

The Crooked and the Upright

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles this afternoon to Proverbs 11. If there's someone that you want to please, isn't it true of us and God as well?

We should know what He delights in, so that we will do it. And know what He hates, what is an abomination to Him, so that we will avoid it. And sadly, even though the Word of God plainly reveals these things to us, we know what He wants of us, we know what He expects of us, because we see it in His Word, even though we know that.

Many times, we do just the opposite. We ignore it. We forget it. Like a husband that might know exactly what annoys his wife and does it anyway when he's not very happy with her.

Or a wife that does it to her husband. Do you wives like it when your husbands do that? Push the buttons that they know are there? Do you siblings like it when one of your brothers or sisters does something that you don't like intentionally on purpose?

How does that make you feel? Or do you think God likes it when we do the same to Him? When we do the things that are so clearly revealed in His Word, that are an abomination to Him, when we do them anyway, whether we're forgetting or intentionally provoking Him.

[1:42] God doesn't like it at all. It is an abomination to Him. And so these things must be avoided. The things that He doesn't like. Matthew Henry says, It concerns us to know what God hates and what He loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly, may avoid His displeasure, and recommend ourselves to His favor.

It doesn't surprise us that there are things that God delights in. But what is surprising to me is that He could delight in us. That He could delight in wicked, fallen sinners like you and me, who have done so much that is abominable in His sight, so many things that He hates.

And I want us to get a glimpse today of the blessedness that we have in seeing that God delights in His people. Are you a child of God today? Then God delights in you.

And we see it here in Proverbs 11 and verse 20. Notice it with me. Verse 20. The Lord detests men of perverse heart, but He delights in those whose ways are blameless.

Very simply, He sets before us what God loves and what He hates. He hates those who are perverse or twisted in their hearts, and He loves those who are blameless in their way. We could say the twisted of heart are an abomination to the Lord.

[3:02] Those blameless in their ways are His delight. It's well and good to see that God delights in His people, but if we don't know how to get to that point, it's no good. It's like holding a child's favorite treat before them.

They can see it. They can see it's good and they want it, but they don't have any way to get it. Well, God isn't like that. He holds up before us this prospect of Him delighting in us. It's a marvelous thing.

And He shows us how we can have that. He shows us that it's those who are upright in heart, upright in their ways, blameless in their path, those who are of integrity that enjoy His smile, His favor.

And He tells us how to avoid His wrath. Those that are crooked in their ways are the ones that are an abomination to Him. There's two kinds of people.

The crooked in their way and those that are straight in their paths. And there's two outcomes. Either the Lord's displeasure or His favor. And should that really surprise us in Proverbs? There's always two ways set before us in Proverbs.

[4:02] The way of wisdom that ends in life. And that's the straight way, the blameless way here. And life is described as God's favor upon us. And then there's the way of folly that always ends in death. And here that's the crooked, twisted way.

And God despising it, it being an abomination to Him. So we want to think about two kinds of people today and two very different outcomes. And the two kinds of people are those that are crooked in their ways and those that are upright in their ways.

Many times these two things are contrasted in the Scriptures. The crooked way is one who is a deceiver. It's duplicity. It's hypocrisy. It's claiming to be one thing when you're actually something else.

Saying one thing is true when the opposite is true. And the flip side is one of blameless heart. It's one who speaks the truth. It's one whose word is true. One who is what He says He is.

Maybe Solomon learned the contrast from his dad. We find these two things set against each other in Psalm 101. A Psalm of David. I will be careful to lead a blameless life. I will walk in my house with blameless heart.

[5:06] I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate. They will not cling to me. Men of perverse. There's our word. Men of twisted hearts shall be far from me. I'll have nothing to do with evil.

But one who is blameless and upright will keep his way away from the one who is crooked and twisted. Or Proverbs 19.1. Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.

You see, the one who's perverse, it's the fool. In contrast with the blameless one. Or better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a rich man whose ways are perverse. We looked at that last time when we were in the Proverbs.

