



Sermon: January 21, 2017

Verses Covered This Week

Proverbs 3:3 – 4

1 Peter 3:18 – 20

2 Peter 1:3 – 4

Numbers 14:1 – 3

Matthew 25:41

How many of you went to the Aggie basketball game yesterday? Man we played great! As a matter of fact, the basketball team sort of epitomizes, there's a subtle metaphor in the third chapter of Proverbs, in the passage we're looking at this morning that sort of fits the Aggie basketball team. They played really hard defense. Missouri's not a bad team. They had trouble coming down the floor. We pretty much outplayed them the whole game. And it was based on the fact that we did not permit them, if they scored, they had to really work at it. We didn't just allow them. We didn't just let them. We didn't just permit them. They wanted to, but we didn't permit it often enough that they won.

It's an odd little statement that we come to here and remember, I've been amazed at, I thought Proverbs would be totally without context, but the first three chapters, particularly, are an introduction to get us into all the topics that he's going to address. And if you remember chapter 2, there was this metaphor of wisdom crying aloud in the street, nobody wants to let it in, and they stop it, but I want you to listen to Proverbs 3, particularly beginning in verse 3. Now listen to what he writes because it's kind of that metaphor, but it's real subtle.

³Let not

In other words, don't permit it. In other words, these two things want to be in your life. God desperately wants to put these two things in your life. So you don't want to stop. Here's what he says.

³Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck,

There's the outside.

written them on the tablet of your heart.

There's the inside. And here's why.

⁴So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Now he says two things. He says, I want you to allow, go ahead, don't put any defense up, don't try to stop this. I want you to allow two things in your life. Number one: I want you to allow steadfast love. Now obviously we don't have that. The only, about I know maybe four Hebrew words, and one of them is this word. And the idea is a love that's steadfast from the Father. If it's there on Monday, it's there on Tuesday. If it's there on Tuesday, it's not less on Wednesday and more on Thursday. It's steadfast. It's like the Alamo in Texas. When those guys fought, they were steadfast. They never quit. They never stopped. They never shirked until they couldn't fight anymore. God's love is steadfast. It doesn't diminish, it doesn't dim, and it's constant. It is there at all times. It is an amazing thing to me. The hardest thing for me to understand in the Bible is that.

When I was a kid we used to buy, every kid bought in those days, model airplanes. We had the glue that you can't buy today because we weren't dumb enough to snort it. So we had this glue, now the problem with these little model planes, sometimes you got a kit that was really just, it was cut right, everything fit together, you put the wings on, glue them in, it looked great. And then there were others that no matter what you did, the wing wasn't any good. So what you'd do is take that thing, chunk it in the trash can, go down to the store, save up your coke bottles, you don't understand that, but save up your coke bottles, and come back and buy another kit and just start over. I do not understand why God didn't do that. I mean He builds this great universe for us, puts us on the planet, and here's what He basically says. He says, "Look, you can do anything you want. You can hang out. You can do anything you want. You've got one tree right here. One tree. You can have anything else on this entire planet that you want. You can't have that one tree." And for some reason we take that one tree. Why in the world did God not just look down and say, "Well let's just start over." And the answer is because His love is steadfast. He created us in His image and that love from the moment of that creation, locked down and has never left. It is so locked down at that moment that the Bible says that even before He made us, that Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. So what God already had said is, "I'm going to make a person in My image and My love is going to be so steadfast that if they mess up, I will create a way to get them back." That is a staggering understanding. But that's what steadfast love is. It does not alter. It's there on Monday, it's there on Tuesday, it's not less on Wednesday, it's not more on Thursday, it is completely steadfast toward every single one of us. Now I want you to bear that in mind. Number two: faithfulness that God is completely and always faithful. That is, when He says that He's going to do something, He has the capacity to do it. And because of His steadfast love, He will do it. There isn't anything He can't do. So when He makes a promise He always honors that. There is a faithfulness in Him that is constant. So you have this steadfast love, you have this steadfast faithfulness; it is a constant thing. It does not ever change. When He makes a promise, He honors and lives that out.

