

Perhaps you've heard of the American poet Robert Frost. I had to read some of Frost's poems in high school and college, and what goes around comes around. My two high school daughters are actually reading some of Frost's poetry in their school--at least recently they have. He has a poem entitled, "The Road Not Taken," and I'd like to quote from it.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept [marked] the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

You see what's happening there--Frost is describing a traveler on a path and he encounters a fork in the road. There's a choice to be made and all things being equal, which is the poem's emphasis, he chooses one. Just four stanzas, this poem, and the traveler is considering in the fourth stanza all that has occurred in his life from that point to present as a result of the choice and wondering about the road not taken. Perhaps Frost was saying that we're a result of our choices, which quite frankly puts a lot of pressure on our choices. The first time I read this poem I think I keyed in on what I always key in on when I read this poem. In the fourth stanza when the author sighs there's a heaviness to his looking backward. He sighs. There's a tendency to do that with ourselves for the choices we make. We do that, don't we? We look backward. We look behind in life. And too often the backward glance is coupled with regret, and that regret settles over our hearts like a dark storm cloud, that, if we're not careful, has the potential to paralyze us from any forward movement. Or worse yet, to not walk in the way of wisdom that our heavenly Father calls us to. The apostle Paul picked up on this human tendency that we have to look behind, and he wrote his letter to the Philippians and he said, "Not that I have already obtained this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to make it my own. I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers," he said, "I do not consider that I have made it my own yet. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I read this great quote from a Christian blogger this week. This lady, Anna Broadway, was speaking as a single woman about sexual purity in the church, and the sentence in the third or fourth paragraph down really jumped off the screen at me. She says this, "The race is run looking forward no matter how badly you ran the last mile." The race is run looking forward no matter how badly you ran the last mile. That's the way we run races. We have to. Where does this tendency to look backward come from? Now I'm not certainly saying that we shouldn't learn from our mistakes. You know the quote that I'm about to brutalize in my paraphrase—but those who don't consider the mistakes of the past doom themselves to repeat those same mistakes. There is good and necessary reason to consider the life that we've had to this point. But I wonder if it could be that the future is such a daunting thing that sometimes we don't have the nerve

to consider it. And if the future seems daunting, and I'm not arguing that it is not a scary thing going out on the road, how can we move forward? How can we even press forward as the Scriptures encourage? How can we press forward, then, with the confident hope that there's not only purpose on the other side of the next moment, of the next hour, of the next day, of the next month—but that purpose is established by the God who not only knows the future, but ordains all that comes to pass as well for his glory and for the good of his people.

The passage that we have before us today is Proverbs three, verses one through twelve. I believe what we have in this passage is a wise, elder father expressing to a young, foolish son how to live his life looking ahead, not looking behind—pressing forward with purpose, not with backward glances of regret. Our young people have a lot going for them, don't they? A lot of energy, creative ideas, they play video games that we can't play because our thumbs work anymore—arthritis and all that—however, I don't envy our young people in this one thing: you got a whole lot of life ahead of you. And sometimes that is a very daunting thing. That's what this son has ahead of him. And each of us, whether we're young or old, all of us alike, we have the same choice each morning: will I wake up and walk in the way of wisdom today, will I serve the creator today, or will I wake up and serve myself. Will I wake up and do what seems best to me, feels right, or will I wake up and submit myself to the wise, godly instruction of a loving heavenly Father. So with that in mind let's read from Proverbs three, God's word for us.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for the length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; but fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