Far better to have nothing in this world. To be poor, but to have a good relationship with God and with men. And have everything the world has to offer and have a broken relationship with God and men.

The one is very poor. The other is rich. Here we see it's better to be poor and upright. Blameless. Than to be rich and crooked and twisted. Or characterizes the twisted path.

[6:06] How can you know what identifies it? So you can know if you're on it. As we talk about these things, see if they characterize your life. This way of twisted. Perversity.

I'm not talking about a slip up here or there. You take straight to the Lord and repent. I'm talking about a pattern of life. Is this the way your life looks? And if it is, you should know.

I'll tell you right here. And the proverb has always told us the outcome is that you are an abomination to the Lord. Maybe there's some professing Christians here today. Who are actually living a twisted, crooked life.

You've tried to deal with your sin. But it always ends in failure. And you always go back to it. You even reached a point now where you don't feel a need or a desire to repent. Maybe it's a secret of yours.

Are you crooked in your way? See if the word of God finds you out. The marks of those twisted in their hearts. They're the deceivers. The words that they speak are lies.

[7:05] Do you speak truth or lies? Do you exaggerate to make yourself look just a little better than you are? That's the way of twisted perversity. Do you deceive your parents to cover up what you don't want them to know?

Tell them you're going one place when in reality you're going somewhere very different. That's a mark of a twisted, crooked path. You cover up the truth with a half-truth.

These are perverse. An abomination to God. Comes up with reference to false scales. In the Proverbs. Differing weights. And you get the idea of a man.

He's in the market and he's selling something. And he has a scale there. He's got a balance. And you put a one pound weight on the scale on this side. And so then whatever you're buying, you put a pound of it on the other side.

You get a pound of meat or a pound of grain. A pound of flour. And you put the flour on until the balance is even. But the crooked man, the twisted man, the man who's perverse in heart, takes his three-quarter pound weight.

[8:04] And he marks it one pound. And he puts it on the scale. And then he puts what you're buying on the scale. And when you're done, it's even. At least it says one pound weight.

So you take home what you think is one pound of grain. And he takes home your money for one pound of grain. When in reality, what you've gotten is three-quarters of a pound. And he's cheated you.

And he's taken what wasn't his. He said it was a pound, but it wasn't. He's deceived you. That's the twisted, crooked, perverted way that Solomon's talking about. And people do this all the time. They say things are one way. When reality is they're another, people do it on their taxes. They only report this much income. They say, this is how much money I made. When in reality, they made more. And so they don't have to pay taxes on it. And they've cheated and lied.

When you write down someone else's answer as though it were your own. Cheating on a test. Or taking someone else's work on a paper and presenting it as your own.

[8:59] We call it plagiarism. Solomon calls it twisted. Perverse in heart. We find in Proverbs that the sacrifice of the wicked is part of this crooked way.

Those who come in pretending to be righteous and worshiping God. But in reality, in their hearts are wicked. It's hypocrisy. You come on Sunday and everyone thinks you're a saint. But you've got them deceived.

Living apart from God. And you know it. God hates your worship. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. That's part of the twisted way. We could go on and on.

It's evil plans. It's those who are proud in heart. Those who justify the wicked and condemn the righteous. All an abomination to God on that crooked way that leads to death. But set in contrast to that.

What does God love? How can I avoid it? I don't want to be an abomination to God. What should I do? Well, there's the blameless way. The way of integrity. The upright way that's set in contrast. The Lord delights in those whose ways are blameless.

[9:57] What is a blameless way? Well, it's those who seek good. Who do what is right in the eyes of God. And delight in doing it. Proverbs 12 and verse 2. A good man obtains favor.

Delights from the Lord. The blameless way is marked by faithful dealings. Honesty and truth. It's the opposite of everything we've just said. He's honest in his way.

But as he puts a one pound weight on the scale. Then it's a one pound weight. If he gives you his word. He'll keep it. If he writes down the answers on a test. You can be assured that they're his own. And if he turns in a paper.