I get the scientific explanation, right. I get it; of a rainbow. Light waves are bending in the raindrops. I get all that. But at the end of the day, that is a promise from God to this planet that He will never again flood it like He did in the days of Noah. Now that's His promise. I don't care

whether you can explain it scientifically or not. And He has never flooded it since. You say, “Well wait a minute preacher. That proves He doesn’t have steadfast love. Because He took an entire generation of people and He drowned them. So where’s His faithfulness and His steadfast love?” I’ll tell you where it is. You stay in Proverbs, but I want to read you an interesting statement in the book of 1 Peter. I want you to listen to this.

¹⁸Christ sufferance once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God,

Now listen to this.

He was made alive in the Spirit ¹⁹in which He went and proclaimed to the Spirits in prison, ²⁰because they did not obey when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah,

He actually had a love that was so steadfast that even with the generation he cut off, after the resurrection, it has to be after the resurrection, there’s no gospel until the resurrection, so He didn’t do this in between death, burial, and resurrection. He did it after resurrection, but he went to Hell and He preached the gospel, but He limited it to the people in the days of Noah. There was other people there besides the people of Noah, but He limited it to those people because His love is steadfast and when He tells you He will give you a chance to find Him, He is faithful to that promise. So He is steadfast in both His love and His faithfulness.

Now watch what He says.

If you bind them on your neck, write them on the tablet on your heart. (have them inside and outside) ⁴You will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Now here’s the question. If I do decide that I will live inside the understanding that His love is steadfast and that He’s all faithful to what He says, why does that make me successful? Now I want you to listen to me carefully, OK. We’re going to cover a few verses, and this is not going to be, the last part particularly is going to be really difficult, but I think it’s key. So I want you to hear me all the way through. Don’t do the Baptist thing and I say something you don’t like and you cut out. Stay with me. Now why does it make us successful? Because this is what it says in 2 Peter. I want you to listen. 2 Peter 1:3. Listen to what it says.

³His divine power is granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴By which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,

Now here’s what he says. If I’m going to partake of the divine nature and I’m really going to win and I’m really going to make it and I’m going to be successful, I’m going to win in this life, I’m going to live out the call God’s got, the world’s not going to be able to conquer me, the enemy’s is not going to win. For that to actually occur, I’ve got to trust His promises, and the only way to be able to claim a promise from God and really stand on it, you’ve got to know two things. You’ve got to know He wants to take care of it, and He can take care of it. I’ve got to know He’s got a

steadfast love and I've got to know He's big enough to honor what He says. I want you to listen to the goofy Israelites. They're getting ready to go in the land, right. They have the worst thing you can do; is a committee meeting. They have a committee meeting. What's the old thing? You know what a camel is? A horse that a committee got hold of. So they have a committee meeting. And they come back and 10 out of the 12, "Ah, we can't go in the land. These people are really big, bad to the bone, can't really win." But he said, "Yeah, we can, we can take this. God said so." Now I want you to listen to the response of the people to that committee's report. Listen to this.

¹All the congregation raised a loud cry and the people wept that night. ²And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them,

Now listen to this statement.

"Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt!"

Now listen to what they just said. I want you to listen to this statement. Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Now he just, they just said two things there. He said, "The Lord's bringing us to the land because He doesn't really love us. If He loved us, we'd still be in Egypt where it was OK. And in bringing us to the land to fall by the sword, because He's not big enough to protect us." And so they lose God's promise and they wind up dying in the wilderness. You can't claim a single promise from God that you need to live this life unless you know two things. You've wrapped them around your neck. You've wrapped them around your heart. And that is, that His love for you is steadfast every single day and that there's not a single thing that He promises you, He cannot perform. So you've got to lock those two things away or you can't pull down what you need. Secondly, so number one, it's the only way you can have faith in the promises.

Secondly, now parents in particular, I want you to listen to me. Don't you dare put your children's worth in how well they can hit a baseball, or how well they can hit a golf club, or how well they can throw a football. Don't even put it in how smart they are. Every one of us in the room made to have a self-worth that is wrapped up in His steadfast love and His faithfulness. That I'm His child, I'm in His image, I've been adopted by God, and that love is steadfast and He is faithful to everything He says, and my worth has got to be tied to that. Listen, because everything else in this world will be lost. Everything else can be lost. I'm really a college football guy, but I watch NFL, generally the last quarter in the playoffs. So I'm watching last week, Minnesota and New Orleans, I hate both teams, but you know, there you go. So I'm watching the game. There's ten seconds left. That's all. Minnesota has no chance. They've got to, they're down 24 to 23, they've got to get a field goal. They have no time outs. They've got ten seconds. If they throw a pass and they've got to throw a pretty long pass to even have a shot at a long field goal. If they do that, if they catch a ball in the middle of the field, they just tackle them, times up. They can't win. It's impossible. So what New Orleans has done, they've got all their players on the sidelines waiting like this because all they've got to do is tackle them. The New Orleans coach, Sean Payton, is so sure of this that he's mocking and taunting the crowd. He's mocking them from his position;

