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Proverbs 14:12 "This Road Seems About Right"

November 18, 2018

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Proverbs Chapter 14 verse 12.

Solomon writes there, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

One thing for sure, we are all responsible to make a choice as to which way we're going to head, and wherever we end up, that'll be where we've chosen to go. Wisdom would dictate that we should be extremely careful to discover what our chosen path is going or where it's going, where it is leading us, where it will leave us in the end. Solomon, in writing to his son early on in this book, said to him in Chapter 4, I think verse 26, "Ponder the path of your feet. Make sure that all of your ways are well established." Think about where you're going. Well, this truth is certainly repeated in this one verse. It is repeated just a couple of chapters later in Chapter 16, I think verse 25, where the exact verse is repeated again, word-for-word.

There is a way that man can walk which seems right to him. The word "yashar" in Hebrew means correct or pleasurable or a good fit. The word for death is "maveth." "Maveth" is a word in Hebrew that means to cause death. It it's causative. He makes a choice. He thinks that is good. It ends up taking him out.

If you happen to be traveling down to Florida and you get on the 5 freeway -- oh, this is a dream -- and there's nobody on it, and you say to yourself, "Well, I know we're headed to Florida, but man, this freeway is moving along good. Let's just stay here," you'll never get to Florida. And it's kind of like that in life. If you just travel the path of least resistance without questioning where you're headed and the decisions that you are making, where is it taking you, you will end up in a foolish place. We should know where we're headed, the destination, the path.

According to the Bible, because that's what I'm going with, there are only two possible destinations where every path terminates: One is hell and one is heaven. There is no door No. 3 or choice No. 4. There are only those two. You won't simply be dead in the grave and

cease to exist. There is no purgatory or halfway house. You can't be reincarnated to try it all over again. There's no nirvana. You won't get your own planet. There's heaven, there's hell. Two destinations. If that is so, we could easily conclude that it's absolutely important that we are sure we're on the right road. And the Bible says so as well: There's a way of the righteous. There's a path of the transgressor. There's a right way and a wrong way to live.

By the time you come to the end or the last portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus will speak of those choices that have to be made, of a life of faith versus the path of sinner, or the path of the religious or the path of the self-righteous. And He challenges His audience to be sure that they know which road they're on, which path they've chosen, which way that they're going, and where it's leading them. Would they pick a path that is well traveled, is worn, favored by many, is popular, is overrun with crowds, or will they turn to Him as their only hope and follow Him down a very much less traversed road? The choice is fairly simple. Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 7, "Enter in by the straight or the narrow gate. Wide is gate, broad is the way that leads to destruction. Many find it, but narrow is the way and

difficult is the way that leads to life. Few there go thereby." I don't know how you misinterpret those words or somehow go, I don't know what that means. Oh, you know what that means. How can you not?

You may have experienced, if you are out witnessing these days for the Lord, a criticism that comes from the world oftentimes that says, "You Christians are just way too narrow minded." I take that as a compliment, because Jesus said narrow is the way. It's exactly how He would view this life. And rather than being discouraged by people criticizing you, be encouraged.

We learn from Jesus' words that the idea that all roads lead to God are a lie. All roads lead to some god, but only one road leads to the Eternal God. And Jesus said very clearly, "I'm the way, I'm the truth, I'm the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." He's the narrow gate He spoke about. He's the door into the sheepfold. When the Lord said to His disciples there in John Chapter 10, He said to them, "Anyone that would try to get into the sheepfold any other way is a liar and a thief and a robber." You can't get in by 100 different paths. There's only one door. He went on to say to them, "No stranger will follow, or they won't follow a

stranger. They'll flee from him. They don't know the voice of strangers, but they know the voice of the Lord. They'll follow Him." And then it says Jesus told them this because their understanding was lacking. They didn't understand what they were saying. And finally He just said to them, "Most assuredly, let me say this: I'm the door of the sheep." You want to know what the narrow way was? His name is Jesus. In fact, Calvary declares there's no other path that you can find towards God that doesn't go through the cross. That doesn't take into account the sacrificial death of the Son.

When Jesus was in the garden the night He was to be betrayed, sweating great drops of blood under tremendous pressure because He was about to take the sins of the world upon His shoulders, and the cost wouldn't just be His physical death, but separation from His Father, He prayed three different times over three hours, "Lord, if there's any other way." What other way? If there's any other way that man could find forgiveness for his sin, if there is any other way that man could find himself in the presence of God and welcomed there. If there was any other way to bring God together with sinful man, to restore him into fellowship, then Father, let's take that, because the cost for this is huge. God's response

from heaven was to send some angels to minister to His Son, to strengthen Him for the task at hand. It was Jesus who finally declared, "Not my will, Yours be done."

The world today, and unfortunately many churches today, are trying very hard to broaden the way, the one that God has established. They do it for a lot of reasons; one is to draw a larger audience, to be more appealing, to be more accommodating, to stay current and with the times. They preach a message of tolerance to sin in the name of love. They are extremely proud of the things that they allow. They love the fact that they are way broadeners - - I don't even know if that's a word, but it works for me. They're contemporary, as if the Bible was written once, but now it needs to be upgraded to match this generation's needs. No, we need to be upgraded to match God's ways. Jesus after speaking about the broad and the narrow path there in Matthew said, "You should be careful of the false prophets, because they'll come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they're like ravenous wolves. They're out to destroy you." Look, just because someone has the title "pastor" doesn't mean he's telling you the truth. Because there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof will cause death.

So what road are you on? Where are you headed? The decisions that you make, the rules that you follow, the priorities that you set, where are you headed? On what road do you find yourself this morning?

The Lord throughout the scriptures constantly challenges us to choose whom we will follow. Moses, when he stood before the two and a half million people or so, before handing off them to Joshua, said in Chapter 30 of the book of Deuteronomy "I call heaven and earth to be a witness against you today. I've set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; so choose life, that you and your descendants may live." Choose life.

Elijah challenged the people watching his conflicts with the -- or confrontation with the prophets of Baal, and he said to them, "Choose today who you're going to serve. What side are you going to stand on? Who are you going to stand with?"

Jesus gave a very clear and simple choice to us. Easily laid out, no confusing words, no small print. A choice between the many supposed ways to God and the one, the only one that He'd chosen, the ordination of His Son to be our Savior, the One that would get us into the doors

of heaven.

It's a choice between the camp of faith and the camp of works; the religious of the heart and the religion of a dead heart. If you go back and read Chapter 7 of Matthew towards the end as the Lord sets these two choices, He goes out of His way to keep limiting them to two. There are two gates, there are two destinations, there are two types of trees, there are two ways, there are two kinds of people, two kinds of builders, two kinds of foundation, two kinds of houses, and so it goes. It's important you see there's only two, because there's a way that seems right. There is a way that seems right. This seems about right.

It is interesting that through the ages, as you read back in history, the philosophers of every generation have sought to try to define right from wrong for us. God speaks to us about the straight and the narrow and the right. Man seeks to redefine what that meant by using contemporary or societal kind of models that they take into account things that we've learned now since the Bible has been written. We want to update. We want to improve upon that which God has said. Most philosophy classes will introduce you to the mores of society model.

It says by definition that if you're interested in determining what's right, look at what the majority of people in a community or society declare to be proper, and that will be proper. That should be proper for you. It's the majority opinion that rules. Can you imagine? And that the broader path, and the broader the path is, the more agreement for the misposition, the more correct the conclusion, which is absolutely contrary to what you find Jesus saying in Matthew.

We went to Holland several years ago, and we helped start a church. I grew up in Holland. I'm Dutch. I speak Dutch pretty well. I even stopped there a few years ago on the way to the Ukraine, where we were helping to plant a church, and tried to do a Bible study in Dutch, and I learned something: I know Dutch, but not biblical Dutch. The word "sanctification," I couldn't begin to tell you what that is. Everything else, I'm fine. But we had taken a bunch of folks to Holland several years ago from the church to help plant a church. We were doing some concerts in some popular places to reach out as this church was begun. And so we were there in the summer and I said to our group, "Hey, let's go down to the beach and hand out fliers." Really bad idea. I forgot that most of Holland has clothing optional beaches. So the pastor

was, "Come on, guys! Here we -- oh, my goodness, what am I doing?" My fault. But we had a good argument -- or not an argument -- a discussion afterwards when we got off the beach about the thought behind the fact that, would this be an okay practice, since everyone thought it was okay? They don't see it as sin. They live and let live. It was just something that we all, or they all, I should say, went along with. Would that then excuse their behavior or not?

This model, by the way, the mores of a society, doesn't allow for any absolute at all. The decisions of right and wrong are made by popular interests and support. But you have to believe, and I hope you would conclude on your own, that if you don't have any absolute and you're just driven by public opinion, you are going to be way off the road. You're going to be wrong. No matter if everyone -- but everyone's doing it. I tried to do with my dad one year. He said, "Well, if everyone jumps off the bridge, are you going to --" you know, dad argument.

Some people use the pleasure-producing model. They determine that because our chief goal should be to be happy, and after all, God want us to be happy, then anything that produces that for us should be right and

acceptable. But how in the world does that work when your happiness pursuit conflicts with mine?

Paul when he wrote to Timothy as Timothy was pastoring in Ephesus, wrote him a whole chapter, Chapter 5 in the first letter, wrote him about the help of the church towards widows. There were a lot of widows who needed help. They had no family to support them. So he made a list of things that would obligate the church to help support and help widows. And one of the things he said was, if the widow's just living her pleasure, she's just living for pleasure, then she's dead while she's alive. There's no sense taking her on. But that's the way he defined some lives that lived that way. So if it isn't the mores of society, then it's the popular I want to produce pleasure, and if it's pleasurable, then I want to be a part of it.

And sometimes, and most often, people turn to relativity arguments. I have this thing, if you want to witness to people, here's what you should do: Ask them if they're going to go to heaven, if they believe in heaven, and how they are going to get there, because that will open all kinds of doors for you to share. Our world has moved towards existentialism for a long time, but it theorizes

it thinks that everything that you do is relative, and the only one and the only person that can determine what is right for you is you. If it's right to you, then it's right for you. That's existentialism; right? We just leave it with you. And the teaching goes that we should all interpret for ourselves the things around us that would be right or wrong, that we should never make blanket statements, that there are no absolutes. And I should say this to you: Of that they're absolutely sure. They don't want any absolute, but that's what they're absolute about. They won't change that. I shouldn't impose my beliefs upon you, you shouldn't impose yours upon me. As long as my belief doesn't hurt anyone, then we should just live and let live, and the philosophy will work. By the way, that philosophy only works until you begin to explain that you are like you are because of Jesus. Then all of a sudden that falls apart.

You might recall life in the days of Noah. The Bible's pretty clear to define them for you. It's early on in the book of Genesis Chapter 6. It tells us that the world had gotten to a place where every decision was wicked, it was violence that covered the land, that people just did what they wanted, that the thoughts of every heart was just evil, and the Lord brought judgment.

But in reality, all of those models that philosophers used are destroyed in the flood. Everyone did what was good and what they liked, and everybody made their own decision, and every thought could be pursued without judgment, and they all ended up drowning in the flood.

The days of the Judges were just as bad. There's no king in Israel in that day. Everyone did that when was right in their own eyes. That mantra is repeated time and again in the book of Judges. Relativism allows for evil, and God brought judgment. And he'll bring judgment again.

Jesus said in Luke, "As it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man." Nothing has changed. We've come full circle. And man today seeks to adopt for himself what seems right to him and comes to that decision by following those same kind of arguments: What is the majority opinion? What is going to help me be happy, because that's my goal? Let me make up my own ideas. We have these clowns today for parents that won't teach them anything, because they want them to make their own decisions. I have an idea what we should do with these parents, but it's not in the Bible either.

