

# Proverbs 11:30

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 September 2012

Preacher: David MacPherson

[ 0 : 00 ] verses 1 to 5. We'll stand to sing, and we'll remain standing for prayer. The miracles of thy grave, how flesh and love may be.

My precious soul longs in and near, near it's thy course to see.

My very heart and flesh cry out, O living God for thee.

Behold that shadow findeth that, and haste it in to rest.

Let us swallow also for herself, and marches her happiness.

[ 1 : 56 ] In thy own altars, where'er she stayed, her young ones for free reign.

O thou, O mighty light of hosts, who art thy sovereign king.

Blessed are you, thy house that dwell, they ever give thee praise.

Blessed is the man whose strength of art, in whose heart are thy wings.

Let us pray. Our God, as we voice these words of the Psalmist, we are struck in considerable measure as to how often they don't really reflect our own soul.

[ 3 : 38 ] How often it is not the case for us that we long for you, that our soul cries out for you, in that urgent manner that the Psalmist expresses in these words that we have sung.

And we pray that by your Spirit you would revive us, and create in us that sense of our great, great and continuing and urgent need of yourself.

And that our great desire would indeed be to commune with you, and to be in and enjoy your presence with us.

We pray that that would be true for all of us. We know that as we gather, we gather with different circumstances that are true to each of us, as we look ahead to the week that has begun, and what it holds for us, no doubt very different for all of us.

But we pray that we would be united in this desire to commune with you, and to worship you, and to hear you, as you speak to us through your word. Lord, we pray that you would bless us, that you would hear us as we ask for you to bless us, and that you would answer us in a manner that is unimaginably more than all that we ask or even imagine.

[ 5 : 05 ] Lord, as we pray for ourselves, and your felt presence with us this evening, hour of worship. So, we pray that that would be true for all of your people, whatever they gather across our city, and indeed to the very ends of the earth.

Lord, we pray that you would forgive us our sins. We fall short in many ways, and we are conscious of that and recognize that, and come before you confessing that we are sinners, and as sinners we sin often against you.

And as we confess, so we also ask that you would forgive us. Be with us, then we pray, in all that we are about this evening. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are going to read the Bible in the New Testament in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and in chapter 5.

Galatians chapter 5, we will read from verse 16 through to the end of the chapter. It is on page 1172 in the church Bible.

[ 6 : 19 ] Galatians chapter 5, reading from verse 16. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious.

Sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery.

Idolatry and witchcraft. Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like.

I warn you, as I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

[ 7 : 40 ] Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Let us beg the first place. Let us live by the Spirit. Let us preach the Word of God. The Word of God. We are going to sing again and we will sing, to God's praise, Psalm 32. The first seven verses of Psalm 32.

On page 38 in our psalm books, Psalm 32, verses 1 to 7, singing to the tune, Arlington, how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose debt is canceled in God's grace, there's no deceit in Him. We'll stand to sing verses 1 to 7 of this psalm.

O bless the one who has received forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose debt is canceled in God's grace, there's no deceit in Him.

[ 9 : 32 ] When bright and silent all my bones, with groaning prayer born out, beneath the hand I felt enchant, both day and night my strength was sad, as in the summer drought.

Let my life bear my sin to you, the guilt that lay within.

I said, O Lord, I not transgress, and you forgive when I confess, you pardon all my sin.

So let that God be grace to you, I knew who I should be found, surely even with my sleeping past, and light in waters rising fast, you'll keep them safe and sound.

You are my hiding place, O Lord, my truth, my truth, my truth, my glory, dear.

[ 12 : 20 ] You make me safe in troubled days, You circle me with joyful grace, When you have set me free.

We'll bow our heads again in prayer. Our God, we gather again this evening, and approach you again this evening, that we might praise you for all that you are, and how all that you are finds expression in all that you do for us.

We recognize that you are a righteous God, a God who is true to Himself, a God who always acts in character, and we are witnesses to your actions as a righteous God, a God who justly and rightly punishes sin, a God who justly and rightly forgives the penitent who comes seeking forgiveness, for you have promised so to do.

We thank you that we can share the testimony of the psalmist, who was able to declare with a tone of celebration, you pardoned all my sin.

And we thank you that that is true for us also. All our sin, in all its gravity, in all its variety, in all its persistence, you are a God who has forgiven each and every one of the sins of your people, as we have been enabled by yourself to come and confess before you.