It's one that he wrote. If he makes a deal with you. He'll keep his end of the bargain. He's a man of integrity. And honesty and truth. That is the blameless way.

The upright way. It's a way marked by wisdom. As we might expect in Proverbs. It's a man of prayer. That's on this upright. Blameless way. Proverbs 15.

[10:51] 8 again. In contrast with the Lord. Hating the worship of. The hypocrite. The wicked. The prayer of the upright. Of the blameless. Is his delight. Those who come and worship.

In spirit and in truth. In genuine heart. He loves their worship. He delights in it. The one who prays. Is on a blameless way. We think of Paul. Always being in prayer.

And he writes about it. In his letters. I constantly make mention of you. What a delight. He must have been to his God. Who worshiped him in truth. And prayed to his God. So there's two different ways.

Two different kinds of people. On those ways. There's a crooked way. And there's crooked people. On that way. And there's a blameless way. And there's blameless people. On that way. We've just seen a few of the things. That mark it out.

And we could. We could look at all of scripture. If we wanted to. And everything that's contrary to God's laws. On that twisted. Crooked. Perverted way. And everything that he requires of us. On that way that leads.

[11:47] To life. The blameless way. But what is God's opinion. Of the people on those two paths. Well it's either delight. Or abomination.

What does God think of you today? Is he looking on you with a smile. With his favor. Or are you a stench in his nostrils. An abomination to him. And just as twisted and blameless.

Are often found together. So are delight and abomination. Proverbs 11. 1. The Lord abhors dishonest scales. But accurate weights are his delight. Proverbs 12.

22. The Lord detests lying lips. But he delights in men who are truthful. You see his delight is in the truth. His hatred against the lie.

And the contrast of course. Is because the two kinds of people. Couldn't be more different. Twisted. Or upright. Let's think about the abomination first. And that's the word that's used here.

[12:45] The Lord detests men of perverse heart. Men of perverse heart are an abomination to him. And we rightly associate that word with the enemies of Israel. As they're going into the promised land.

That word is used to describe the ways of the people that already live in the land. Their idolatry is an abomination. Their homosexuality is an abomination. All of their violations are an abomination in the eyes of God.

Detestable. Deserving as wrath. That's true of God's enemies. But sadly. What happened when the Israelites went into the land. Is that they began to adopt those ways. They began to do things that were abominable.

That were an abomination in the eyes of God. Things that he hated. His own people. Doing these things. And so. Instead of the warnings just coming against the nations. Declarations against them. The prophets have to begin to warn against God's own people. Here's what will come of you if you continue in this path. That is so detestable to God. So. Such a stench in his nostrils.

[13:42] And so Solomon. In his wisdom. Warns against seven things that are an abomination to God. Haughty eyes. Lying tongue. Hands that shed innocent blood.

Feet that devise wicked schemes. Feet quick to run to evil. Evil. False witness. Pouring out lies. Stirring up dissension between brothers. And. The Israelites had fallen into all of these things.

And idolatry. And many others. And so judgments were sent against them. It's a dangerous place to be. To be living contrary to the word of God. Because that is an abomination to him.

And notice that it's not just the way. This is a very strong proverb. And in some ways it ought to cause us to fear and tremble. It's not just the way of the wicked that God hates.

He doesn't just abominate the crooked path. What does it say? The Lord detests men of perverse heart. The people on that path are an abomination to him.

[14:44] That's not a popular thing to say. But it's the truth of God's word. If you are perverse in your heart. Going your own way. Living the life of a fool. You are an abomination to God.

You know what God does. With people. That continue in their crooked ways. Unrepentant. He sends them to an eternity of suffering and torment.

That will be unending and intolerable. You thought your perverse ways would bring you delight. You pursued them because there was some promise of pleasure on the other end. But that's the lie of the world.

In reality it will bring you suffering and death. Don't be deceived people of God. That the Israelites coming into the land were pretty full of themselves. All these nations are so abominable.

And what did they find themselves doing not much later? The same things. And we as God's people might tend to think the same way. I'm upright. I'm blameless.

