

Promise, Person, Purpose

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Proverbs, book of Proverbs chapter 16, and I would just like us to consider one proverb in this chapter, and it's in verse 6.

Proverbs 16, at verse 6, where Solomon writes, by steadfast love and faithfulness, iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord, one turns away from evil.

By steadfast love and faithfulness, iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord, one turns away from evil.

Now, I think it's safe to say that words are important, and words are important because they communicate to us what's going on in our lives.

Words express our feelings. Words describe our situations. Words convey our mood. Words reveal our opinions. Words are important, and how we use words is important.

[1 : 17] Because we can use our words to encourage or to discourage. We can use our words to defend or to condemn. We can use our words to love or to hate.

We can use our words wisely or foolishly. Words are important. And you know, when we come to the book of Proverbs, we see how important words are.

Because the book of Proverbs, it's a book written by Solomon, and it's full of wise words. And when you read this book, you realize how important words are, and how powerful words are.

Because the book of Proverbs is just a collection of wise words that are used to teach wisdom. And Solomon wants us to be wise. He wants us to possess through wisdom.

But through wisdom, it isn't knowledge. Knowledge can exist without wisdom. Someone can be knowledgeable without being wise. But according to Solomon, through wisdom is the ability to discern between right and wrong.

[2 : 25] Between good and evil. Between sin and righteousness. And so, through wisdom is seeking to live your life in a manner that is pleasing to God.

By keeping his commandments and upholding his covenant. And you know, that's how Solomon introduces his book of Proverbs. He says in chapter 1.

Chapter 1 at verse 1, he writes, The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. Then he says, To know wisdom and instruction. To understand words of insight.

To receive instruction in wise dealing. In righteousness, justice and equity. To give prudence to the simple. Knowledge and discretion to the youth. Then he says, Let the wise hear and increase in learning.

And the one who understands obtain guidance. To understand a proverb and a saying. The words of the wise and their bridles. And then Solomon says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

[3 : 26] Fools despise wisdom and instruction. And so for Solomon, words are important. Because words convey wisdom and understanding.

But what I'd like us to see from this verse that's hidden in the book of Proverbs. I want us to see that this verse, verse 6, is a golden verse. And it's a golden verse because it contains the greatest wisdom.

And it expresses to us the beauty of the gospel. Because in this golden verse, there are only eight words. There are eight Hebrew words.

And each word is important. Because they express to us three things. They express to us the covenant, the cross, and the Christian.

So in these eight Hebrew words, we see the covenant, the cross, and the Christian. And we'll see that as we go through this. So first of all, the covenant.

[4 : 26] The covenant. Solomon writes, Now as we said, words are important.

And the first two words of this golden verse are the words, By steadfast love and faithfulness. Now although there are a few words in English, there are actually only two words in Hebrew.

Steadfast love and faithfulness. And those two words, they're words that remind us of God's covenant promise. They're covenantal words. And the word steadfast love, or maybe depending on the Bible version that you're using, it might be loving kindness or mercy.

The word steadfast love, as it is here in the ESV, it refers to God's covenant love towards his people. That God has acted graciously and mercifully towards us, not because of our merited righteousness, or holiness, or even our goodness.

But God has acted towards us solely because of his great love for us. And you know, this is what the Lord repeatedly reminded the children of Israel.

[5 : 36] He reminds them back in Deuteronomy chapter 7, that he saved them, and the Lord delivered them from bondage and slavery in Egypt, not because they were greater, not because they were more important than anyone else, but that he saved them simply because he loved them.

And you know, I love what we're told in Deuteronomy 7. It says, The Lord did not set his love upon you, or choose you, because you were greater than any other people.

No, he says, The Lord set his love on you, because he loved you. The Lord set his love on you, because he loved you. And you know, this is our great hope and assurance as a Christian tonight, that the Lord has chosen you.

He has loved you, and he continues to love you, not because of who you are, or what you've done as a Christian. The Lord promises to love you, because he has set his covenant love upon you, just because he loves you.