God's word for us. You may recall that it's been noted several times in this series on Proverbs that in the first seven chapters of this book we see somewhere in the chapter—usually at the beginning, but somewhere folded in there—a pleading, the desperate beseeching of the younger, foolish one to heed the instruction, to pay attention, to hear, to treasure up, to remember, to be attentive to, to hold fast to, to obey the teaching of the older and wiser one. And this passage is no different. But I want to suggest that we can read Proverbs 3:1-12 with a little bit deeper meaning, because what I believe—and this is not new to me, commentators for many years have seen this here—is this is the language of covenant. What you have is, in verses one and three, five through six a, seven, nine, and eleven, you have the older, wiser father giving the obligations, the admonitions, with obligation and instruction. And then you see in verses two and four, you see in six b and eight, ten and twelve, the potential for reward if those obligations are met. This is the language of covenant. This is what it looks like when a covenant is established, the parameters of the covenant are set up. The obligations are laid out in detail and then the reward is in view as well. I like the way that the Westminster Confession of Faith chapter seven, paragraph one puts our condition. It's in keeping with this idea that we're looking at this passage in the way of covenant. Listen to this paragraph concerning you and me: The distance between God and the creature is so great that even though rational creatures are responsible to obey him as their creator, yet they could never experience any enjoyment of him as their blessing and reward except by some voluntary condescension on his part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant." And the Confession goes on to lay out the different covenants and the way that God interacts with us, but you see what's happening there? The distance between a holy God and us is so great that if there's ever to be any connection at all it has to be initiated by God. And once initiated by God, it is worked out by God. That's the whole beauty of covenant. God makes the covenant and he keeps the covenant, and then he calls us to his covenant community. Praise be to God. So we have covenant language in view. You know the story, the history of our redemption as a covenant people. God called Abram, he said Abraham, I'm now changing your name—you'll be the father of many nations. Then we see the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, and we see how the people of Israel—the people that God set his affection on and never wavered from that affection—how they ended up in slavery in Egypt. And God goes to Moses in Exodus three. He has heard the cries of his people, now a vast number—from Abraham and his wife Sarah to a vast number—God says to Moses, you need to go. I've heard the cries of my people, I'm sending you to Pharaoh to tell him to let my people go. And Moses debates with God a bit—I'm not eloquent of speech, I can't do that

Lord—and I've sent you. And then Moses gets to that question, when they ask who it is that has sent me, what shall I say? And God answers Moses this way: in Exodus three, verse fifteen God said also to Moses, "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." The word used in that verse, LORD—capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, is the way that our English translation translates the covenant name of God, Yahweh. We just read Psalm 146. Go back and read Psalm 146 this afternoon and see all of the things that Yahweh does, that the Lord does. He cares for the fatherless and widows. He lifts up those who are downhearted. He makes sure that the arrogant do not win. All of those things the Lord accomplishes. And that's the name that God gives to Moses. I am the covenant-making God. I am the covenant-keeping God. I am the Lord. That is my name forever, and thus am I to be remembered through all generations. And that covenant is established. The honor of God's name is on the line. Because if the covenant is not kept, then his name is sullied. God makes the covenant, he keeps the covenant. Now it's enough to just take Proverbs 3:1-12 and say, this is the sermon for today: Yahweh is trustworthy, therefore trust him. Now go, and live your life. That's enough because of who God is. But the word of God is deserving of much more devoted attention by us today, so I want to try to make five points that the father is giving to the son. Five points that I believe the Scriptures are communicating to us as God's covenant people. Follow Yahweh, trust Yahweh, fear Yahweh, honor Yahweh, and receive the love of Yahweh, the Lord.

