

AUTOPSY • Week 5: Probability or Promise?

Daily Briefing • Day 2 of 5 • Don't Use the Exception as Your Escape

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

Day 1 established that the Probability or Promise principle is real and biblically grounded. Today we address the most common way it gets misused. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I know that adhering to biblical beliefs and behaviors produces preferred outcomes most of the time, but not all the time. Please keep me from using that knowledge as an excuse to avoid honest self-assessment and personal accountability when examining adverse outcomes. I invite You to show me where my beliefs and behaviors have betrayed Your principles so that I avoid destructive self-soothing. I ask for Your help in Jesus' name. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

Every true principle can be misused, and Sunday's Probability or Promise principle is no exception. By way of reminder, the Probability or Promise principle goes like this: "biblical beliefs and behaviors produce better outcomes most of the time, but not every time." The specific misuse goes like this: a person violates biblical beliefs and behaviors, experiences the painful downstream consequences, and then declares that they did everything right and "we just live in a world broken by sin." The honest autopsy would tell a different story, but the Probability or Promise principle makes a convenient escape from that examination. A parent who prioritized money, achievement, and activity over spiritual formation watches a child walk away from the faith and says "we did everything right and it still did not work out." But they did not do everything right; their actions contradicted their words. They taught their children what they actually valued through their beliefs and behaviors, and what they valued was not God. A person who ignored clear red flags about a business partner, entered a financial partnership with someone whose character was questionable, and then experienced betrayal says "I operated with integrity and was still stabbed in the back." But the honest upstream examination would surface disregard for 2 Corinthians 6:14. In both examples, the Probability or Promise principle is used as self-soothing rather than doing the autopsy that would have been more useful.

Lamentations 3:40 was the verse that opened the Autopsy series in Week 1: "Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD." It was placed at the beginning deliberately. The testing and examining comes first. The appeal to divine sovereignty or the Probability or Promise principle comes after honest self-assessment, not instead of it. The person who reaches for the exception before doing the autopsy is skipping the step that the series was built around from the beginning.

The reason honest self-examination is so hard is named plainly in two passages. Proverbs 21:2 identifies the core obstacle: every way of a man is right in his own eyes. We are naturally inclined to see whatever we have said or done as righteous and our own reasoning as sound. Jeremiah 17:9 names the deeper problem underneath that: the heart is deceitful above all things. The instrument doing the self-examination is compromised, and that reality must be accounted for. This is why the honest autopsy requires God's help rather than self-assessment alone.

READ & MEDITATE

Lamentations 3:40

"Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD."

Proverbs 21:2

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart."

Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

Read Lamentations 3:40 and notice what comes *before* returning to the LORD. Then read Proverbs 21:2 and ask whose assessment of your ways is more reliable: yours or God's. Then read Jeremiah 17:9 and sit with what it says about the instrument you are using when you examine yourself.

REFLECT

The honest autopsy must come before the appeal to the exception. Testing and examining your ways is the prerequisite, not the optional first step.

Think of a situation in your own life where things did not go according to plan. It might be a negative outcome in the realm of spirituality, health, finance, relationships, career, et cetera. Before reaching for the Probability or Promise principle as the self-soothing explanation, honestly answer this: did you do a full upstream examination of the beliefs and behaviors that contributed to the outcome? Not a partial one that stopped before the convicting part, but the full honest one? This might look like a parenting situation where the honest examination would reveal priorities that modeled values other than the ones you verbalized, a relationship where the honest examination would surface warning signs you chose to overlook, or a financial situation where the honest examination would identify laziness, get rich quick schemes, or impulsive purchases. Do some honest introspective self-assessment of one painful outcome before moving on.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes. We are naturally inclined to see our own inputs as righteous. The LORD weighs the heart.

Fill in the blanks from Proverbs 21:2:

"Every way of a man is _____ in his own eyes, but the LORD
_____ the heart." (Proverbs 21:2)*

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

What does it tell you about the reliability of your own self-assessment that God's perspective on your ways is consistently described as different from your own? Where in your life are you most likely to give yourself the benefit of the doubt rather than submitting that area to honest examination? How will you account for our human tendency to get ourselves off the hook and take away personal accountability?

Jeremiah 17:9 says that the heart is deceitful above all things. The practical implication is that the instrument doing the self-examination is compromised. This is why honest autopsy requires God's participation, not just our willingness to look.

Psalms 139:23-24 has been used throughout this series as a model for inviting God into the examination: "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any grievous way in me, and lead

me in the way everlasting.” What would it look like to bring the specific situation you identified in the first question before God in exactly this posture? Write your own version of that prayer for that situation below.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. As we’ve read, God’s ear is not dull. Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Galatians 6:9 from memory: