

The Broken Heart

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[0 : 0 0] So this is our 12th look at the book of Proverbs and what we know so far is that the book of Proverbs teaches you that you can either be wise or you can be a fool in life. So there's our positive statement for the night. Originally we were going to squarely focus on addiction tonight but as I was thinking about addiction and reading through the whole of Proverbs and looking at text about addiction there aren't very many actually that directly address it but I noticed a few things.

One I found a really helpful definition from a theologian who's also a psychologist about addiction and he says this, addiction is an enslaving destructive external dependency on some object in this world that when mistreated causes deep harm to your body and soul. I found that it's a pretty good definition but in Proverbs when it does address addiction specifically it addresses it alongside all sorts of other aches and sins and there's a primary theme common to all of them and that's that they manifest a broken heart and I was talking to Alistair I who preached on the sins of speech you know month or so ago after he preached and he said as he was preparing for the sermon on speech which he prepared for for a long time and read through the book of Proverbs a few times he said the thing that he noticed most was that the book of Proverbs talks about the heart on every page every column constantly it mentions heart many many times 75 or so times

I found as I was reading through Proverbs again this week and the main idea in Proverbs about the human heart the thing it talks most about the human heart something so fundamental really to the whole book is that the human heart is broken sometimes it uses the phrase the wounded spirit or the heart that aches and the broken heart so that's the title tonight and we're not specifically talking about breakups like girlfriend boyfriend breakups with the broken heart which is the way we use that phrase most often today but that is included for sure amongst many other things but we're really talking about actually is psychology psychology and I'm not a psychologist but the study of the inner life the study of the human psyche of the inner self the Bible has a ton to say about what we call psychology today long before that science ever developed about the human psyche and Proverbs has a ton to say about it and it talks about the heart or the spirit so we're gonna look at this tonight the human heart the primacy of the heart the broken heart the healing heart and the wise heart and if you were counting that was five things and five I don't think I've ever preached on five points in a sermon here it's always three and sometimes two but tonight is five but don't don't be afraid because three of those points are two minutes or less okay so it's two points and three little ones so don't worry first the human heart the Bible mentions the heart literally hundreds of times and almost 1,000 times mentions the heart it's a little Hebrew word *Leb* *lebe* very simple and almost never in the entire Bible is the heart does the word heart refer to the internal organ the muscular the muscular organ that pumps blood throughout your circulatory system only maybe three times the whole Bible and that makes sense because the way we use the word heart today is the exact same right you almost never mean the muscle probably when you use the word heart in your daily speech we say in modern day we give heart to hearts whenever we're about to start a new relationship we talk from the bottom of our hearts we talk about people who have hearts of gold we talk about people who have cold hearts and hearts of stone our heart goes out to all of those who are suffering right we use the word heart in tons of different ways and that's exactly the same way the Bible did it and English probably does it because the Bible did it first so what's what it what is proverb mean by the word the concept of the heart chapter 14 verse 10 the heart knows its own bitterness and no stranger shares its joy the heart knows its own bitterness no stranger shares its joy what is he saying the author there is saying this only you know the true bitterness of your own heart or the true joy of your heart in other words the principle underneath the point underneath that is that you have an inner self that is completely invisible you have an inner self a part of you that nobody else can see that's not external only your heart knows your bitterness only your heart knows your joys right

