your worldly treasure can't save you, consider the gospel.

Jesus Christ came as God's own son and lived that life of righteousness. But more than that he gives us his righteousness if only we turn to him in faith. If we are covered by that wonderful gift, then you too are promised resurrected life in the same way Jesus himself was resurrected.

The profit of this provision is can't even be touched by death itself.

Solomon continues to readjust our idea of treasure because what we would expect him to say is this: treasures gained by wickedness don't profit, but treasures gained by righteousness do. But that's not what he says. He says "but righteousness delivers from death." Why? Because the wise man sees the greatest treasure in life is God's salvation: being delivered from death and restored to God himself.

The wise man trusts that God has provided abundantly for him in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But this leads to the second point today: Seeing God's provision allows us to **Turn to Him**.

This is the natural landing place of our first point right, if we trust that God is able to provide for us, then a wise person would constantly want to turn into God's provision whereas a fool will turn away from God's provision.

Read with me **Proverbs 10:3**.

So here is this really stunning contrast here. It plays out like this: If you are righteous, that is you are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ by faith, God will provide for you the very thing you hunger for. God himself will not let the craving of hunger or the fear of loss overtake you. He provides exactly what you need.

But if you are not righteous, that is if you refuse to acknowledge God's provision of salvation, then God also provides something for you: he provides the constant thwarting of all that you crave.

The sense behind the word here translated as thwarting is "pushing off."

I want to confess something, I'm not a perfect parent. But sometimes my failures as a parent lead to helpful illustrations. There was a time when one of my daughters was finally tall enough to reach things on the table, and I was sitting at the table once and she wanted her sippy cup which was on it. I told her to reach for it, but I moved it just out of her reach.

It was just close enough where her finger tips could touch it, but never close enough to actually get it.

What God is doing to the wicked in this passage is a very similar thing. He places what you crave just out of your reach, he thwarts your satisfaction. This is why we grab worldly treasures like sex, comfort and wealth, we hold them but find that what we really want is actually still beyond our grasp.

But this is not because God is amused by your struggle, as I was with my daughter. It is based both on God's just judgement and also in God's great mercy.

It is God's judgement because as we just saw there is no enduring life for those who seek to live in sin. Christianity is not another option in the self-help aisle. It is a matter of receiving God's salvation through the righteous provision of Jesus, or it is to be separated from God and all pleasure both in this life and in

the life to come. This pushing back is a foretaste of what awaits the foolish on judgment day when they are forever removed from the relational joy of God's presence.

But secondly, it is because of God's mercy that he does this.

How many of us have pursued the career, the lifestyle, the romance, or the possession we thought would finally satisfy our craving only to have it seem, after all of our effort, to be pushed back once again?

How many of us are so crushed by the failed expectations of enjoyment and intimacy in this world?

How many of us think that this last dance with sin will be the final dance because we think we've finally figured out how to enjoy it in such a way that it will ultimately satisfy us only to find ourselves longing for it again the next day?

This is the kindness of God's provision in your life to keep you from finding saving satisfaction in things which cannot save. Whatever dissatisfaction or confusion or frustration you might have in your life in areas like family, career, wealth or adventure that might be a holy dissatisfaction meant to point you to what really satisfies.

Augustine who lived with great capacity to pursue happiness in wealth and art, created a society in his youth to try and find the happy life. In his autobiography he said that he turned to the beautiful things which God created not realizing that these things are meant to point him the beautiful God who stood behind all of it. This toil drove him mad.

Until God solved this holy dissatisfaction by opening his eyes: Then he said this: **"You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours."**

Here's the astounding principle we cannot miss here: both the righteous and the wicked will experience seasons of hunger. But the righteous know that when the hunger pang of life in a broken world pierce our side that God has promised to come into our want and fill it with himself.

Where the desire of sin can never actually provide what we want, God has promised peace for those who trust in him. Look at what Jesus says in **John 6:35**.

This is the key to the rest of the Proverbs. The Proverbs will include wonderfully practical advice for all of life.

But if you do not see the provision of God in satisfying us in Jesus then you'll never actually turn towards him. Behind all the practical input of this book is the relationship of the God who stands behind all of it.