There's a way that seems right to a man, but it leads to death. Our choices without God's help will lead us to difficulty. In fact, it's in the chapter right before this, Chapter 13 verse 15, and it says this: "Good understanding will gain favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard." It's interesting to me that people, they flaunt freedom to sin as the way of life, the way of freedom, and yet the Bible says just the opposite: You live a sinful life, you're heading for a hard life. Oh, being a Christian is so hard. No, no, no. It's the easiest thing you can discover. It's the way of life and peace and joy, and deliverance from guilt and hope for the future. Oh, it's not easy to live a Christian life, in a world that doesn't want anything to do with God, but it's the easiest life you can live. The other choice is even worse. The way of the unfaithful, the transgressors, is hard. And by the way, the word "hard" there is literally the word for concrete. It's permanent. To choose to follow man's definitions of right, ignore the ways of God, is to willfully embrace a difficult life with built-in suffering. And the Bible would tell you why. The built-in suffering is intended to get you off that road, because God doesn't want to lose you. So every week you run into something so the

Lord says, you see, this is hard. Get off the freeway, man. Make a U-turn. Come to the way of life.

Sin will wear you out. The divorce rate today is almost 54 percent. So how many exes suffer and the children get caught in the middle? The way of the world is a hard way of life. The attitudes that we have towards sexual activity and perversion today, oh, it's the joyful life of tolerance. No, it's the life of abortion and sexually transmitted diseases. The way of the transgressors, that's hard. It's not life. It's a hard life.

Alcoholics statistics, drug abuse. They had another article this week about the increase, the dramatic increase of suicide around the world. It's a hard life, man. Finding the freedom to do whatever you want might look tantalizing and seductive, but any, I think, willful observer would see that those ways are leading to destruction. Supposed to lead to freedom. It doesn't.

When I go around sharing with people, I always get confronted with the same answers: "How you going to get to heaven?" And most people say this, "It's like the golden rule path." They'll say things like, "I'm just trying to live a good life. I'm trying to be as honest as I can. And I'm a moral guy. I expect that God will

accept me. I want to show up on that day with all my accomplishments and get a reward." The problem is, that doesn't cover what you've already done. I can be as honest as the day is long, be a recognized civil leader, be a good citizen, have a reward, but the Bible says in no uncertain terms the only path that will lead to life isn't through my good works, which are filthy rags in God's sight, but through His good work on my behalf. Jesus said to the disciples -- in fact, I think it must have stunned them. He pointed to the scribes and the Pharisees, everyone would agree the most holy guys on the planet, and Jesus said, "See those guys? Yeah. You better do better than them if you expect to get to heaven." Matthew 5:20. I paraphrased, but that's exactly what it says. "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees." In fact, He said in Matthew Chapter 5 at the end of that first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, "If you want to be perfect, if you want to do this on your own, you be perfect like your Heavenly Father is perfect. If you want to stand, go stand next to Him. See how you measure up." He said to Nicodemus, "He who has the Son has life. If you don't have the Son, you don't have life." Two roads.

So the golden path, that's a big argument you'll hear a lot of times. Other people will say this -- it's almost a play on the same thing -- they will say, "Well, I'm doing my best. I'm doing my best." Oh, that's going to help for you. What if your best isn't good enough? "Well, I can only do my best."

If you go through the Old Testament, the feast day of Yom Kippur was held as a nation by Israel to recognize nationally their sin. There were a lot of offerings and sacrifices and bloodshed on that day, so that the people would always be reminded that they stood by the grace of God and not by their own good efforts or accomplishments. And so it went on for years. Today if you go to Israel on Yom Kippur, there aren't any offerings. In fact, Yom Kippur has become a day of remembrance, a day of just reflection. What used to be a looking forward to a Messiah that would save, now is a time of considering whether your good works and your evil works balance out. In fact, if you're in Israel two weeks before Yom Kippur, you might very well get a lot of help. You may get a free cab ride. The guy might, "Oh, you don't have to pay today." Someone might pay for your lunch at the lunch counter. And the reason is everyone's trying to balance the books. "Two weeks away. I've got to -- I'm leaning

this way. A couple more good things, I think I've made it." It becomes this works idea. I'm doing my best.