there's part of you nobody in other words another positive statement tonight no one truly knows you no one truly knows who you are there's a whole world inside of you that is invisible that nobody external to you has ever seen before your inner conversations your thought life and it dominates so much of who you are for it oh by the way Augustine St. Augustine the great early church theologian he calls this the inner self so I'll be calling it the inner self quite often tonight chapter 14 verse 13 even in laughter the heart may ache and the end of joy may be grief even in laughter the heart may ache so what's it what's he saying he's saying that just because you laugh on the outside doesn't manifest necessarily what's happening in your inner self and everybody knows this right we do it at church all the time you come and you smile and you laugh and you and you have nice banter but we all know that people might be broken on the inside and hurting on the inside in other words the inner self it's invisible just because you manifest something externally doesn't necessarily mean that that's what's happening on the inside and so there's a distinct inner life you can be as gentle as a kitten as a newborn kitten on the outside and on the inside be as angry and disgruntled as the most angry rattlesnake maybe you've never seen an angry rattlesnake I've seen an angry rattlesnake in person and I can tell you they're very angry that external and internal they're different they're different you have you live in two worlds so to speak that are connected so point one all point one means is this when the Bible normally speaks of heart or spirit it's referring to the inner self the inner life the core of your personality it includes your inner conversations that you have with yourself all the time that you're having with yourself right now your desires your loves your biggest hopes and your deepest flaws that's the heart and that's what the heart in the Bible because that's that's point one point two the primacy of the heart the primacy of the heart and all we mean to say here is that the inner life the heart is incredibly important to pay attention to so Proverbs 18 verse 14 a man's spirit will endure sickness but a crushed spirit who can bear a man's spirit can endure sickness but a crushed spirit in other words cannot bear cannot bear anything what there's what the author is saying is this if you have a cheerful heart if you have a heart that is at peace and strong then no matter what circumstances come your way even the most vile sickness a man's spirit can endure sickness then the circumstances don't change the condition of your heart your heart determines how you feel about all circumstances in other words a secure safe strong heart can go out into the world and experience anything and be okay not that it doesn't have sorrows but can be okay can be strong but a crushed spirit if you have a crushed inner life deep deep deep problems in the inner life then circumstances dictate exactly how you feel when things are good in your life you feel good and when things are bad or your life you feel terrible right and in the modern world the basic spirit is that circumstances are the complete determination of our happiness our failures and our successes that's what determines our happiness and the Bible saying no if you place primacy on your inner life focusing on giving grace on the means of graces of grace for your inner life then you can go out into the world at any circumstance and remain strong that's the point of 18:14 in other words so much of your life is dominated by what happens inside your head you spend all of your time in your inner thoughts in your inner conversation right you're only occupied with external things part of the time you're not always in conversation with people and much of your life you're asleep but even in the moments that you're asleep your inner life is still raging it's still happening the conversations the dreams all of it the inner life is so important and if you neglect it you neglect it to your demise that's the point here third the broken heart why should we prioritize focusing on our inner self on our heart our spirit why should we prioritize it and the answer in the book of Proverbs and this is our primary point tonight point three is that it's because the human heart is broken the human heart is broken Proverbs says it all over the place Proverbs the heart aches the spirit is wounded the heart is crushed the heart is rotting the heart is and these are things aspects of the heart where you can be wounded by things that happen to you the heart is anxious bears grief is sorrowful and is depressed and then these are things that you do inside your inner self things that are what it calls right the heart is envious addicted prideful and hateful okay so those are all the different verbs the book of Proverbs uses for the broken heart and so one of the main conversations about in the psychology world today in the 21st century that you guys have heard for sure is conversations about where human problems the core of human problems the kind of problems that happen in our heart of hearts anxieties and depressions and and and sins of envy and anger and all sorts of things why does that happen to us where do these problems come from and there are basically two extreme answers to that question on the one hand there's the answer that you might call the left or the liberal answer whatever that might mean but the liberal answer and that's that people have deep problems in this world because

of things that happen to them right that people are fundamentally victims of their childhood of how they were treated as a child of their context of their environment of issues of esteem that have come from the outside of biological issues that affect your inner psychology that's the position on the left that fundamentally our problems come from the outside the problems of our heart come external to us and then on the opposite end of the extreme which is where

[12 : 34] Christians more often than not land is that they say no the problems human deep human problems deep anxieties or whatever those are moral issues and if you have that that's something that you've done that you've chosen that you've acted on and that's a problem fundamentally not with what's outside of you but what's with you right and what is the book of Proverbs say to quote Facebook which is always a reliable source it's complicated it's complicated the answer is yes the book of Proverbs recognizes all of those things it's super complex right the Proverbs has a really intricate and impressive psychology of a study of the human psyche a theology of the inner self it's complicated right so for instance the outside just let me give you a couple examples of what it talks about our broken hearts come from external circumstances that we are indeed victims yes

Proverbs affirms that chapter 14 verse 30 a peaceful heart gives life to the flesh but envy makes the bones rot a peaceful heart gives life to your flesh but envy makes the bones rot now this is so modern it's so aware it's so up-to-date it's so ancient and so contemporary at the very same time because what's being said here is that there is indeed a biological aspect to the problems of the human heart a peaceful heart can give life to your flesh that's the word for physical flesh but envy can make your bones rot right in other words what it's saying is that human beings are some psychosomatic whole as we say that things that happen inside of your inner life manifest and embodied problems right and that the reverse is true that biological issues can actually cause issues of the inner self issues of the heart right for instance if you have if your thyroid isn't working properly and this is just according to the medical communities of today basic if your thyroid isn't functioning properly if you don't have whatever I can't remember whatever thyroid produces somebody will tell me afterwards I have no doubt then it can make you want to commit suicide over the long call it can cause deep depression your biology affects something like deep depression that's an absolute fact right there's and Proverbs is not afraid to affirm that but at the same time it says at the end of that passage envy will make your bones rot and we all know this is true as well if you've ever suffered with long-term indwelling sin it can cause manifestations of outward sickness right or if you struggle with a lot of deep anxiety and worry it can make your it can make you sick right this is probably happened to many of us that there's a psychosomatic union that Proverbs is well aware of a second passage chapter 25 verse 20 and this is just more generally about circumstances how external circumstances affects us this is a really fun one whoever sings songs marry songs it should say to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day and puts vinegar on soda okay in other words it's saying that when the when it uses the phrase whoever sings marry songs to a heavy heart it's referring to a person that comes and sings jingle bells at Christmas to the wife who's just lost her husband right external circumstances break hearts and there are moments in life where jingle bells is not appropriate it doesn't help instead what it says it does is it's like taking off their outer garment in the middle of winter it makes them cold as ice or it says and this is the best one it's like putting vinegar on soda now I don't know exactly what they're what they're referring to there if soda means what we call baking soda today maybe I'm gonna go with that because maybe you've done this I've done this hundreds of times literally when I was in early secondary school and late primary school but if you take a two liter bottle and you put vinegar in it and then you pour baking soda in it right people done this I hope so it's amazing you you screw it on as tight as you can you shake it up and it will explode in your hand we used to there was a toilet bowl cleaner in the

States that had some kind of compound in it we figured out it was very off brand you know really terrible and if you use that instead of baking soda you could get a two liter bottle to shoot literally to the end of the neighborhood I mean it was unbelievable but probably they're they're aware of the science this is exactly what they're saying they're saying that when you sing a marry song at the wrong time to somebody that's been broken by external circumstances it causes an explosion you see vinegar on soda that's what they're saying in other words it's simply saying external circumstances have a really matter when it comes to the condition of our hearts that they can cause deep sorrows depressions anxieties all sorts of things and then thirdly and finally for this point this is the ultimate this is the ultimate statement in Proverbs about external consequences 14:13 even in

laughter a heart is sad and the end of happiness is grief even in laughter a heart is sad and the end of happiness and grief and what's he's this is an incredibly morbid proverb because it's saying that everybody even the happiest people you know even the Colin Armstrong's in your life right if you know Colin ultimately has a broken heart we can't relativize it it says even in laughter the human heart is sad and at the end of all happiness is grief you think of the best moments of your of your life the best people around you the best dinners the best

Christmas dinners and whatever the laughs end up they stop the best books come to an end and humans ultimately have to watch people around them die as they look down the barrel of their own demise and you say thanks I didn't come for that tonight but look look that's what that's what he's saying here in the book of Proverbs the end of all happinesses is ultimately grief and what does he mean by that he's talking about death he's talking about death and death and there are tons of people walking around the streets of Edinburgh tonight and in our city that think that the grave is the only goal that are looking down the barrel at their own demise at death but they want so badly a life that has meaning a life that has purpose a life that is ultimately when you weigh it at the end more happy than it was sad and the book of Proverbs is saying that's not that's not reality that's not facing the facts that's not coming up against reality that's not being brave enough to be consistent enough to say if our lives ultimately have no meaning in the end if the grave is only golden life has no meaning now in other words everybody no matter what they believe no matter what they think about God in the end of all things longs for what the great one of the great theologians of the 20th century or Carl Bart said a far off country that they have never visited a land without disease disaster and death and see us Lewis puts it this way in the weight of glory speaking of this far off country he says there's a secret in every one of you it's a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience or our circumstances he says we find beauties and we find joys and books and music or whatever but the true object of our desires is not in the books it's not in the music the best parts of this life books music whatever they're not the thing itself they're only the scent of a flower that we have never found they're the echo of a tune that we have never heard it's news from a far off country that we have not yet visited the aching heart the broken heart the wounded heart longs for a circumstance a land a place that is beyond the bounds of death disaster disease and destruction our hearts ache because circumstances matter and the circumstances of this world are broken produces broken hearts but why are they so broken our circumstances and Proverbs is nuanced it doesn't just say we're victims it also focuses on the inside the internal the inner life it says we have broken hearts because our hearts are broken what does that mean in other words the world of sorrows that we live in that breaks our hearts the external circumstances that come in and break us they exist because the human heart broke the world in the first place see the things that come in and break us from the outside exist only because the human heart first broke the world it broke circumstances it broke our experiences and so this is what Proverbs says also about the heart not only can it be crushed from the outside but the heart is wicked deceitful perverse crooked haughty prideful bitter envious hateful and addicted and so it's not simple it's it's not simple it's not saying one or the other it's not saying the extreme right or the extreme left in the book of James we read James chapter 1 verse 13 to 15 earlier James of course is the proverbs of the New Testament and it offers a psychology of sin in the book of Proverbs of the heart and in verse 13 this is what James says let no one say I am being tempted by God in other words what he's saying is no one can say that the fault of my sin is my circumstance circumstances James is saying does not cause us to sin let nobody say in any circumstance that they're being caused to sin tempted to sin by God verse 14 but people are enticed by their own desires desire conceived gives birth to sin in other words there's a difference in circumstances and what truly causes us to sin and he says that what truly causes us to sin is our deep desires in other words why do you sin you sin because you want to you sin because you want to your sin is not something that somebody made you do you sin because you wanted to it's a manifestation of the deepest desires of the human heart I use this illustration when I taught on James 1 last year but you don't remember so he's again many of you have taken like accountancy exams or law exams or investment exams or whatever any type of qualification and imagine that you go in and you bomb it you completely blow it and you fail and you get the results and if you're being honest with yourself you ask yourself why did I fail why did I do so poorly and you're being honest none of you are ever gonna say I failed it because they tested me if they wouldn't have tested me I wouldn't have failed right and that's true if you wouldn't have been tested you wouldn't have failed but the real reason what's the real reason that you failed it's your fault you didn't do the work you didn't prepare right it's not the circumstance it's not the test itself the