He has set his covenant love upon you, just because he loves you. It wasn't anything to do with you, or your upbringing, or your family, or your knowledge of the Bible, or even your church attendance.

[6 : 53] The Lord loves you because he has chosen to love you. And he loves you, and cherishes you tonight, with an everlasting love. And this is the beauty of it.

And you know, it's not only an everlasting love, it's an eternal love. It's a love that knew you, and chose you, and cared for you, before the world began.

My friend, this is what's so beautiful about our covenant God. That we were known to him, we were chosen by him, we were loved by him, with this covenant love.

And we were loved by him, before he had even spoken into the darkness of this world, and said, let there be light. And this is the wonder of our salvation, that God in the realms of eternity past, God the Father, and God the Son, they entered into this great covenant of redemption.

And it was all signed and sealed by the Holy Spirit, where God the Father, he chose us, and he loved us, as sinners. God the Son was willing to die for us, as fallen sinners.

[8 : 03] God the Holy Spirit was willing, to dwell within us, as fallen sinners. And this is the beauty of the gospel, that even in the realms of eternity, your name was known to God.

You were known to God. You were loved by God. You were chosen by God. You were part of this, great covenant plan of redemption, through which God would bless his people. And what's amazing is that, despite our unfaithfulness to the Lord, the Lord has always remained faithful to his covenant.

And that's what we see in these two covenantal words. This is what they emphasize. They emphasize God's steadfast covenant love, and his faithfulness towards his covenant.

And you know, this is something we have to remember. That God in his love, and out of his own good pleasure, nothing in us, in his love and out of his own good pleasure, he chose to make this covenant, this binding promise.

But the beauty of God's covenant of redemption, is that when the Lord made this covenant, he sought to do something, in order that there was nothing, that could break this covenant.

[9 : 20] The Lord sought to redeem a people to himself, regardless of how wayward they could be. And the wonder of it all, is that the Lord graciously, bound himself to this covenant.

He bound himself to his own people, and he promised to fulfill his covenant promise, with steadfast love, and faithfulness. My friend, the God of the Bible, is a covenant making, and a covenant keeping God.

He's faithful to his people, and he's faithful to his promises. And, whatever you may be going through tonight, as a congregation, or even as individuals, you can be assured by God's covenant

promise, that you are valuable, not because of who you are, but because of whose you are. You are valuable, not because of who you are, but because of whose you are. You belong to the Lord. And the Lord has, covenanted himself to you, which means that, he will never cast you off. He has promised never to leave you, never to forsake you, to go with you always, even to the end of the age. And you can have that assurance tonight, all because, the Lord has bound himself to you, with his steadfast love, and faithfulness.

[10:45] And that's where your assurance is tonight. That's where your hope of salvation is. It's in the heart, of God's covenant. Because, you know, there's nothing we can do, to make God love us, any more than he already does.

And there's nothing we can do, to make him love us, any less. And through your faith, in Jesus Christ, you're part of this covenant of redemption.

Not because of anything you've done, or anything you've achieved, but solely, according to his abundant grace. But you know what's so wonderful, about this verse, is that God's steadfast love, and faithfulness, it's not only a promise, it was also a person.

And this is what I love about the Bible, because these two, important words, steadfast love, and faithfulness, they're repeated throughout the Bible. And they're repeated, throughout the Bible, as God's promise of salvation.

But they're also revealed in the Bible, as God's portion of salvation. Because when we come to the New Testament, these two words, steadfast love, and faithfulness, they're translated in the New Testament, as grace, and truth.

[12:00] And when the Apostle John, when he wrote his gospel, account of one, of Jesus Christ, one of the first things, John said, was that God's covenant promise, he says, it has been revealed, in person.

He says to us, this eternal word, that was in the beginning, with God, he has become flesh, and he has now dwelt among us. And in Jesus Christ, John says, we have beheld the glory, of God's covenant, which is full, of grace, and truth.

Full of steadfast love, and faithfulness. My friend, Jesus is full, of steadfast love, and faithfulness.

