

# Guest Speakers

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Austin is going to come first. If you'll turn to Proverbs chapter 21, we're going to do verses 1, 2, and 3 right in a row. We may need to borrow a little bit of time from you guys tonight, all right? It means we're going to go a little bit longer.

If you just slip out, we understand. But we want to make sure we cover Proverbs 1, 2, and 3 tonight. Well, it is always exciting and thrilling to have the opportunity to preach.

And I count it a very special honor to be able to preach before you all, church family. And then the icing on the cake is that Pastor Trent actually asked me to preach Proverbs 21, 1, which is one of the verses that the Lord has used to help me and my wife get through this last year and a half, two years of waiting.

And I don't know if he was thinking that when he gave it to me or if it was the Lord that did that without Pastor Trent's knowing. But either way, actually, especially if he did it without Pastor Trent's knowing, that's just more evidence of the truth of the verse.

And so let's take a look at this together. It says, The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water. He turns it whithersoever he will.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] Friends, we serve an almighty God. He is the king of kings. He is lord of lords. We find out in Revelation that he is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last.

He is both the creator and the concluder of everything that is. He is high and lifted up. And he rules over all. He rules over this world.

And he truly is the king of all kings. And Psalm 115.3 says, But our God is in the heavens. He has done whatsoever he is pleased.

And he does that even with the hearts of kings, as we see here in this verse in Proverbs. He is able to turn the heart of kings in his hand.

And just an interesting side note, I find it fascinating that it says hand, singular and not plural. He doesn't need two hands to do this. With one mere hand, he is able to turn the heart of a king.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] So just as when he created the world, he wound the rivers and he carved out their canyons and he guided them from the mountains to the sea, just like a farmer would use channels and other methods of irrigation to get water through his fields and to farm his land.

So God is able to turn and maneuver the hearts of kings. And that's right, even kings. And so what that means is, whether presidents or prime ministers, he turns their hearts.

Whether chancellors or chairmen, he turns their hearts. And it seems so, the illustration in my mind at least seems so simple.

Well, if we are just to take our hand under a running faucet, we are able to somewhat move and manipulate the flow of the water, right? We're able to kind of turn it and bend it.

And yes, the water is flowing on its own, and yet we are able to somewhat guide and direct it with our hands. Well, how much more so God with his creation? And so we look at this verse, and we're able to think and process what happens all throughout the Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament.

[ 3 : 30 ] Consider in Exodus, both chapters 4 and 14, God specifically says that he hardened Pharaoh's heart to make his wonders and his glory known, both in Egypt and to Israel.

Consider how he hardened the heart of Sihon, king of the Amorites, to destroy him in battle in Deuteronomy chapter 2. Let's think for a moment about how in 2 Samuel 24, he moved David's heart to number Israel and Judah.

There's how God even used the king of Assyria in Isaiah 10. And get this, he says he used the king of Assyria as an axe, as a rod. He used him as a saw, just as a mere tool in his hands to accomplish his purposes.

This is our God. He controls the hearts of men. And over the course of this last year and a half, we have constantly been pushed back to the truth of this verse.

Why is it that China is shut down to this day? Why is it that Taiwan has been shutting and opening, shutting and opening, shutting and opening for the last year and a half? And just now are we able to seemingly slide through?

[ 4 : 40 ] It's the Lord. And I have countless times been eyeballing the news and thinking, why? I know the name of the health minister of Taiwan. And there are times when I'm thinking, what is he thinking?

Why is he not letting people in now? And then I have to think, well, the Lord has his heart in his hands. He's got it. He has his heart in his hands.

Now, there are a few implications to this truth. First of all, because the heart of our leaders are in his hands, well, we should pray for them, right? If he controls their heart and he controls the flow of their desires, then maybe we should pray and petition God that he would change their hearts to make certain decisions or to do different things.

2 Timothy 2, 1 and 2, Friends, do you pray for your government leaders?

Do you pray for them? Their hearts are in God's hand. Second implication, if king's hearts can be turned so easily by the Lord, then how much more our hearts?

[ 5 : 55 ] How much more the hearts of that person that you just wish they would change their mind about something or you wish that they would take a different course of action in some way? Because of the truth of this verse, we know that we can pray to God for them and for that situation.

We can take that petition to the Lord and perhaps he will turn their heart as well. Friends, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. So why not pray to him?

Proverbs 21, 2 now. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord pondereth the hearts.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes. So we're busy people, aren't we? I know in Indonesia they kind of make fun just at Americans because we think time is money.

And what they're saying is you guys are sure busy and you are proud of it. And we are that way, aren't we? We are busy people and we do have a lot going on in our lives. But here's the thing is no matter what's going on around us, we think our way is the right way of doing it.

[ 7 : 04 ] What's the right speed to go through Atlanta? My speed. If you're going faster than me, you're a maniac. If you're going slower than me, come on, get out of the way.

I'm trying to get somewhere. I'm running late to a meeting. Because what we do is we set the standard based upon what we think and we want. Where we're headed is the right way.