So we see the first point the father is making: follow Yahweh. He is trustworthy, follow him. My son, do not forget my teaching. Let your heart keep my commandments for the length of days and the years of life and peace they will add to you. Here we have another appeal. We see this throughout the first section of Proverbs: don't forget what I'm saying to you! It's the application of 'don't forget,' but it's much deeper than just don't forget. Don't forget means to remember, and to remember means to obey in the Old Testament. Now we understand this principle, right? Don't forget to buckle up when you leave the parking lot—it's got a law behind it, safety involved. Don't forget tonight's trash night, right? In our household we forget that happens once a week and we build up a mass of trash. Don't forget, tonight's trash night. Don't forget, next Tuesday's your wife's birthday, right? Don't forget that one, husbands. And that's what's happening here. The Father says don't forget my teaching, but it's much deeper than just the simple implication. He says do not forget my teaching—hide it deep in your heart. He's not talking about just the head knowledge of what the instruction is, he's not talking about 'I have an awareness of this' or a rote memory of what's being said. He says these things should be kept deep in your heart. Let your heart keep my commandments. Let them dwell in your heart richly. Grasp them tightly and don't let go. It's always about the heart, the heart is always in view. Why? Because the heart is what will be judged on the day of reckoning. Jesus Christ made that clear in the Sermon on the Mount. You've heard it said, Do not murder, but I tell you that if you've hated your brother in your heart you've committed murder already. The outward act didn't necessarily have to occur for it to be a guilty verdict in our heart. So the father is calling the son to do something that is not superficial. It's from the core of who we really are. The take-away here is that obedience comes from our core. Obedience springs forth from the heart, and the heart that has been regenerated by the Spirit of the living God is a heart that can obey. The psalmist said, I've hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against God. How does the father's instruction get deep within the heart? The son must determine to be deliberate and dedicated to the intake of God's word. You see it there in verse three. It says, "Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart." Diligence, dedication, deliberate. In Deuteronomy six, verse four, we encounter similar language. This is where we read the Shema: Hear, O Israel: The LORD thy God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength—right? And what follows after that command Moses records in Deuteronomy six, that you shall teach these things diligently to your children and you shall—All these words I command you today shall be on your heart, teaching them diligently to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise. You will bind them as a sign on your hand, they shall be a frontlet between your eyes. And write them on the doorpost of your house so that you will be immersed in this good and godly instruction—a dedication to a study of God's word is what's being called for here. Now listen, it's not an automatic thing: I read my Bible, I did the right thing. But we do know this, that if you don't intake God's word the possibility of doing the wrong thing is much greater. So it's not an automatic thing, but there is no way that we can live according to God's way unless God's word dwells richly within us. The father's admonition is for that, but see it—see the grace. It grounded in the character of a kind and merciful God. You see the two terms that he uses there in verse three: love, 'hesed' and faithfulness, 'emet.' These are words that are constantly paired together, they're always employed as a couple. The lovingkindness, the covenant faithfulness, the faithful love of our great and merciful God. And so we see the father instructing his son. Don't forget my instruction;

bind it to your neck. Make sure it dwells rich in your heart. But make sure that when it dwells there, it dwells there with a view that God is kind and merciful. We see the pair of words employed in Exodus 34. The LORD, the LORD, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital B, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love, 'hesed' and faithfulness, 'emet.' You see the picture there is that when we intake God's word we're to do so as those who read this word as a love letter. We've been sought out. We've been found. We've been rescued. We've been delivered. We've been sealed. We've been promised that wedding feast of the Lamb, and we are being completed every step along the way. That's the way we read God's word. We're sinners who justly deserve punishment, but God has chosen to crush his only son on our behalf. So he says, my son, follow Yahweh, follow him! But follow him with the view that he is the covenant-making God. He's kind and merciful. He saved you. He's worthy of you following him.