[ 14 : 20 ] And not only do we look back and recognize that all our sins have been forgiven, but we are able to look forward also, conscious that we will continue to sin in this life, and we would not wish to be blasé about it, but we recognize that that is the reality.

But we look forward to that also in the confidence that you are a God who will be ready and able and willing to forgive us. And we do pray that you would help us to flee from sin, that you would help us to sin less and less.

And we do look forward to the day when we will be completely delivered from this body of death, this body and this life that is so prone to and guilty of sin.

Lord, we thank you then for your goodness and your pardon of us. We thank you that you are our hiding place, our true security. We thank you for the beautiful language of the psalm that you circle us with joyful praise.

We thank you that as we gather as a body of your people, we know something of that, to be part of a worshipping people who sing praises to you, our God.

[ 15 : 41 ] Lord, we pray that you would be pleased to bless us in all that we would seek to do, and very especially all that we seek to do in your name.

We commend to you some of the activities that lie ahead of us in the days before us in this week that has begun and into the following week. We thank you for the opportunity we will have next Lord's Day together with God's people from other churches here in the city, that together we would

give a tangible expression to the communion of the saints, that we are indeed but one people of God.

We pray that you would bless us and that as your word makes very clear that where your people gather together in harmony and in unity, there you command a blessing.

We would know something of that, something of the wonder of the God of heaven commanding blessing upon his people. We pray for all the churches that will be represented.

We thank you for our brothers and sisters at Gilcompton who will host us on this occasion, and for the folk from Tron Terrace Baptist who will be leading the service.

[ 16 : 58 ] We pray that you would put in our hearts a real desire to be there and to participate and to raise our voices in united praise to you.

We pray that this would be but one visible symbol of the unity that we enjoy, and indeed that you would place upon us a desire to seek more and more means and avenues whereby we can give expression to our unity in your Son, Christ Jesus.

So we do pray for that service. We think of our gathering in the morning when we will participate in the Lord's Supper. And we do pray that you would bless that sacrament that will be celebrated in our participation in it.

We thank you for the opportunity we will have to gather on Saturday at the congregational outing. We pray for good weather. We pray that all the plans that are in place would be able to be brought to fruition well, and that a good time would be had by all who are able to be there.

And that this, as with other occasions like it, would be an opportunity for us perhaps to get to know folk who we don't know so well. And that it would also be an opportunity for those who maybe are connected in one way or another to the congregation, and who are invited, that they might come and participate and feel more and more a part of us.

[ 18 : 37 ] We think of the many families connected to the church through the work of Little Lambs, and the invitation made to them to come along. And we pray that many of them would do so, and that would give more of us an opportunity to meet and to welcome such into our family.

Lord, we do pray then for that occasion. We thank you for the brethren there at the Baptist Church and cults, and for their kindness in allowing us to use their facilities.

Lord, as we pray for ourselves, so we pray for your church across Scotland, and that across Scotland you would also guide us and direct us to a more tangible and genuine desire to express the unity that we enjoy in your Son.

Lord, we are conscious that as a church, as the Christian church in Scotland, we have been guilty of not valuing that unity as we ought.

We are so quick and prone to divide and splinter and go our own way and do our own thing. And we know that we project an image, an impression to the world at large that is far from being a healthy one.

[ 19 : 58 ] We pray you would forgive us for this. And we pray that it would be our desire to seek to heal wounds that there might be, and to cross bridges that can be crossed, and bring ourselves as your people more and more together.

We are a small people, and the task that you have given us is a great one. And we would be incapable and are incapable of doing it by ourselves, but together, and with your help, the task is doable.

Lord, we do pray then that you would help us in this matter. As we pray for our own land, so we pray for the world and for your people across the world. And very especially, we would bring to you, as we are in the habit of doing, and we pray that it would be a continuing habit.

We bring before you those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Whatever they might be, and whatever the circumstances of that might be, whether they be cases that have reached the attention of the world's media, or perhaps, and very especially those that are hidden and unknown to so many of us, and yet known to you.

Lord, we pray also for those of our own number who have been called to service across the world and in other countries.

[ 21 : 27 ] We think of Clive and Ruth Bailey, who have returned this week to Peru. We thank you for the time they were able to spend in Scotland. But we pray especially that you would help them as they take on, once again, their duties in Lima, and very especially in the school there.