The speed that we're going is right. What I care about, you should care about. What I don't care about, you shouldn't care about either because I am the standard here. And that's what we tend to do is our default setting is my way is the right way.

So whatever is going on in your life, you think this is the way everyone else should handle this. Every way of a man is right in those own eyes. We do have a lot going on and we think our way is the right way.

But the Lord pondereth the hearts. But we have to know and understand that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart is what God says.

[ 8 : 07 ] So we have to cry out to God and say, Lord, I've got a lot going on. I'm busy. I've got a lot of plans, but Lord, I give them to you and I need you to inspect them. So we cry out to God, search me, oh God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. We can't do this. We don't have it figured out. And we don't have to go through life just continually with that default setting of I'm right and you're wrong.

My way is the way we've all got to keep going. And the way I've always done it and the way we're going to keep doing it. No, God can step in and intervene in our lives as we open up our lives and say, Lord, I need your help.

And so we've all got a lot going on. If you go talk to us missionaries, sometimes we're going to cry on your shoulder about paperwork and quarantine. Yes, I'm crying about my 10 days. Thank you, Austin Till, for making me feel very unspiritual up here, complaining about my 10 days.

But here's the thing. Missionaries aren't the only one that are being attacked by the devil. We're not the only ones that have a lot going on. Every person in here is trying to serve God in this church, in this community.

[ 9 : 18 ] And the devil is going to come after you. And we've got to guard our hearts and we've got to lay our plans before God and say, God, I am not in control. I want your plans, Lord. So I've got all these plans and it seems right to me.

But God, I need you to ponder. And God knows. He sees it and he knows. But he wants us to invite him into our lives. Soccer. Man, I like soccer as a kid.

Maybe one of these days I'll be like Jeff Bush and play soccer again and be in good shape. But not yet. But I know a little bit about soccer again. Forget those cards. The yellow card, the red card, right?

The other card's like, you messed up. Watch it, buddy. Red card's you messed up and you're out of here. Well, here's the thing. I've got another card that's the green card and that's Josh's card. If you ask me about any decision I make, green card, it's good.

Isn't that the way our default setting is? We live and breathe to say my way is the right way. But we don't have to stay there. We can say, Lord, I'm going to open up your word. And I need you, Lord, to open up my eyes so I can see wondrous things from your word.

[ 10 : 20 ] God, help me to wash my mind. God, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So here's the thing, church. Christian, husband, father, wife, mother, children. We cannot go through life and just knee-jerk reaction to everything.

This is how I'm supposed to handle it. I've got the answer. I've got the answer. Because our default setting is we're right and you're wrong. Our way is the right way. But God is not wanting us to live in fear that we can't make a decision.

See, that's where the devil wants us. He wants us so privel we think we've got it all under control. And then he wants us so despondent and nothing's going to ever go right. And he's got us right where he wants it.

But we have to come back to God's word and say, God, I believe you're going to direct my paths. God, I give you my life. We are supposed to keep our hearts with all diligence. For out of it are the issues of life.

[ 11 : 18 ] We can make decisions and then confidently follow the Lord. See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Yes, we do have a lot going on.

Yes, we're busy. And yes, a lot of times we think ours is the right way. But sometimes we can be wrong. We've got to lay down everything before God. Say, God, I need you to direct me. I need you to change my heart, my mind.

And Lord, I trust that you're going to ponder my heart. You're going to understand what's going on. And then you're going to direct me moving forward to help change my thinking, how I lead my home, how I serve in my church, how I serve in my community, how I respond to all the difficult things that hit us, all the decisions.

Yes, I understand. And I understand that I've got to be very cautious when I make decisions because by default I think I'm right. But man, I've got to run back to God and say, God, I know you're in control.

I know you're pondering what's really going on here. Lord, would you direct my paths to serve my family, to serve my wife, to serve my children, to serve my church, to serve the lost world and not serve myself?

[ 12 : 24 ] And then we can confidently move forward. As we're cautious and guarding against our own selves, God will direct our lives. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Those are more important than the outward aspects of worship. And many times we're focused on the outward aspects, right?

The areas that everyone can see. I'm up here teaching this verse. That's something people can see. You're here today at church, and people can see that you're here. You're serving in a ministry, and people can see that.

[ 13 : 28 ] And that's a wonderful thing. And a sacrifice is something that we should do. But at the same time, if we're not careful, we focus solely on that. And not on those private matters.

We can see here, the Bible says the word justice. To do justice. What's justice is to speak truth. It's to do what's right. It's to do what's right, no matter what others think.

It's to be just and fair in our dealings with others. Judgment. That means we're judging fairly. It means we're not putting up with sin. We're rejecting wrongdoing.

It says, to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. What's a sacrifice? Well, in the Old Testament, many times the Israelites would go, and they would go to the temple, and they'd take a lamb or a sheep, and they would take an animal, and they would offer it as a sacrifice.

It was a visible type of worship. It was a visible act of service to God. And the Bible doesn't say that's wrong. The Bible only says that to do justice and judgment is more acceptable.