And then the father says, trust, trust in Yahweh. Verse five and six—a very familiar passage, we've probably memorized it in vacation Bible school, we have it needlepointed over some fixture in your house, maybe, maybe not. Trust in the LORD, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. Trust in the covenant-maker, the covenant-keeper with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, he will make your paths straight. You see who the actor is? He will make your paths straight. That's the promise, that's what comes with it. But what are we to do? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him. You see, trusting another involves the idea of first knowing that other and knowing that other to be trustworthy and deserving of your trust. It's a relationship, because once we know that the one is trustworthy, we can place our trust, and then that trust action follows. We will step out in faith when we trust the trustworthy one. Dana, my wife, and I—we've been known to walk around the trails that our Columbia Association has placed all through the woods in our town—all these asphalt wooded trails that are wonderful to walk on. And if we're walking on a familiar trail, no problem for me—can do it. If we're walking unfamiliar territory, I need Dana. Dana has usually already gone online—I don't even know how to go online and find the map of the covenant, community stuff. She finds the map, she maps out where we're going, even knows the distance, you know, how much whining she'll hear from me, and all that stuff. It's all calculated. And when we start on those trails that are unfamiliar, we get to a fork in the road. I don't wander aimlessly off, up some end into a cul-de-sac and intrude on somebody's barbecue or down the hill to a muddy creek bank and get my clothes all messed up. I turn to her. Which way? Left or right? And she says, this way. And we go that way. Knowing that she's trustworthy I can not only ask, but then when the answer comes I can follow, step out in faith, and go the way that we are to go. You see the illustration? As we walk in various journeys in this life that we have, while we breathe this air, while we walk this globe, the father's admonition for us is to trust God, trust Yahweh. He is trustworthy. He already knows the end of every trail, he knows all contingencies, and we can embark on the journey because he knows the end. The college group is reading through the Kevin DeYoung book, *Just Do Something*, and DeYoung makes the point in there about we can risk because God doesn't risk. He knows all things. He knows the end so we can take risks. We can follow, we can venture out to be obedient. In that same book DeYoung lays out the three ways that we look at God's will. The will of decree is one way. The Scriptures speak of the hidden will of God. It is the secret mysteries known only to God. It is that decree which he has decreed before time began, that he is accomplishing and no one can thwart that plan. And then there's the will of desire. The will of desire shows up in what God has clearly stated in his word, he's clearly communicated to us. We sit around and wring our hands and pull our beards and 'what is God's will for me? Should I murder, should I gossip?' You know, it's very clear, God's will. Should I hate, should I lust, should I steal, should I be discontent, should I grumble and complain, should I slander, should I witness my faith to others, should I care for those less fortunate than I am, should I give generously out of what God has blessed me with? See, God is pretty clear on a lot of stuff. It's when we forget that God has spoken and has not stuttered that we get all messed up. He's already told us what his will is for our lives. Trust Yahweh to lead you. He will make our paths straight. It's when we get into the more personal nature, it's when we flip things topsy-turvy and we make things more a priority—our wants, our desires—than they should be, than God's wants and desires. When we flip and say, shall I go to this school or that school, should I marry this person or get married at all, should I buy by the blue Jeep or the green jeep. You know. Right? God has spoken about what's important to him, he's laid it out. And the father says, listen, you can trust in the character of the God who made you and the God who made and kept the covenant to lead you in the way that you should go. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, acknowledge him with all your heart, and he will make your paths straight. It sounds like the words that Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount, when his hearers on that hillside probably had their priorities topsy-turvy. He said, don't worry about what you're to wear or what you're to eat. He said in Matthew six, Seek first, though, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. You can trust God to lead. I've adopted Kevin

DeYoung's definition of anxiety from this book. He says anxiety is simply living out the future before it gets here. That's what anxiety is. Anxiety is simply living out the future before it gets here. God knows the future. I know God. That's the plan. Straight pathways is what the son should expect. I don't think that means a life that is void of sorrow or tragedy or valleys. Rather, I believe that what he's saying there is, that is a life that is the straight and narrow where God assures his people of his blessing, even and especially in the time of valley.