moment of the test is not the cause of our sin we sin we sin because we want to in other words circumstances give occasion to expose our sinfulness our broken hearts and Francis Spufford puts it this way what we're talking about here is not just our tendency to lurch and to stumble and to mess up by accident our passive role as agents of entropy in this world instead it's our active inclination to break stuff stuff here means promises relationships our well-being and the well-being of others you are a being he writes whose desires make no sense they don't harmonize we are equipped more far more for farce and tragedy than we are for happy endings you're a human and that's where we live normal experience the aching heart the promise breaking heart so there's two senses to the broken heart we have broken hearts because of the sorrows of this world the external circumstances but at the core Genesis 3 the human heart is what broke the world it's what created the circumstances the situation of sin and brokenness so Christians Proverbs can say with the left with the most extreme absolutely human beings are victims of circumstances in that biology and all sorts of factors play into the mess of human deep heart problems and at the same time with the right I

[27 : 21] can say it's my fault and both of those things are true at the very same time we don't have to choose one or the other there's no healing there's no healing without confession without being willing to say I'm at fault there's no healing without confession so fourthly a five and five is only one minute is there is there hope is there a cure for the broken heart is there a cure for this situation these are the three worst Proverbs in the book of Proverbs okay so brace yourself 1120 those who have crooked hearts are an abomination to the Lord chapter 16 verse 2 all the ways of a human being are pure in their own eye but the Lord weighs the truth the spirit and 20 chapter not chapter 20 verse 9 who can say I have made my heart pure I am clean from my iniquities of course the answer that's implied there is no one in other words what these three Proverbs tell us is that God looks beyond your external actions he looks at the deepest in most parts of your inner life the in the conversations you have with yourself your deepest desires and that every single one of us is found wanting it says here that he weighs our spirit in the balance in the scales of justice this is what the sermon on the mount was about so in the sermon on the mount of course Jesus is saying all of you think and say that you know you can honestly say I've kept it in commandments right I have not committed adultery people he was addressing people who were saying this I've not committed adultery I've not stolen I've not murdered and he's saying but God sees your inner life at the core of who you are sin is you have a crooked heart doesn't matter if you've never committed adultery you've done it in your heart right he's that's what the whole sermon on the mount was trying to was trying to teach that God weighs the inner self the inner life not just the smiles and the external manifestations of who you are he sees everything in addition to the three worst proverbs so to speak in the book of Proverbs there are three proverbs that refer really peculiarly to the tree of life I'm only offer you one a gentle tongue is a tree of life but perverseness breaks the heart in other words it's saying that a healing heart a heart that's being healed from corruption and brokenness is compared here to a tree of life and the meaning is pretty simple on the surface a gentle tongue is a tree of life a perverse tongue breaks the spirit in other words when you say a kind word to somebody it can actually heal their heart in a way but a perverse word a corrupted word breaks their spirit but that gentle word that kind word the author is saying is a tree of life one commentator says this is such an odd comparison to make the tree of life it's not just some random phrase random comparison this is an instance of cosmic nostalgia is an instance of cosmic nostalgia the author here is imagining through just the kindness of words a far off country a hope of a land beyond