But do you know, what makes the Bible, such a beautiful book, to meditate, and to read?

It's that Jesus, is not only the person, of the covenant promise, he's also the purpose. Jesus is the purpose, of the covenant promise. Because the Apostle Paul, he reminds us, that God has, demonstrated, his covenant, steadfast love, and faithfulness, towards us.

He demonstrated, it towards us, in this way, Paul says, that whilst, we were still sinners, whilst we were still, strangers to grace, and to God, still in the far country, still prodigal, still without hope, in the world, still enemies, of the cross, God demonstrates, his love towards us, in that while, we were yet sinners, Christ, died for us.

[13:36] That's the purpose. The purpose of the promise. And you know, that's what we were singing about, in Psalm 85. We were singing about, the promise, the Persian, and the purpose, of the covenant.

We sang in Psalm 85, we sang that, at the cross, truth met with mercy, and righteousness, and peace, kissed mutually. And what the psalmist, was saying was, at the cross, faithfulness, met with steadfast love, and righteousness, and peace, they kissed mutually.

At the cross, in the promise, the Persian, and the purpose, of God's covenant, Jesus bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree.

And you know, my friend, looking at this one verse, words are important. And these words, steadfast love, and faithfulness, they're important, because they remind us, about the covenant.

But as we go on, we see that these words, they also remind us, about the cross. So the covenant, the cross. Solomon writes, in verse 6, by steadfast love, and faithfulness, iniquity is atoned for.

[14:51] And by the fear of the Lord, one turns away, from evil. And so words are important. And so having described, described God's covenant, of redemption, with the first two words here, steadfast love, and faithfulness.

Solomon now describes, the cross of redemption, with the next two words, iniquity, and atonement. And in these two words, iniquity and atonement, we're given, the reason for the cross, and the remedy, of the cross.

We're given the problem of sin, and the provision, of a savior. And with the word, iniquity, Solomon is just highlighting, for us, the reason for the cross.

Because iniquity, as we know, it's just another word, for sin. But you know, in another sense, iniquity is not just, another word for sin.

Because in the Bible, there are three words, that are used to describe sin. There's transgression, iniquity, and sin. And these three words, they describe different aspects, and actions, of our sin. [15:58] And each of them, transgression, iniquity, and sin, each of them, gives to us, the reason for the cross. Because transgression, transgression, is an outward act, of wrongdoing, that's premeditated.

Transgression, is the active desire, to have our own way. It's a desire, to do what we want to do.

Transgression, always begins with, I. I want, I need, I will have.

Transgression, revolves around self. And it involves, making this, deliberate act, of disobedience.

Transgression, it's, it's illustrated, by this walking across, or the stepping over, a boundary line, that has been set, by God's word.

And when we commit, an act of trespass, we're crossing over, that forbidden boundary.

Transgression, is the outward act, of wrongdoing. But iniquity, iniquity is an inward act, of wrongdoing.

Iniquity means, perverseness, or crookedness. Iniquity comes, from the heart. It goes deeper, than transgression. Transgression, is the outward act, of crossing the boundary line.

[17:12] But iniquity, is the inward reality, that there's a crookedness, and a perverseness, in our own heart. And you know, the biblical diagnosis, of our heart, is that it's deceitful.

Above all things, desperately wicked. Our hearts are, full of iniquity. They're twisted, and bent, and perverted. And you know, Jesus knew that, iniquity would be a problem, for us.

Because, well, transgression, it's, it's a boundary, that's crossed, and when it's crossed, everyone can see us, doing it. It's a public sin. But iniquity, iniquity is a boundary, that no one can see us crossing, except God.

And because no one, can see us crossing, this boundary, our heart is something, that we need to watch. And Jesus warns us, again and again, about our heart. He says, out of the heart, come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander, these, says Jesus, are what defile a person.

And when you combine, the outward transgression, and the inward iniquity, that's when you have sin. And sin means, to miss the mark. It's the image, of the arrow being fired, and it falls below the target.