So the father says, follow Yahweh, trust Yahweh, fear Yahweh. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be a healing to your flesh and a refreshment to your bones. The father knows the nature of the son. He repeats the admonition to not depend on his own understanding. He says, do not be wise in your own eyes. I don't know if any of you have ever tried to eyeball something that's supposed to be level—hanging a picture. I don't recommend it, eyeballing it, wise in your own eyes. And if you've committed to saw with a real sawblade a real piece of wood that you purchase with real money, I especially don't recommend trying to eyeball what's level. Because it's not going to work. We need a standard that is outside of ourselves to tell us what the rule is--what the rule is for that cut or for that picture. If we attempt to set the rule aside and go it on our own, it ain't pretty, folks. And that's what the father is making sure the son knows. That's why he repeats the admonition: Don't be wise in your own eyes. It's futile. The father calls the son, and we are called as well, the only rule to inform our faith and to guide our practice is the word of God. This is the rule. This is the standard. This is what makes our paths straight. And the reminder, then, is to fear God--to have a reverent fear of the living and holy God, and to turn away from evil. The Scriptures tell us to hate that which is evil and to cling to that which is good. Shun evil; run away from evil. I had a friend in seminary, my best friend, and we're still good friends to this day, but he used to always—he was a single guy, and if he'd see, like, a girl coming, he'd say, "Danger, Will Robinson, danger! Danger!" He's channeling the robot from TV's *Lost in Space*. You kids have to Youtube that later, but your parents can maybe explain it to you at lunch. "Danger! Danger!" Sometimes I felt like my buddy was making light of the fact of temptation, you know, pretty girl walked in..."Danger, danger!" You remember? The intensity of our shunning is the degree to which we take serious the admonition to shun something. The degree to which we take seriously the admonition to shun something is the degree to which we understand the ability of that something to cause our destruction. The degree to which we take serious the admonition to shun something is the degree to which we understand the ability of that something to cause our destruction. I don't like mushrooms. Don't put them on my pizza, don't put them in my salad, and don't hide them in my casserole, if it's all the same to you. So I shun mushrooms. I know you don't, and it will be on Facebook this afternoon, all the mushroom lovers out there with all the dark chocolate lovers. I get that. But there's a big difference between me shunning mushrooms and me shunning cyanide. And you get that. We get the difference, because okay, I get the desire to have this mushroom or not, the intensity of that 'shun' is not very intense. But if somebody says, this casserole's filled with cyanide, would you like a plate, I'm not going to entertain the thought of the Ritz crackers crumbled on top of that. I'm going to run from that casserole because it has destruction inside. That's what the father is telling his son. The father says you need to have a healthy respect, a fear, even, of the Lord, the Lord. A fear of the Lord leads to a life that is quick to shun evil, to run. Remember Jesus's words in Matthew chapter ten. He said don't fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. That's the admonition of the father. Fear the Lord, shun evil, do not be wise in your own eyes. God's word has spoken about what's good, what's proper, what's pure, what's holy, what's fitting for you and for me as his covenant people. We need to be in that. What is the result of shunning evil? The father gives it. Look at that: Health. He says, health to your body and a refreshment to your bones. The idea of refreshment here carries with it dried out bones that need moisture, they need water. They're arid, they're brittle, they're breaking, and they need to be moisturized. But I don't think we're supposed to read this on the surface, that it's a 'Get out of Sickness Free Card' like the Monopoly game. But rather there is a general principle here, because we know we suffer illness, we know we suffer sickness. But the principle goes deeper; it goes to the heart again. Those who shun evil and fear God can avoid suffering the deep pangs of guilt that wrack our body with all manner of ailment. That's what the father is saying. Listen how the psalmist puts it in Psalm 32. He says blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit. Listen to what the psalmist's condition was: For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you. I did not cover my iniquity. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. Listen, beloved, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Now in a room this size with this many people, I'm convinced that there are some of us who need to acknowledge sin before the Lord. Remaining silent--can I just communicate this as a brother, as a fellow pilgrim, as a fellow confessor--remaining silent is a blueprint for wasting away

inside. That's what we're being called to. Listen, the beauty of this is that God already knows, he already knows all that we've done, thought, said, or could do. He wants you to acknowledge it. Free you from the heavy heart of unconfessed sin.

So, my son, follow Yahweh, trust Yahweh, fear Yahweh, honor Yahweh. Honor the Lord with your wealth, he says, and with the first fruits of your produce. Then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine. How about that? How about that for an image? He says, honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all that you produce. We have a computer program. I don't use it because I don't know how to do it. I just bring receipts and tell Dana when I've used our debit card and she plugs all this stuff in. So that at any given moment I could say, hey, could you give me that really depressing printout that I can get from you? She's got in there how much we spend on groceries, how much we spend on gasoline, how much we spend on mortgage, how much we spend on BG&E, how much we spend on entertainment, all these things. I could print that off at a moment's notice and see how I spend my money. How do you spend your money? How is your wealth resourced out? I'm sure that this son is probably not where he's going to be in terms of wealth, but the father knows that if he gets this principle in at the foundation, it will last him a lifetime. And so he says this: Honor the Lord with your wealth, give to God your firstfruits. Make sure that God knows your heart in response to all that he's blessed you with. And again we have this vivid imagery of filled barns with plenty and wine vats that are bursting. Come on, really? Can we get an 'Amen'? In a Presbyterian crowd? But the picture there is of contentment. He says, listen, if you honor Yahweh with your wealth, if you give to him your firstfruits, all the other stuff you spend your money on is going to take its right perspective, and you'll probably see you're not to spend your money on the stuff that you used to spend. Why? Because you're honoring God with your resources. And as you do, a sense of contentment will overwhelm your heart, you'll realize that this place is not our home. We've got a mansion. So that little place on Sohap Lane? Okay, the bathtub has a leak underneath, I got that. But the mansion doesn't. And that's what I'm looking forward to. He says, honor Yahweh.