[ 14 : 34 ] It's more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. And I can't read this verse without thinking of a story. A story in 1 Samuel 15. Solomon's the writer of Proverbs, and maybe his dad, David, told him this story.

Maybe he said, you know what? Solomon, one time there was a king before me. His name was Saul, and God commanded him to go and destroy a nation. This nation had sinned against God, and God said, it's time for their judgment.

And Saul was commanded to go and destroy the nation and not bring anything back. But Saul goes, and he destroys the nation, but he brings some cattle, and he brings some sheep back with him. And God sends out his prophet, Samuel, and Samuel walks up to him, and he says, why do I hear the bleeding of sheep?

Why do I hear some oxen coming along here with you? You're supposed to destroy everything. And Saul says, well, you know, I thought we could offer some sacrifices. I thought that would be a good thing to do.

Honor our God. Everybody will be able to see these thousands upon thousands of sacrifices that we're going to offer. And Samuel said in 1 Samuel 15, 22, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

[ 15 : 48 ] Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. God hated what Saul did because it was partial obedience. And that's what he's talking about here in this verse, partial obedience.

You know, growing up, I used to think to myself, why is that such a big deal, partial obedience? My parents would always say things to me like, slow obey is no obey, right? Partial obedience is not obedience.

And I used to think, why is that such a big deal? But just recently as a father, I've come to realize that that actually is a pretty big deal. My son has started to learn how to go to the bathroom.

And I've realized that he can do part of it, but have bad aim, and it's not very helpful for me. It is a big deal.

He says, hi, Papa, I went to the bathroom. I'm like, yes, you went to the bathroom. But then I walk in there, and I see he didn't actually go in the toilet. He went somewhere else. It was partial obedience, but it was not very helpful for me as a dad.

[ 16 : 54 ] So we can see a story. We can see a statement. He's saying here that our character is more important than our outward image of being spiritual or of being religious.

Justice and truth are more important than other outward spiritual activities. We shouldn't be hypocrites. We should be the same person we are in private as we are in public.

And so I would just like to close tonight asking you or looking at the final point of self-examination. Self-examination. It's easy to point at somebody else, right?

But it's hard to point at ourselves. And Solomon, he wrote this verse. God inspired him to write this verse. But what happened in his life? He was the one that built the temple.

And the Bible says that he offered up hundreds of thousands of sacrifices. If you go and read the verse about the dedication of the temple, he offered, I believe it was 120,000 sheep up as sacrifices to God.

[ 17 : 56 ] He had the sacrifice part down. But as we know, towards the end of his life, he kind of lost a little bit of that personal character stuff, didn't he?

He began to fall away from God. He began to chase women. He began to follow other gods. And so maybe he wrote this. Maybe he knew this in his mind, but he didn't necessarily apply it.

In our lives, I think we should take a moment, examine ourselves, and say, God, you know what? Am I more focused on what other people think about me? Or am I more focused on obeying you?

Am I obeying you in those private moments when no one else can see? When no one else knows what I'm doing? Am I doing right there? Do I have character to do what's right in my business and not just change things a little bit so I can earn a little bit more?

Am I doing right in my private area? Am I doing right in my B level? Who I am? Am I doing right when no one else knows? So let's take a moment.

[ 18 : 57 ] Let's ask ourselves, God, am I obeying you fully? Not just in the areas where people can see what I'm doing, but also in those private areas. We'll end the night in a word of prayer.

Here in a second. I'll invite the men in the service. I know I want a little bit longer, but it was invested well in God's word. I appreciate the time they took. I'm going to give four prayer requests before the men come here in a second. One, in just a short moment, all three of those men are going to be preaching God's word in a different language, and we get to be part of that, and that's incredible.

So I just want to thank God for that. I just say, God, thank you for allowing us, of all the times and all the places we could have been born and at, you put us here in Alpharetum, at this church, and we get to be part of that ministry.

And I'm really thankful for that. I love it. Second, I'd like to pray for West Kentucky. I'd like to pray for churches that met today, churches that are still churches. They're just without buildings, right?

And so they are working together, and so we pray for them as they would pray for us in the same situation. Pray for Baptist Tabernacle and Jeff Brown. He got voted in today as their pastor, and so we're excited for Jeff and McKenzie, and hopefully we get to have a special service with them in the future when they come back here.

[ 20 : 11 ] But let's be in prayer for him and the church moving forward. And then lastly, very heavy upon many of our hearts today, knowing that Matt Rowan was a member of our church, came here training for missions, wants to work among Jewish people.

The day was the funeral for his dad in Milton, Florida, and that's so hard. And so we won't be praying for Matt. I pray in the weeks to come we have an opportunity to minister to Matt and have him around here.

I'd love you to help us do that, minister, encourage him, but that is very difficult. Some of you have been there before, and you just know it's just nothing that you can ever be prepared for. And so pray for Matt and his family.

So, I mean, if you wouldn't mind joining me at the altar, I'll pray for us, and then we will leave the night.