[18:37] It misses the mark. That's what sin is. It's to fall short, of the standard, that God has set, in his word. It's to fall short, of God's glory, both inwardly, and outwardly.

And so the Bible tells us, that the reason for the cross, is because all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The reason for the cross, is our transgression, our iniquity, our sin.

The reason for the cross, is because, God is of purer eye, than to behold iniquity, and to look upon sin. God hates sin. He can't look upon sin.

And our sin, deserves God's wrath, and punishment. My friend, the reason for the cross, is because our sin, deserves the fires of hell.

And you know, is that not what the psalmist, reminded us, in Psalm 130? He asked the question, Lord, who shall stand, if thou Lord, shouldst mark iniquity?

[19:37] And what the psalmist, was asking was, Lord, if you were to mark down, and take note, and keep a record, of all my transgressions, iniquities, and sins, I could never withstand, your righteous judgment.

Lord, if you looked into my soul, and saw all my sin, all my thoughts, all my words, all my actions, all my gossip, all my anger, all my backbiting, I wouldn't be able, to defend myself, against your accurate, description, of my heart.

I couldn't endure, the wrath and hell, that my sin, deserves. Lord, who shall stand, if thou Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? But you know, the wonder of this golden verse, is that, Solomon says, by steadfast love, and faithfulness, iniquity, is atoned for.

By the promise, of the covenant, there is a provision, in the cross. And what Solomon, is affirming to us here, is that in these words, these two words, iniquity, and atonement, we're given, the reason for the cross, and the remedy, for the, of the cross.

My friend, the reason for the cross, is our transgression, iniquity, and sin. And the remedy, of the cross, as you all know, is that Jesus, was wounded, for our transgression.

[20 : 58] He was bruised, for our iniquity. The chastisement, of, of, our peace, was upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed. And you know, in this, Solomon is affirming to us, that the problem, of sin, and the provision, of a savior, that's what's in these verses.

The problem of sin, is that God, is of purer eye, than to behold iniquity, and to look upon our sin. And because of this, we need the provision, of a savior. We need someone, to cover our sin. We need someone, to avert God's wrath. We need someone, to hide our sin, from the holy face, of God. And that's what, the word atonement means.

It means to cover. To cover our sin. And what's interesting, is that, the only other time, that the form of this word, is really used in the Bible, is in Leviticus, chapter 16 and 17.

And those two words, those, sorry, those two chapters, I should have said, those two chapters, chapter 16 and 17, in Leviticus, they present to us, the most important day, in Israel's history, the day of atonement.

[22 : 14] Leviticus 16, it's a wonderful chapter, and I'd encourage you to read it, because, it's a great chapter, because it describes to us, the actions of, Aaron, the high priest, and the duties, that he had to perform, once a year, in order to make atonement, for the people.

And, we don't have time, to go into it, in great detail, but, in Leviticus chapter 16, we're told that, on the day of atonement, the priest, shall make atonement, to cleanse the people, that they may be clean, from all their sins, before the Lord.

And, then you go into chapter 17, and we're told that, atonement can only be achieved, by the shedding of blood. The Lord said, it is the blood, that makes atonement, for the soul.

It is the blood, that makes atonement, for the soul. And my friend, that's how iniquity, is atoned for. That's how the wrath of God, is averted. It's covered, by precious blood.

And that's the remedy, of the cross. Because when we look at the cross, we see, a crucified Christ. And we realize that, without the shedding of his blood, there's no forgiveness.

[23 : 28] Without the shedding of his blood, there's no atonement. There's no mercy. There's no reconciliation, with a holy God. There's no peace with God. There's no redemption. Because we're only redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold.

We're only redeemed, by the precious blood, of Jesus Christ. So without the shedding, of the blood of Jesus Christ, we could never be made, as white as snow.

My friend, the reason for the cross, was our transgression, iniquity and sin. And the remedy of the cross, was the blood of Jesus Christ. And you know, if any of the apostles understood, this wonderful concept, it was the apostle John.