And then he says, receive Yahweh's love. You say, wait, no he didn't. He said do not despise the Lord's discipline. That doesn't sound like love. It is love. We know this principle. You wouldn't take a three-year-old toddler out there in the parking lot after church lets out and just let him go. You wouldn't do that. If you did, we'd tackle the toddler first and then we'd tackle you. You'd run after that toddler. You'd say, hold on, there, partner, buddy, Timmy. You'd take his hand and if he rebels against that, you'd have to discipline him. Why? Because you love him. Three thousand pounds of machinery moving forward at some fifteen miles an hour is not going to do well—Timmy's not going to do well if he's out there competing against that car. You know that, and so you discipline him if he rebels against that. You don't want that to happen. God knows. And so he says, listen, I'm going to correct. I'll correct you through this life. I'll lead you in the way of everlasting life, but there'll be correction along the way. We started with a passage from Paul where he said none of us have arrived. We press on, we're works in progress. And there are ways, the writer of Proverbs says, that there are potentially in this passage, three ways to respond to the Lord's discipline. The first is, we can despise it. We can make light of it, blow it off, no way--I'm not submitting this. We do that with authority. You go down here and you speed and you see flashing red lights in your rearview mirror. It doesn't matter what upbringing that patrol officer had—he was probably a good kid or whatever, but I can guarantee you that somewhere along the line when he makes a traffic stop he's going to be the recipient of the castigation of the person sitting there, who was just trying to get to work on time or whatever it was. This person simply represents the law being enforced—that guy outside the window. But the ire, the despising of the correction comes so quickly to our hearts. We probably did in that illustration just now—we probably just identified with the driver. Yeah, how dare that cop pull him over. Doesn't he know he's going to be late for work? That's how easily we despise correction. The second option is also potentially deadly. It says you could be crushed by it. Don't become weary, don't let it be so oppressive that you can't function anymore. We do this all the time. We see this in the prophet Hosea's recording all the tears that they cry, they wet their pillows at night because of all the tears...but they're crying because they got caught! There's no repentance there and the Lord is serious about true repentance. He says that's not repentance, it's just people that didn't want to be corrected. That's why they're crying. So we could despise the Lord's correction, we could make light of it, blow it off. We could be crushed by it, become weary under it. Let me say this to all of us, myself included, that whenever we're tempted to either to despise the correction that has come our way or be crushed underneath the weight of correction, it reveals something about our heart. It reveals that our heart is not resting in the righteousness of Christ. If Dana tells me, you're late for dinner again, and I rear up and go all defensive, I'm resting in a righteousness that I'm a good husband and good husbands aren't late. But she tells me, you're late again, it was inconsiderate to the family, and I'm resting in Christ's righteousness, I can hear that

correction. I can receive it with gladness because I don't want to be inconsiderate to them. I want to love them. And so resting in Christ I can receive correction, be corrected by it, receive again by faith the forgiveness because I'm not a faithful husband. I'm not a good husband. I'm not the godly man I consider myself to be. Forgiveness full and free purchased by Christ on the cross and righteousness that he clothes me in so that they need a husband and a father. So now clothed in Christ's righteousness I can be that. That's what it means to live by the gospel. And that's what the father is telling the son. Listen, don't despise the Lord's correction and don't lose heart under it, don't become weary under it. Why? Because God is loving you. When you're corrected, when I'm corrected, God is loving you. He counts as his sons those whom he corrects.

So we have this before us: Follow Yahweh, trust Yahweh, fear Yahweh, honor Yahweh, and receive the love that Yahweh has. Now there is a potential. Here a preacher came, he took the pulpit, he opened God's word, and he laid out five things for you to do. The potential is that you feel a heavy burden right now. Well, let me submit to you the beauty of what Christ has done in the covenant is that Jesus Christ has done all of that perfectly. And he invites you to receive his record of righteousness and to confess that you don't follow, trust, honor, fear, and be corrected the right way. That's what it means to walk into the future walking in the way of wisdom, resting in the covenant. Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, please help us. As your sons and daughters we want to approach the future with a boldness knowing that you know the future for us, and we know you, and so we can take those steps forward, we can press forward, strain forward. And Lord, we ask that you would use these songs of response now to remind our hearts that you are the sovereign God who ordains all that comes to pass, and all that you ordain is a righteous thing. So the future is known to you and we can trust you. And Lord, we pray then that you would be our vision and that you would lead us to that place where ultimately we see you face-to-face, our high king of heaven, the victory won, praise be to Jesus, Amen.