We remember Frank Green having returned to Thailand. And we pray and commend to you the work among the Karen people in the refugee camps and indeed beyond. And pray that you would own and bless and prosper that work. Heavenly Father, we pray for them and mention them by name, but in representation of many others, who have been known to us and who, in one way or another, have gone out, sent by us into the work of the mission field. And we pray for them and pray that you would be with them and uphold them all, as indeed that you would uphold us as we seek to be missionaries where you have placed us here in this city. These things we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. Now, before we turn to God's Word to consider one passage within it this evening, let's sing again.

[ 22 : 46 ] And we're going to sing Psalm 18. Page 21, Psalm 18. And we will sing verses 30 to 36 of this Psalm.

We'll sing to the tune Duke Street. Psalm 18 and verse 30. Verse 30. For perfect is the way of God. No flaw is found within His Word. To all who put their trust in Him, a shield and refuge is the Lord. Psalm 18 verses 30 to 36. And we'll stand to sing. Sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Good song before the two big four years, risen of Israel, as we are delighted and Arnold, as we are dwelling of the two lucky four years, dese■ for us. For who is God except the Lord? Besides our God who is the Lord, He is the God who makes me strength, And in perfection but I won.

[ 24 : 21 ] He raised my feet, my feet of fear, Upon the high sea makes me stand, My arm shall bend the bow of cross, In shields of war be changed by hand.

Your right and his knee victory, You stood the bow to make me great, So that my footsteps do not fail, You stood the bow to make me great, This past week that has concluded has been a very hectic one, A very enjoyable one, But hectic for one reason or another.

Some of you will know that I had the opportunity at the beginning of the week To participate in the Positively Presbyterian conference that's run by our denomination. And that allowed me to gather with other ministers and other folks as well in Larbert, From Monday through to Wednesday.

And then for family reasons that many of you will also be aware of, We headed down the road to Edinburgh on Friday to drop off our wee boy at university.

And so that filled up a good part of the week. And I confess, if confession it is, That in the circumstances I was unsure until quite late in the week what I should preach on this evening.

[ 26 : 34 ] In the morning sermon I had had an idea of what I would be dealing with earlier on. I won't say it was ready, but what I was going to deal with was in my mind. But for the evening things were far from clear.

And participating in the conference, of course, was an opportunity to maybe come up with some ideas, Or maybe have my mind directed in one direction or another.

And that is, in effect, what happened. One of the papers that was presented at the conference was presented by the Reverend David Court, Who is a Church of Scotland minister in Edinburgh.

And his topic was preaching in the light of eternity. And he developed that theme very helpfully.

And as he did so, it was, I think, for all of us present, A salutary reminder of the importance of keeping eternal realities to the fore. Not only in preaching, but also in life.

[ 27 : 37 ] And as I gave a little thought to the matter that was being addressed, A familiar text came to my mind. And I'm sure as I say what it was, it will be familiar also to you.

And the words that came to my mind were words that we find in the book of Proverbs. He who wins souls is wise. He who wins souls is wise. Now, I think most of us will be familiar with those words of Scripture.

But I wonder how many of us are able to say what the first part of the sentence is. Because that is the second part of a sentence there in Proverbs.

And there's a first part that I think most of us would be a lot less familiar with. So, I don't know if anybody knows what that first part is. If you do, well, give yourself a pat on the back.

But for those of us who don't, then you can look up in Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 30. And we're going to be thinking about this verse this evening.

[ 28 : 46 ] As I say, drawn to it by the words in the second half of the verse. But as we consider it, bringing also to bear on the matter the words that introduce what then follows.

So, Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 30, page 645 in our Bibles. And there we read, The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. I want us to think briefly this evening about this noble and urgent task of soul winning.

And to do so in the context of this verse in which the words are found. I want to consider the matter under three headings.

First of all, I want us to notice together a necessary condition and an established means for soul winning. A necessary condition and an established means for this task of winning souls.

[ 30 : 00 ] The next thing that I want us to notice together in the text is an implicit and solemn truth. In the text there is, I think, implicitly this solemn truth that we want to notice and consider.

And then finally, and it really follows on from what will have gone before, an urgent task to be performed. This task, this mission of winning souls.