[15:40] Look at all these. I can't believe the abominations that go on in our country. Horrible things that happen. And horrible things do happen. And people do horrible things here. Things that are an abomination to God.

But he who stands should take heed lest he fall. Beware. Lest like the Israelites we too. Fall into these things and become an abomination to our God.

If you claim to be a child of God. Guard your path carefully. That you might not walk in ways of crookedness. But ways of holiness and blamelessness. The crooked in their way are an abomination to him.

But what a beautiful contrast. He delights in those whose ways are blameless. Those who are upright in their way are his delight. And this is what I haven't been able to fully wrap my mind around this week.

And I'll just try to give you a little of the fruit of what I've thought on. The fact that God delights in us. That he takes pleasure in those whose way is blameless. That he loves us.

[16:42] That he shows us his favor. Instead of his wrath. We deserve to receive what everyone who's on that crooked way is going to receive. We deserve that. We deserve justice.

We deserve punishment. But to think that God delights in us. That he takes joy in us. He doesn't just tolerate us. He doesn't just put up with us. He doesn't just say, well, I'll save them.

But I really would rather not. I'll let them come into my house. But they can't sit on the furniture here. Because they're dirty. No, he loves it.

That we are his people. He delights in us. The fact that you are his child today makes him glad. He delights in those whose way is blameless.

I can't wrap my mind around that. But this is where we need to dwell every day. You feel disdain from the world? Do you feel despised by classmates and work associates?

[17:38] Do some in your own family reject you? All of that cold shoulder, that cold reception from them, pales in comparison to the warmth of God's delight in you. His smile upon you.

There's a couple of things that it means that God delights in you. It involves acceptance. And the word sometimes has that connotation. He receives you. You're accepted by Him.

You're not rejected. You're not sent away. We deserve to be sent away and rejected. But we're not. We're received into His arms. It involves protection. Psalm 5 and verse 12.

For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous. You surround them with your favor as with a shield.

God's delight in us is our protection. He delights in us so He will let nothing harm us.

He will allow no thing to come into our life that won't be for our good. Because He loves us. He delights in us. So He's not going to let anything touch us. That won't be for our good.

[18:35] He's going to work all these things together, in fact, for our good. You surround them with your favor as with a shield. So to have God delight in us is to confess with Paul, Romans 8.31, What then shall we say in response to this?

If God is for us, who can be against us? My God delights in me. You can't touch me. The world can't harm me. You can throw all your arrows at me. And I'll come away unscathed because God delights in me.

Well, if you've been around here for any length of time, you know that there's something a little amiss here. How can God delight in people like us and sinners like us?

We've done so much that's crooked and contrary to God and His Word. How can He look on us with favor? How can He accept us? And when we look at our children, and we can accept them with their flaws and with their imperfections, they're our children.

We love them. We can overlook certain things. Your children brings you a piece of art, something that He's drawn, and it's barely recognizable. And you think, is it a house?

[19:43] No, it's a dinosaur. Well, that's okay. And you can take delight in your child's work of art, even though it might look more like a house than a dinosaur. You can overlook all of its shortcomings.

You love your children that way, but God can't look at us and just overlook our shortcomings and delight in us in spite of all our flaws and imperfections. God can't do that.

He's perfect. He's holy. He can't just say, I'll delight in you anyway. There has to be some other way. He can't turn a blind eye to our abominations.

How is it that He delights in sinners like us? Well, it's through Christ, isn't it? God's delight in His own Son. Right after Paul writes, If God is for us, who can be against us?

He continues, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

[20:40] You see, it's in Christ that God shows His favor. He delights in His Son, and so He delights in all who are in His Son. You remember what God said about His Son?

When Jesus was baptized, and then again at the transfiguration, you remember what He said? He said, this is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased.

In Him I am delighted. He is my delight. And in Jesus, there was nothing that had to be overlooked, no shortcomings, that had to be passed over and pretend like God didn't see them.

There was only sweet perfection, and so God could delight in His Son, could accept Him in His sacrifice and His righteousness. And so now, He delights also in all who have trusted in His Son, all who are in Christ.

Paul's favorite phrase, those who are in Him. If God delights in Christ, then He delights in all who are in Him by faith. All who have trusted in Him, who are His children as well.

[21:44] And what a remarkable thing that is. He delights in His own Son, Christ. We understand that. He's perfect. But now in Christ, we too are sons. And He delights in us.

As He delights in His own Son. Psalm 149, in verse 4, For the Lord takes delight in His people. He crowns the humble with salvation.

And that's in Christ. And so, for those of you who have faith in Christ today, you who are His people, the favor that surrounds you is because of what Jesus has done for you.

That's a pretty good way to remember Christmas, isn't it? Why is it important that Jesus was born? Why is it important that He came into the world without Him? God wouldn't look on us with favor.

We would still be an abomination to Him.

We would still be in that crooked way. We would still be under His wrath. But with Christ, in Him, God's smile rests upon us.

[22 : 43] His favor is on us. Instead of eternal wrath, we have His eternal smile. Blessing indeed. Child of God, He delights in you today.

You are a joy to Him. Now the world will try to tell you the exact opposite. They will say that the twisted in heart will find a light and pleasure.

And that blameless ways are abominable, boring, and useless. That's the twisted lie of the world, isn't it? That's part of that crooked way. They're selling you pleasure.

But underneath, all you'll get is suffering and pain. The world is selling you a lie. They're on the crooked way. What would you expect? Would you expect them to tell you the truth? No.

They're going to tell you lies, and so they're going to hold out the crooked ways. Come in this way. And this is where it's at. This is where the real delight is. This is where the real pleasure is.

[23 : 40] Don't be deceived today. Don't listen to the lie. Don't believe the false sales pitch. Believe the Word of God.

Believe the One who can only speak truth. Don't listen to the ones who are under the influence of the Father of lies. What would you rather have?

Would you rather be an abomination to the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, who will judge all things when He comes with His holy angels? Would you rather be against Him? Would you rather have Him be against you, or would you rather have Him for you?

Showing you His favor. Delighting you. It's the difference in listening to the world and listening to God. Which voice will you follow today? I pray that if you're in the crooked way, God's wrath resting on you, that you will open your eyes and see the truth.

That only in the way of blamelessness, of uprightness, that Christ has walked before us, that He will enable us to walk behind Him. Only in that way is there life, and the favor, the smile of God upon you.

[24 : 48] May God expose our hearts. May He show us any ways that are yet twisted and need to be abandoned. And give us grace to walk uprightly in all that we do for His glory.

And so that He might continue to delight in us and Christ. What a blessed people we are. Walk away full of the privilege that we have of God taking joy in us as people through His Son, Christ. Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank You that You have sent Your Son into the world. and that You delighted in Him.

That You could say, this is my Son whom I love and whom I am well pleased. We thank You that Christ did not fail in His mission. That He did live a perfect life.

That He died an atoning death and rose powerfully from the grave, conquering death once and for all. You are sealed that You accepted His work.

[25 : 47] We thank You for Him because in Him we have life and light and righteousness. In Him we have Your smile upon us. And so we thank You today for Christ.

We thank You for showing us favor, though we do not deserve it. And we pray that You would come and show that favor to others today. Show them the lostness of their ways.

Show them where their crooked ways will land them. Do a great work in lost and dying sinners. Put them on that way that leads to life. And we pray now as we go from here to the health care center that You would bless the service there for the good of the residents that come to here.

We pray that they would be encouraged by the singing of truth and by the truth of Your Word that comes in song and in preaching. We pray that You would do them good.

That You would help each one that will sing or have a piece to perform. We pray that You would use it for Your glory and that You would bless it. And we pray that You would bless the remainder of our day.

[26 : 51] We thank You that You've given us this day to bring honor and glory to Your name, set apart where we don't have to engage in the things that weigh us down the rest of the week. May we delight in You on Your day even as You delight in us, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.