the broken heart what's the tree of life the tree of life is in Genesis chapter 2 it's a sacrament in the Garden of Eden it's a sign and it's a thing and a symbol that speaks of blessed life of perfection of life without disease and death disaster and destruction a life without broken hearts and wounded spirits a kind word cosmic nostalgia of a time a tree of blessed perfections you may be interested in find out that in the New Testament speaks also of trees quite often oftentimes in the New Testament it does not refer to the cross by the name cross but it refers to Jesus cross the cross that Jesus Christ died on as a tree Paul does it all the time he speaks not of the cross of Christ but the tree of Christ in Greek and at the end of Genesis 3 Adam and Eve after they had sinned were not permitted if you remember to eat of the tree of life it was closed off to them in other words the blessed perfection of Eden is not yours because your heart is broken and then at the end of the Bible in Revelation chapter 22 there's another tree of life in the

Garden of Eden where the people of the city of God come and partake and what it's saying of course to us is that the only hope that your heart has for being freed from the wounds and the crooked brokenness is to eat of the tree of life that's the only hope that's it but the beauty is that the tree of life is not simply out there in Revelation 22 healing is not just entirely future the tree of life where else is the tree of life in the New Testament the tree the tree that he hung on you see when Adam and Eve said no to God when they committed acts of rebellion against God they chose to reject the tree of life and because of that Jesus Christ was hung on the tree of death so that once again you could partake of the tree of life where is the tree of life for the Christian for you right now in the 21st century it's to stand beneath the cross the cross is the tree of life Jesus Christ himself is the tree of life the only way that you can have a healed heart is by partaking of the tree of life and right now that is by faith that's by faith until you reach a better country a far-off land a land without the death disaster disease and destruction what does that mean to eat by faith chalm Thomas Chalmers puts it this way there's only two ways a person can overcome their broken corrupted heart a deep desire for the evil things of this world that they can overcome a deep desire for the evil things of this world they can either overcome the desires of their heart by their own willpower by leaving this world behind by separating themselves hiding avoiding all external circumstances of temptation or they can set forth another object even God in Christ as a more worthy object of their utmost desires so let me just close I won't give the full final point just one minute and I'll close the wise heart we what we're saying is this we do indeed have to repent and seek change for the problems in our heart and that happens first by eating from the tree of life himself the gospel Jesus Christ but the book of Proverbs doesn't leave us there it also offers an ethic it says that actually we we have to repent and act in order to heal our hearts even in this life while we wait for the future the garden to eat of the future tree let me just read to you a couple of these Proverbs and we'll close these are this is what you do now this is human action that you take in the meantime the purpose in a man's heart is like deep water but a man of understanding will draw those out in other words what it's saying is your inner self is a deep mystery but the wise person seeks to know themselves do you know yourself by faith in Christ walking towards holiness do you know yourself do you explore the deep recesses do you understand what your idols are what the problems of your heart are so that says the wise men seeks to know themselves and secondly a fool gives full vent to his spirit but a wise person quietly holds it back a fool a fool gives full vent to their spirit but a wise person holds it back in other words yes indeed your spirit remains corrupt you were simultaneously justified in a center you remain corrupt but the wise man holds holds holds back their spirit fights against it doesn't say anything everything that comes into their mind knows that they have corrupted and bent broken thoughts and conversations and drink even dreams and fights against them and does what they can to stop them and then finally and this is one of the few passages about addiction and the whole of Proverbs listen my son be wise set your heart on the right path do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat for drunkards and glutton's become poor and drowsiness close them and rags in other words the wise person protects their heart by knowing their idols and not putting themselves in position that the idols can take hold of you positions of addiction if you will so until you partake in both heart and body of the tree of life the far off country go with

Proverbs 23:19 here my sons and daughters be wise direct your heart in the way that it should go and it will be well with you let's pray father we ask oh lord that you would give us faith in the eyes of our heart that you would change our hearts that we would desire Christ more than sin that we would long for a better country and that in the meantime you would point us towards holiness by being wise giving us wisdom we ask for it in Jesus name I'm in