Look, if doing your best could get you to heaven, Jesus shouldn't have died. He should have just given us a little bit more rules to follow where we could do our best. And some people, when you share with them, will say this: "Well, I'm very sincere." And they operate on the premises that truth is of little consequence because the controlling interest with God is sincerity. They don't allow for anyone being sincerely wrong. As long as they're sincere. Yeah, but they're -- doesn't matter. As long as they're sincere. And I always say this to people: I want you to go back and read the Old Testament and see how these sincere worshippers of Baal and Moloch and Mammon, how they turned out, and what God did with these sincere believers; so sincere they put their own children in the fire. Fire. That's sincere. They couldn't have been more devoted than the worshippers that Elijah confronted. These guys got up early, spent the day screaming at the top of their lungs, cutting themselves with knives, lacerating themselves, jumping on the altar, all 450 dead by the end of the day. They were sincerely wrong.

Ask a Mormon if he is sure he is going to heaven, and an honest Mormon will have to say to you, "I don't know. I'll have to wait till I get there." Well, I would just suggest this to you: That's too late. You don't want to wait till you get there and find out you were wrong. But you see, there's a way that seems right to a man.

I want to know where I'm headed before I die. How about you? I want to be sure I'm on the right road thanking God that He wants me to know it as well. John would write in 1 John Chapter 5 towards the end of your Bibles, "This is the testimony that we've been given by God, and this testimony is eternal life, and this life is in His Son. And if you have the Son, you have life; if you don't have the Son, you don't have life. But these things I've written to you, that you might believe in the name of the Son of God, and that you might know that you have life, and that you might continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." That's what God wants. He wants me to know. You don't have to wait until you die to find out. Share that with your Mormon friend. You don't have to wait. You can turn to Jesus today, put your trust and hope in Him and the work that He did at the cross and acknowledge the resurrection and you'll have life.

So what road are you on? Truly. What should have been a goal for our life so often is set aside for just living it like the world does. Paul said there was only one God and one mediator that stood between God and man. It was the man Christ Jesus. And if you go back and read what we began with, Matthew Chapter 7, and you read about that narrow gate and all, you will see that from God's standpoint, your options are limited. It's not "Let's Make a Deal." You have to come through the gate. And there's only one gate and He has only One Name and He's only One Person and there's only One Name given among men whereby you and I can be saved. It's Jesus. And to come into the gate, by the way, biblically, you've got to come alone. Can't bring your buddies who encourage you on at the bar at 2:00 in the morning -- chug it, chug it -- they're not going to be there. You're going to be there by yourself. You're going to come through the turnstile alone. You won't be able to bring a lot of baggage with you. You won't be able to bring your self-will with you. You'll have to leave your self-confidence behind. You won't be able to drag your good works through the gate. You're going to have to just come by yourself.

When that rich young ruler who wanted eternal life came

before Jesus to ask about it, Jesus got right to the heart of the matter. He said to him this: "Empty your pockets, squeeze through the gate." All right. I'm paraphrasing again. That's what He said. "Sell all that you have. Come and follow me." But you see, the gate was too narrow for him. Salvation in the Bible is always the exchange of everything you have for everything He has. And that's the issue Jesus addressed with him, and that's the impetus of this verse.

The narrow gate requires repentance and faith, not works. The wide gate, on the other hand, represents all of the various means where which people have decided they can follow God. You can bring your friends, you can drag your baggage, you can bring your theology. None of it has to agree. You're all in this together headed, in fact, the wrong way.

Salvation is not accomplished by public opinion, a group vote, a group movement. Jesus comes to save individuals. You call on the name of the Lord and you'll be saved. It doesn't say you all. Just says you. Your call.

So what seems right to you? Because you're going to be responsible for the decision you have made. And here's

the good news: While you're still breathing, you can still choose life. The principle of this proverb is so important, like I said, it's repeated just two chapters down. So if you were to say, "Well, this road seems right to me," which one are you talking about? It's a good message for us, because we're running into Christmas, where a lot of nonsense is passed off as truth. So how about you speak up and go, "Hey, there's only two ways to go. I've been reading my Bible. Let me tell you what I'm learning." Ask people how they're getting to heaven. And you can talk to them about the golden rule method, or the pleasure-seeking principles, or the mores of society, or the Word of God.

Ponder the path of your feet. It's a good thing to know where you're headed before you get there.