Now, before we do embark on looking at these matters under these headings that have been identified, there is maybe some merit in just briefly clarifying a point with regard to the language that is used here in the book of Proverbs.

And in this verse in particular, Proverbs is, as we know, part of what we know as the wisdom literature.

It is poetic language. And this language of winning souls is poetic in its form.

[ 31 : 15 ] And I say that because in the light of Scripture, in the light of the revelation in its totality that we have, God's revelation in Scripture, the biblical concept of salvation is a broad one that is, of course, concerned with men and women in the totality of our beings.

Not just our souls, not just our souls, but including our physical bodies. Our physical bodies will also be the object of God's redeeming purposes.

We look forward to glorified bodies as we are inhabitants of the new heavens and the new earth. Indeed, the biblical vision of redemption encompasses not only men and women being saved, not only men and women in all their, in their entirety being saved, but also it encompasses the redemption of creation itself.

And so, redemption in the Bible is a very broad vision and concept. And as we speak, as we will this evening, because that's what we have in the text, as we speak of soul winning, of winning souls, it's not to espouse a narrow and unbiblical conception of God's redeeming purposes, but simply to recognize that the word soul, as it is used here, is being used in a poetic or, if you wish, symbolic manner as representing all that we are as men and women.

And so, to win a soul is simply a way of saying to win a person. That is the intention and that is what is meant.

[ 33 : 00 ] But having briefly clarified that, if indeed it was necessary to do so, I want to move on to consider this matter of winning souls under the headings that we've already mentioned.

First of all then, a necessary condition and an established means that we find in this text. The two parts of the verse, if we can speak of them as two parts, I think we probably can speak of them as two parts, but the two parts of the verse or sentence, do not stand in glorious isolation.

Maybe, for us, that is often the way it's been. I certainly speak for myself in saying that I'm very familiar with that language of, he who wins souls is wise.

Very familiar. And have in my mind, or have had in my mind some idea of what that means and what's involved, at least in some measure. But what went before is something that I had given very little thought to at all.

So, in that sense, there was a division, certainly in my own thinking. But that is not the intention of the writer. These two statements go together.

[ 34 : 10 ] They are intimately, and I would say causatively related. The one follows from the other. And in what way? Well, I think the manner in which they're connected is that what is being said is that the necessary condition, in God's estimation, for being a soul winner is a life that is fruitful.

If we are to win souls, it is necessary that our lives be fruitful lives. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

It's not that both of these things are independently true, though they are, but that they are connected. A fruitful life as a necessary condition for being a soul winner, certainly an effective winner of souls.

In the absence of fruit, we lack the authority to declare a message. We lack the power to deliver it in the manner that we ought.

We lack the means to win souls. Why is fruit so important in this task? Well, first of all, we can say is that the fruit we bear is a natural extension or product of who we are.

[ 35 : 28 ] It's not like an item of clothing that we can choose to put on or take off as we see fit. The question of the fruit that we produce and that we bear really is a necessary expression of who we are on the inside.

If we are right on the inside, that must find visible expression on the outside, in the fruit that we bear. The fruit that we bear reveals who we really are.

Now, it may be possible in certain circumstances and for a certain amount of time to give an impression that is not a true reflection of what's on the inside.

But that is a game that can't last forever and certainly does us, nor anybody else, any good. Sooner or later, ultimately, what we are on the inside will find expression on the outside, in the fruit that we bear or that we fail to bear.

So, that in itself, I think, is one way of noticing how this matter of bearing fruit is so intimately connected with winning souls and why it is rightly presented and reasonably presented as a necessary condition.

[ 36 : 49 ] The other thing we can say about bearing fruit, which is the subject of this first part of the verse, the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. The second thing we can say is that the fruit that we bear, like any good fruit tree, is intended for the good of others and consequently is likely to be involved in the matter of winning souls.

A fruit tree bears fruit, not for itself, obviously. It bears fruit that others would enjoy it, would profit from it, would be fed by it.

It lives for others. That's its purpose. That's its reason for being. And really what we are being told here is that as those who, by grace, are known and described as the righteous, those who, to use New Testament language, are Christians, ourselves, if we are indeed Christians, then that is why we live.

That is our purpose, that we would bear fruit for the blessing and benefit and profit of others. And again, I think it's not difficult for us to see how this relates very intimately with the matter of winning souls.