There will be times where following God's wisdom puts us in incredibly difficult. There will be times when it seems walking with God actually reminds us of what we lack. But when we see that God has promised to satisfy us by atoning for our sins through Jesus and winning us back to him, then we joyfully turn towards him knowing he is faithful.

In other words we will never choose to live the righteous and wise life if we don't actually believe that behind every difficult decision God calls us to make, the promise of God's provision stands behind it all.

He will never leave us empty.

When we read the Proverbs we read lots of things which call for us to act. But what undergirds all of the practical advice in this book is the idea of God's sovereignty. He is able to sustain the righteous.

We will never apply the proverbs of God unless we believe in the provision of God. Because it's not wise business practices which bless us, it's not healthy families which bless us, it's not strong work ethics which bless us, it is God himself who blesses us by bringing us into an all satisfying relationship with him through Jesus Christ.

But what does this look like? Often times we can hear of God's provision and it can lead us to passivity. In other words in a difficult situation we might simply sit back and say: If God is faithful then I can sit back, kick up my feet, and wait for him to bring my joy like a glorified butler.

Or in the course of our lives we pursue whatever we want to pursue thinking that we are pretty much able to do anything we want because God has already promised to save us in Jesus. Both trust in God's provision, but both are wrong responses.

But look at how this proverb closes in **Proverbs 10:4-5**.

Here is our last point: Seeing God's provision allows us to **Work Heartily for Him**.

Because we trust that God will provide we actually become busy.

What do we become busy with? Righteousness! Not laboring for the treasures of this world but for the richness of God himself.

A righteousness which brings satisfaction to the individual and brings blessing to the community which is around us.

The word used for "slack" in verse 4 is not a word that only implies laziness. It's actually a word that implies deceit.

In other words there are people who pretend as if their life is being lived in service to Jesus but in all reality they are slack. They are living for themselves while claiming to live for God. But they are only deceiving themselves. There are no riches in this life, no joy, only poverty.

In contrast to this is the diligent hand who continues to trust that the labor of righteous living is truly what makes us rich.

Remember how Solomon said that he toiled and toiled for his riches only to find they didn't satisfy? Well when we are saved by freely turning to Jesus in faith, we get put to work, but it's work that actually satisfies!

Look at how Paul puts this in **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

Or at how James puts this in the New Testament: **James 3:13-18**.

Because God richly provides for the righteous, we know that there is as James says, a harvest of righteousness in which we ought to now walk. Do you hear that wonderful truth, God promises us a harvest of righteousness!

This abundant harvest changes how we view God and changes how we interact with others.

How many of us actually believe that Jesus' salvation is so sufficient that it will actually provide for you a harvest of righteousness in your life? In other words, do you trust that the gospel is so powerful that it will actually change the way you live?

But this is the wonderful nature of God's provision: it puts us to work with wonderfully soul satisfying labor in whatever it is we do. Don't sleep on this harvest! God wants to do wonderful things through your obedience to him.

Here's the practical beauty of this: Wherever you are, whatever you do for work, whatever your relationship or economic status is in life, God has provided for you everything you need to put yourself to the task of soul-satisfying, other-blessing and God glorifying work.

So when you begin to ask yourself the question of: "What am I doing in life?" Your salvation in Jesus Christ actually answers that question for you and promises the wonderful provision of God in the midst of it!

You are to work in such a way where your life is gathering the visible fruits of righteousness. Which means in any given circumstance you can make yourself busy by asking yourself two questions: "How can I show God in this moment my righteous loyalty to him?" In what ways are my decisions showing that above worldly accolades or riches I'm trusting in God's salvation for my satisfaction and my identity?

And secondly, "How can my righteous actions bless my community?" How does my faithfulness to God spill over and show others the love of Jesus, or the service of Jesus, or the truth of Jesus?

Here's the wonderful beauty of this: While we are looking to the provision of God and the experience of others, we actually get what we always wanted: we get the reminder that God's provision is sufficient for us, that though obedience and faithfulness is often hard, God meets our faithfulness with the richness of his pleasure.

If God has richly provided for you a gospel which saves you from death, then certainly this gospel will also occupy us with joy in this life.

So our hope here is that we would see God's wonderful provision for us and want to walk in his wisdom for our joy, for the joy of those around us, and for the glory of the God who saved us.