

01-06-03a Ecclesiastes

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning for our scripture reading to Psalm 103. Psalm 103. This is a Psalm of David.

I find that the scripture readings that we're doing as we study Ecclesiastes often end up coming out of the Psalms because, as you know, much of Solomon's understanding of God and the plans and purposes of God came through the instruction of his father. And in Proverbs and other places Solomon recorded much of what David taught him. And you can see a lot of David's thinking and even David's ways of expressing ideas in what Solomon writes in the Proverbs and in particular in Ecclesiastes, which is where our current Sunday morning studies are located.

And this Psalm, I think you will find, is echoed in what we're studying in Ecclesiastes chapter 3. This Psalm is subtitled in the New King James, Praise for the Lord's Mercies. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquities.

Who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the children of Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will he keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

For he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass. As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those who remember his commandments to do them. The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

Bless the Lord, you his angels, who excel in strength, who do his word, heeding the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, you ministers of his, who do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. I think the beauty and the truth of this song is self-evident. I would like to point out just a couple of things.

You will notice that he begins by encouraging his own soul to focus on the attributes of God, to not forget his benefits, to remember that he forgives iniquity and separates it from us, that he redeems us from the rightful penalty for our wrongdoing and our corruption. Instead of punishing us according to our sins, he crowns us with loving kindness and tender mercy, and satisfies us with good things. He renews us.

He is gracious, he is merciful, he is slow to anger, abounding in mercy. But look at verse 11. As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward whom? Toward those who fear him.

There is a condition on which we receive God's mercy and all of these great benefits, and that is to fear the Lord. What is the fear of the Lord? Well, Scripture says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's when we wake up and realize that we are not the center of the universe, God is.

And to orient ourselves to the existence of God, to the purposes of God, and to acknowledge his rightful place as supreme, to recognize that we have an obligation to him, that he has issued a call to us, and to acknowledge that call, that is the fear of the Lord. And we subordinate our wishes to the will of God. It's the same thing, the word fear is a little bit different in English than it is in Hebrew.

Yare in Hebrew has the idea of respecting, acknowledging, giving something its rightful place. It's not abject terror. This is what we do when we stop at a stoplight or when we observe the various laws and regulations that apply to us.

We pay our taxes, we are law abiding, and we're not in abject terror of law enforcement, but we respect it and we acknowledge its place and that it has priority even though we might be in a big hurry, we don't run stop signs, we don't run red lights, even though we might be short on cash, we don't cheat on our taxes. If someone returns us too much change or someone doesn't charge us enough, we tell them, we make sure that things are right because it's the right thing to do. And we recognize the importance of everyone obeying laws so that we don't all get run over and have our cars crinkled and have children killed in the streets and so forth.

We acknowledge that the law is needful and that it has priority over our own wishes. Well, that is what the fear of the Lord is, acknowledging that he has commandments and has a plan and a purpose and that it takes priority over what we might think is important. And God's mercy, God's grace, God's loving kindness, the renewing, the redeeming, the cleansing, the forgiveness, the tender mercies are reserved for those who fear the Lord.

There are people who disregard God and that mercy doesn't appear. Their sins are not separated

as far as the east is from the west and the temporal penalty and consequences of those sins comes upon them. People look around and say, why is this happening to me? Why am I having all of these troubles? Why is my life going so badly? Well, in the absence of the fear of the Lord, we lack all of these wonderful benefits.

You notice again that verse 17, the mercy of the Lord from everlasting to everlasting is on those who fear him and his righteousness to children's children for such as keep his covenant and to those who remember his commandments to do them. We've seen this in our Luke study where Jesus is teaching and a lady's voice floats up out of the crowd and she says, blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed. And Jesus says much more than that, blessed or happy are the ones who have my words and keep them.

It's the same truth in the Old Testament and in the new to have the word of God and keep it, to do it, to assign it its rightful place. Lots of people know the law, but not everyone keeps it. He talks about the higher creation, the angels and all of the hosts of heaven who minister and do his pleasure and all of God's works in all places of his dominion owe this allegiance to God.