taunting them. Because he knows they can't win in ten seconds. So Case Keenum throws a punt, you men will understand what that means, he chunked a punt, Diggs from Minnesota catches it right by the sideline. It's over. They tackle him, times out. He can't get out of bounds. There's two New Orleans Saints guys there. The safety comes up to tackle him and he misses him. And the dude falls, grabs the ground, looks up, there's nobody there. So he runs into the end zone, everybody except the New Orleans people go crazy. They're going nuts. There's no way this could happen. It's unbelievable. Now the kid that missed the tackle is a rookie. He had played well all year. He had made tackle after tackle; great plays all year. Played well in this game, except for one play. From that afternoon on every media outlet blasted him, "Man he whiffed. He missed the tackle. He didn't do this." He wept at the locker. Couldn't even hardly talk to the media because that's the problem. When you put your self-worth in something that can be lost in a second, because now when they talk about that kid, they don't talk about what good plays he made all year. They talk about the one play that he whiffed. That's now the focal point of his life. Don't you ever tie your kids' worth to how good they are in a sport. You tie your kids' worth to who they are in Jesus Christ. Because I don't care how bad the day gets, His love is steadfast. Whether they hit a homerun or don't hit a homerun, it doesn't matter; His love is steadfast. If that kid makes a tackle or he misses a tackle, His love is steadfast. It doesn't matter what you do or don't do, I want you to tie your worth as a parent, and particularly your children, to the fact that Jesus Christ has a steadfast love with you and He's faithful to everything He says. You can't lose either one of those things.

And then, thirdly, and this is the hard one. Now I want you to bear me out today. OK. The other reason this makes you successful, it's the only way you're ever going to have a correct understanding of grace. I want to read you something. You stay where you are, but I want to read you Matthew 25:41. Now before I read that, when I grew up, Baptists had two-week revivals. I mean that's the way it was. Two weeks. You went every night for two weeks. You whine about going one time on Sunday. It was every night for two weeks. And the evangelist was always goofy. I remember we had a guy that came in one year in Slidell, Louisiana. He came out one night and he had green shoes, green socks, green pants, green shirt, green tie, and a green jacket. I didn't ask about other parts of him, but I'm just telling you I'm wondering what other clothing color there was. But that's just ridiculous. That's insane. But he thought it was great. And he did what they did every night. He beat everybody up. Told everybody how bad they were, how wicked they were, you get that after two weeks. Buddy after about the tenth night you're going, "I'm sorry." You're running down repenting over stuff you've never done. I mean and when, and so when we came out of that kind of genre, particularly when the Jesus movement came along, we said, "You know, that's ridiculous." And so Billy Graham put out a tract that we never used until Billy Graham put it out, but basically Billy Graham's opening line of the tract was, "God loves you and has a plan for your life." And we fast forward to today where the concept is that yeah we need to be saved, but we're really not that bad. I mean we kind of missed the mark, we've made some mistakes, we haven't gotten, this is what I hear, I'm not reaching God's best. And we have all these little slogans that they really kind of say, "We're not that bad." Listen. I want you to listen to what He says. This is Jesus Christ, the same person who said, "God loved the world so much that He sent His Son. Whoever believes on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Listen to what He says. This is the words of Jesus Christ. Listen.