You know, if we are Christians who bear fruit that is of blessing and a profit to others, then it is reasonable to imagine that we would also be Christians who would be used of God to win souls.

[ 38 : 17 ] So, bearing fruit is what we might call a condition for winning souls, but I think we can also describe it as a means to winning souls. I think I've just really said something that relates to that.

You see, it's not just that being fruitful is a condition that God has arbitrarily established. And of course, He has the prerogative to do so. He, if He wished, could do that.

Well, if you want to be a soul winner, you have to bear fruit. That would be fair enough if He simply made that condition. But it's not just a condition, it's also the means whereby we are likely to win souls.

Fruit bearing is a principal means for soul winning. That is how we win souls, as we bear fruit for the good and blessing of others.

So, not only a condition, but the means whereby we can perform this task. Well, we've talked a lot about this fruit that we bear.

[ 39 : 16 ] But what is this fruit? Well, certainly, in answer to that question, it's legitimate to think of the language that Paul uses and that we've read already in Galatians, where he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit, what we might call spiritual fruit.

And we can just remind ourselves of what he says there in Galatians 5, verse 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Surely here we have a profile of one who would be a very effective winner of souls. One who bears this kind of fruit.

And as no doubt has often been highlighted here in the language of Paul in Galatians, he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit in the singular. Not as if this were a menu of virtues that we can pick and choose from and say, well, I don't really meet all of them, but there's one or two there that more or less are true of me.

No, the fruit of the Spirit, this is a package deal if you wish. This is a description in its entirety of the Spirit-filled Christian. The Christian who will be in God's providence and with God's help, a winner of

souls.

[ 40 : 40 ] So, I think we can, in answer to the question, what is this fruit, turn to the passage there and the list, if you wish, or the description of Paul concerning the Spirit-filled believer.

But, I think we can go beyond that, though you might say that in itself is very broad in what it says. But I think we can go beyond that in this sense, that the way the word fruit would be used in the Old Testament, I think would probably have carried a broader meaning in the sense of including the good works that the righteous perform in the service of others.

It could include the prayers of God's people as they intercede for others. It could include the occasions when we share with others verbally the good news concerning the gospel, concerning Jesus Christ with others.

All of these constitute a fruit, the fruit of the righteous, the fruit of the believer. And what we are being told is that that fruit will be a means whereby souls can be one for God.

So, you have Paul's identification of the fruit of the Spirit as a reasonable and legitimate answer to the question, well, what is this fruit that we are to bear? But we can broaden that in the manner that we've just done.

[ 42 : 14 ] So, these aren't separate categories. They go very much together, if you wish. The actions that we perform, the prayers that we pray, the witness that we bear, will be a natural outflowing of the characteristics that we find there in Galatians.

So, that then, first of all, in this regard of winning souls, a necessary condition and an established means.

But I move on to the next thing that I want us to notice as we think about this text, and that is that the text also carries within it what we might call an implicit and solemn truth.

Well, what is this implicit truth? Well, the implicit truth is that souls are lost. There would be no need to speak of winning souls if they were not lost in the first place.

He who wins souls is wise. And what is taken as a given by the writer, what is implicit there, is this solemn truth, that souls are indeed lost.

[ 43 : 26 ] Now, the Bible is crystal clear on this matter. The Bible is crystal clear on recognizing that among all men and women, all of us gathered here, and indeed all who are inhabitants of this fair city, and indeed men and women across the world, all of us fall into one of two categories.

We are either forgiven sinners, or we are unforgiven sinners. We are either those who have been enabled by grace to put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, or we have not done so. We are either saved or lost. We're all non- ethnicity of one or other, or no middle ground. Now, it may well be, and indeed it is, impossible for us to establish definitively where one or other person might be.

That is something that is beyond our capacity. I don't know if we would want to be able to do that, but what is clear is that there is this division that the Bible makes very clear.

And there are many who tragically fall into that category, if you wish, of those who are lost. What does it mean to be lost?

[ 44 : 49 ] We speak of the lost, but what does it mean to be lost? Well, we could say a few things in answer to that question. And to be lost is to live a purposeless life, the eternal life that is a gift of God, while encompassing all of eternity, begins in the here and now, in the living of a new life, life in all its fullness.

This life in all its fullness is denied to the lost. They don't experience that life. They're lost. But more tragically than a purposeless life is a tragic death.