In his first letter to the churches, John assures us, that it's only the blood of Jesus Christ, that cleanses us, from all sin. And because of this, John says, we can all have confidence.

You can have confidence, he says, that if you confess your sin, God is faithful, to his covenant, and he's just, in all his dealings, that he will cleanse you, from all unrighteousness.

[24 : 42] But then John went on, to write about, the reason for the cross, and the remedy of the cross. He went on, to write about it, in chapter four. Because he said, in chapter four, here in his love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son, to be the propitiation, for our sins.

Here in his love. Looking at the cross, this is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.

He loved us, with his covenant, steadfast love, and faithfulness. And John says, God fulfilled, his covenant promise, by sending his own son, to be the propitiation, for our sins.

To be the atoning sacrifice, for our sins. To cover our sin, with his blood, and to avert the wrath of God. And that's what the word, propitiation means.

It means to cover our sins, and to remove the wrath of God. Our sins are covered, by the blood of Jesus. And by standing condemned, in our place, as our divine, substitute, the wrath of God, is averted.

[25 : 56] You know my friend, when we look at the cross, we have to see, that Jesus did it all. And he did it all, at the cross. And that's what you're going to, proclaim this coming Lord's day.

You're going to proclaim, his death, until he comes. You're going to proclaim, the reason for the cross, the remedy of the cross.

That's what we're going, that's what you're going to do, this Lord's day. And you know, it doesn't matter, how many times, I come and consider, the cross of Jesus Christ. I'm always, reminded of, the words of that hymn.

Man of sorrows, what a name, for the son of God, who came, ruined sinners, to reclaim. Hallelujah, what a savior.

Bearing shame, and scoffing rude, in my place, condemned he stood, sealed my pardon, with his blood. Hallelujah, what a savior. Guilty, vile, and helpless, we.

[26 : 59] Spotless lamb of God, was he. Full redemption, can it be. Hallelujah, what a savior. Lifted up, was he to die. It is finished, was his cry.

Now in heaven, exalted high. Hallelujah, what a savior. When he comes, our glorious king, all the ransomed, home to bring.

Then I knew, this song we'll sing. Hallelujah, what a savior. My friend, words are important. And the words, of this golden verse, they remind us, that through the promise, of the covenant, there was the provision, of the cross.

But then lastly, and more briefly, there is the purpose, of the Christian. So we have the covenant, the cross, and the Christian. The covenant, the cross, and the Christian.

Solomon writes, in verse six, by steadfast love, and faithfulness, iniquity, iniquity, is atoned for. And by the fear, of the Lord, one turns away, from evil. So words, are important.

[28 : 11] And having used, only eight, Hebrew words, Solomon has described, the promise, of the covenant, steadfast love, and faithfulness. He's explained, the provision, of the cross, iniquity, is atoned for.

But then, in the last four, words, that Solomon uses, he reminds us, about the purpose, of the Christian. Because the purpose, of the Christian, he says, is to fear the Lord, and to turn away, from evil.

And what we have to see, is that one will result, in the other. By fearing the Lord, we will turn away, from evil. And that's the purpose, of the Christian. We are to fear the Lord, and turn away, from evil. And as we said earlier, Solomon introduced, his book of Proverbs, to us, with the statement, the fear of the Lord, is the beginning, of knowledge. Fools despise, wisdom, and instruction.

And what we have to see, throughout this book, I'm sure, if you've read it before, you'll see that, Solomon repeatedly, explains, what it means, to fear the Lord. Solomon says, that the fear of the Lord, is not only the beginning, of wisdom.

[29 : 15] It is wisdom. And he says, the fear of the Lord, is to hate evil. The fear of the Lord, prolongs our days. The fear of the Lord, is strong confidence, in the Lord.

Solomon says, the fear of the Lord, is a fountain of life. The fear of the Lord, is great treasure. The fear of the Lord, leads to life. The fear of the Lord, is riches, and honor, and life.