⁴¹“Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;’”

I want you to understand something today. If you miss Christ in the justice of God, you go where Satan goes because you're as bad as Satan. You see I make that statement and immediately half of you revolt. "I'm not as bad as Satan." Oh, yes, you are. He's in rebellion. You're in rebellion. This is not some flaw. This is not some little mistake. It's not that you've missed the mark. You are in rebellion against the Creator of the universe as surely as he is. And therefore in the justice of God you go where he goes. And God's a just God, you go somewhere else. But you don't go somewhere else. You go where he goes because you're as bad as he is and therefore you get his destiny because you're equal to him in your sin. "So, well preacher, thank you. I feel real better now." If you understand that and then you understand no matter how bad you are, even though you're as bad as God's most implacable enemy, that His love is steadfast to you, it doesn't stop, it doesn't change, it doesn't diminish on Tuesday, it doesn't get better on Wednesday, it doesn't stop on Friday. His love is steadfast to you and his offer of faithfulness, that you can be transformed in the blood of Christ, that faithful offer is there no matter how bad you are. And when you get that, that I really am bad, and I look at God and say, "God am I that bad?" Yes. So what does that mean, God? Then you're going where Satan goes. What, what can I do to get out? Nothing. What if I change? Doesn't matter. You've already committed rebellion and you can't change who you are. So, God, is there any hope? There's absolute hope. Well how is there absolute hope when I can't fix something that makes me as bad as Satan? How can I? I can't fix it. How can there possibly be hope? Because there's hope not in what you can do, but in what I've already done. The hope rests in My Son who before the foundation of the world was chosen to die on a cross in absolute splendor in absolute glory taking on your sin holding on to His righteousness so that your sin could be removed and His righteousness given to you. That is the offer I have on the table. Because My steadfast love and that offer will always be there until the day you die because I'm faithful to every promise I make.

And then, then if you really get that, that you're as bad as Satan, but His love is steadfast, and the offer is faithful, and you fall at the feet of Jesus Christ, and you ask Him to come into your life, listen to me, that is when you understand real grace. We have cheapened it. And it's not cheap, it was paid for by the most precious blood that ever walked this planet. His love's steadfast and if I understand grace in that sense, I'm as bad as Satan, I'm headed where he is, but God's steadfast love and His faithfulness has pulled me out of this mess, and not only has He forgiven me, He's implanted His holiness in my life, He's put His Holy Spirit in me as a down payment, so that Holy Spirit stays in me until the day Jesus comes to get me at my death. If you understand that, let me tell you what happens. When you understand real grace, not that you're a little off, you are in rebellion. When you understand that grace and you make that statement and you believe in Christ and you stand up and the enemy walks around the corner and says, "Hey man! I got an offer for you." You're going to look at Satan and say, "You foul being, get away from me. You don't deserve what my Father has given me. Back off." The reason we yield to the enemy is we've forgotten who our Savior is and we've so cheapened grace that we don't understand the depth of what it is. It is staggering what He did for us. The great thing is a kid can get it.

Last Sunday morning when I finished the sermon, talking to new members and my grandson Wes comes down. 7 in February. I think he just wants to shoot the breeze. And you never know with

him what's going to happen. So he comes down, he's following me around, and we sit down over here, and he goes, "Hey Pops. I think God spoke to me today." I said, "Really? Well let's talk to your mom when the service is over." So we talked and I gave her The Wordless Book that she took home and was going to walk him through a page a day. So Wes and I went and hit some balls Sunday afternoon. So we're coming back, he brought it up again, we walked through the questions that I do on Wednesdays with kids. Knocked them all out so Lauren took him home. She walked him through each page of The Wordless Book. Came to the end. They prayed and she said, "Wes do you believe Jesus came in your heart today or Sunday?" And he said, "He came in my heart Sunday." And then she said, "He kind of had this concept that God would speak to him when he needed to be saved, but He wouldn't speak to him anymore." So somehow in the conversation Lauren said, "Yeah, He's going to speak to you a whole lot more times." His face got real bright and he said, "Really?" Here's what He said. He said, "I think God wants me to go into my room and tell Him about my day." And then he said, "And I'm going to tell Him He's the best." At 7 years of age, that bit of grace has opened him to an understanding of a relationship and worship. A relationship is you just talk to Him and worship is you tell Him He's the best. And only a correct view of grace can give you that.

Let's pray.

Father, I still don't understand how You love us like You do. But I'm real grateful for that. You are the best because we were the worst. Thank You for Your love. I thank You for the honoring of Your own word to me. Father I ask You today, walk among this crowd and tell us what we need to know. In Jesus Christ name.