And there is no death more tragic than the death of a lost soul. No death more tragic than the death of one who has reached that point without putting their trust in Jesus as their Savior.

Because the opportunity for putting our trust in Jesus, the opportunity to be found, to be saved, to be won, is an opportunity that is afforded in this life.

And the door of opportunity closes when we die. And so, to be lost speaks not only of a purposeless life, but a tragic death.

[ 46 : 09 ] And of course, a tragic death that leads into also an eternity without Christ. And again, the Scriptures are clear. The destiny of the lost is a Christless eternity, without God and without hope forever and ever and ever.

And that is a hellish prospect. And in the face of this reality, is it possible? Well, it is possible, even though I pose the question rhetorically.

Is it possible for us to remain unmoved and passive and silent? We must win souls. He that wins souls is wise.

He has grasped the eternal implications and consequences of a lost condition. And in the words of Jude, we must be engaged in snatching others from the fire and saving them.

So, there's this implicit truth, and a solemn one, that there are many who are lost. But I think there's also another implicit truth that I just want to quickly notice.

[ 47 : 21 ] And the other implicit truth is that we as Christians, as believers, in the language of Proverbs, the righteous, we are able to win souls.

Evidently, that's taken as a given also. It would make no sense to say he who wins souls is wise if that was something we couldn't do. We can win souls. You can win souls.

Now, I say this, and I stress this, because when the matter of soul winning or evangelism is broached, we are perhaps, or some of us perhaps, are often keen to make clear our credentials as card-carrying Calvinists and solemnly affirm that we can save no one.

It is God alone who saves. And this is true. But there remains the God-declared truth, that he who wins souls is wise.

God has determined that as we fulfill His conditions, as we make use of His established means, and as we rely on the working and power of His Spirit, we can and we will win souls.

[ 48 : 37 ] If I can just quote one commentator on this verse, Charles Bridges. He recognizes this reality that it is God who saves and yet who has chosen to use the likes of us.

And he expresses it in this way, He only, referring to Jesus Christ, He only, who purchased them by His blood, can win them to Himself.

That is the lost. Yet has He set apart men and women, I would add, for the work of drawing souls to God and to the love of Him, sweetly gaining and making a holy conquest of them to God.

So we have then in this verse not only a necessary condition and an established means, but also an implicit truth, or indeed two implicit truths. Firstly, that men are lost, but also that we can be winners of souls.

Which leads us to the final thing that I want to mention, and that is one that I think follows necessarily from what we've said thus far, and that is that the verse also speaks of or identifies an urgent task.

[ 49 : 46 ] Now in the light of what we've said already concerning the eternal destiny of the lost, it is not a big jump to speak of soul winning as an urgent task. But the urgency of the task is also implied by the language used by the writer.

The word there, translated when, in Proverbs, in the verse, in Proverbs 11.30, is a very common word in Hebrew.

It has a very broad semantic range, and what I mean by that simply is that it can be translated in a variety of related ways, and given that, it would be dangerous to try and read too much into the possible meanings of the word, or how it has been particularly used on this occasion.

Having said that, it is worth recognizing that this word is a word that can have the meaning of laying hold of, or seizing, where the picture is, or could be, the picture of one who rescues somebody in danger.

A bit like the language of Jude that we've referred to, snatching from the fire and saving. Or the verb used also could be used in the context of one who, in a military context, is conquering a city, or maybe somebody grasping a keenly sought-for prize.

[ 51 : 12 ] In all these ways, the language used, I think, can legitimately be understood as in and of itself, impressing upon us the urgency of the task.

In the examples that we've given, what do they suggest as regards what is involved in winning souls? Well, to rescue the perishing is not likely to be a walk in the park.

It will be tough and costly and perhaps even dangerous for some. Well, so it is with soul winning. To conquer a city or to win a battle involves guile and effort and courage and perseverance.

So it is with soul winning. To grasp a sought-for prize, such as is the goal of Olympians, as we're able to continue to see through the Paralympics.

To grasp such a prize involves years of disciplined and dedicated effort. So it is with soul winning. He who wins souls, he who seizes, who grasps, who lays hold of souls, is wise.

[ 52 : 25 ] As we draw things to a close, I ask myself and I ask you, are you wise as wisdom is defined in this verse?