The fear of the Lord, is the beginning, of wisdom. But what does it mean, to fear the Lord? Well, my friend, to fear the Lord, is to submit, to the authority, of the Lord.

To fear the Lord, is to live in submission, to Jesus Christ, and in obedience, to God's word. To fear the Lord, is to confess, Jesus Christ, as your Lord.

To fear the Lord, is to have Jesus Christ, as Lord, over every area, of your life. It's not just, this little religion box, that we have, that Jesus owns.

[30 : 19] It's our whole life. He is Lord, over all. Lord, over all our life. Every area, of our lives. And you know, that's what David, was reminding us, in Psalm 19.

Because when David, considered the wonder, of God's word, he used all these, different terms, to describe God's word. He described, God's word, as his law, his testimony, his statutes, his commandments, his fear, and his judgments.

I'm sure you know, the Psalm very well. God's law is perfect, and converts, the soul and sin that lies. God's testimony, is more sure, and makes the simple wise.

The statutes, of the Lord are right, and do rejoice the heart. The Lord's command, is pure and death. Light to the eyes, impart. And then he says, unspotted, is the fear of God, and doth endure forever.

The judgments of the Lord, are true, and righteous, altogether. And what David, teaches us in Psalm 19, is that to fear the Lord, is to, live in submission, to Jesus Christ, and in obedience, to his word.

[31 : 35] And you know, that's what professing, your faith is. It's living in submission, to Jesus Christ, and being obedient, to his word. His word that says, do this, in remembrance, of me.

So, fearing the Lord, is living in submission, to Jesus Christ, and being obedient, to God's word. And by fearing the Lord, we're not to pick, and choose, which parts of the Bible, we want to adhere

to, and which parts, we want to ignore.

To fear the Lord, is to submit, to the authority of Jesus, and be obedient, to the authority, of God's word. My friend, to fear the Lord, is to say, as David did, about God's word.

They more than gold, yea much fine gold, to be desired of, than honey, honey from the comb, that droppeth, sweeter fire. And what Solomon, reminds us here, is that, the purpose of the Christian, is that, by the fear of the Lord, by submitting, to the authority, of God's word, we will turn away, from evil.

We will turn, from sin, to Jesus. And you know, we're often told, that, Jesus is our example, to follow. We are to imitate, and mirror our lives, on the life, and conduct of Jesus.

[32 : 59] And Jesus, is our example, of what it means, to fear the Lord. When Isaiah, spoke prophetically, about the birth, of Jesus Christ, he said, in Isaiah 11, the spirit of the Lord, shall be upon him.

The spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the spirit of counsel, and might, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear, of the Lord. And so, if there was anyone, who feared the Lord, it was Jesus.

If there was anyone, who lived in obedience, to God's word, and submitted, to the will of his father, it was Jesus. If there was anyone, who upheld, the promise of the covenant, it was Jesus.

If there was anyone, who fulfilled, the provision of the cross, it was Jesus. If there was anyone, who set out, the purpose of the Christian life, it was Jesus.

Because Jesus, feared the Lord. He lived in obedience, to God's word. And we know, that he was obedient, unto death. Even the death, of the cross.

[34 : 03] And so the purpose, of the Christian, our purpose, as a Christian, is to fear the Lord. So that we will, turn away from evil. Our purpose, is to fear the Lord, continually.

So that we will, continually turn away, from evil. And it was Spurgeon. We love Spurgeon. And he put it very simply.

To fear the Lord, is to love, worship, and serve the Lord. To fear the Lord, is to love, worship, and serve the Lord.

And so as Christians, our response, to the covenant, and to the cross, is to love, worship, and serve, the Lord.

By steadfast love, and faithfulness, iniquity, is atoned for. And by the fear, of the Lord, one, turns away from evil.

[35 : 05] Words, are important. And the words, of this golden verse, are important. Because they remind us, so beautifully, about the covenant, the cross, and the Christian.

May the Lord bless you, and may the Lord bless, these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Let us pray.