We as a human race are just one part of God's creation, but we have the same obligation as the angels and the heavenly hosts to bless the Lord and to assign him his proper place. But in particular, you'll note that God executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed in verse 6. He made known his ways to Moses. He made known his acts to the children of Israel.

That's a big part of our Old Testament record, the Pentateuch, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the record going forward from the creation of the world to the entry into the land of Canaan. All of that is manifestation of God's ways and God's acts. And it demonstrates time and time again that God is merciful and gracious.

He's slow to anger and abounding in mercy. He doesn't deal with us as we deserve. He deals with us on the basis of his own righteousness if we acknowledge him, if we fear him, and that condition is essential to note.

Let's return now to our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 3. Ecclesiastes, of course, classified as a wisdom book in the Hebrew canon. You had the law, the prophets, and the writings. The law, of course, the books of Moses, the prophets, the major and minor prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, so forth.

Even today, if you look on the front of the Hebrew text, it says the Torah, which is the books of Moses, the prophets, which are the Nevi'im, and the Ketuvim, or the writings. Ketuv means literally to cut or to inscribe, and the writings are the historical and wisdom books, and Ecclesiastes is in that third section of the Hebrew Bible. Solomon, we know, was the wisest man in his age.

He was given wisdom by God because that's what he asked for, and this book has been often

misunderstood because it is thought to be the investigations of a secular mind and trying to find meaning in life and finding that all is meaningless, all is futile. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity, says the preacher. That's what people remember about Ecclesiastes.

We've seen in our covering of the first two chapters or so that that is not what this book is about at all. It is examining the difference between what is temporary and what is permanent, and what Solomon is looking for is that which lasts. Hevel, which is translated vanity so often, doesn't mean vain or futile at all.

It means transient, impermanent. It just doesn't last. You can do a lot of things in life, but what is it that you can take with you beyond the grave? You can't take buildings.

You can't take accomplishments. You can't take kudos and certificates and medals and awards. You can't take the appreciation of people.

You can't take impact. You can't take construction projects or beneficial works. We think about Beethoven.

They had a whole series on the composers on PBS, looking at these great symphonic works that they created, and they're remembered. Hundreds of years after their lives, we have their music. It's played by orchestras every day, and it's played on the radio, and people appreciate it and enjoy it.

But it's not a question of can you do something that will last after you're gone. We know that that can take place. The pyramids are still standing.

The question is, the guy who built the pyramids, the composer who composed the great works, what has he got to show for all of his labor and struggling under the sun during his lifetime? What does he take forward? Well, he's dead and gone, and you can't bring your trunk full of manuscripts. You can't bring pictures of the great pyramids at Giza with you. It doesn't benefit you beyond the time under the sun.

From the sunrise to the sunset is the span of earthly life. And what good does it do you? People say, well, I see on entertainment tonight, they're going back, whatever happened to these various stars, and a lot of them have died of AIDS or died of cancer. They had Bill Bixby and some of these others, and they interviewed them once they knew that they had a terminal disease, and they were working frantically trying to finish up in their lives, and they put the microphone in their face and say, well, how do you cope? What are you doing? He says, well, I just want to accomplish something that we remembered after I'm gone.

Well, Solomon says, that's all well and good, but what good does it do you? It's havel, it's grasping the wind. You're trying to grab a hold of something to take with you, and when you look in your hand, there's nothing there. You can't take human accomplishment, you can't take earthly

labor and the fruit of it with you.

It's under the sun, everything is under the sun, and he says it's transient, it's a vapor, it's like trying to grab a hold of the wind. I used to watch my daughter blow bubbles and then run and try to catch them, and if you do catch them and you look in your hand, there's nothing there. It was there and it's gone.

So he concludes, and we saw this in chapter 2, verse 24, and again, because people have misunderstood this verse, even the translators, when they come to interpretive choices in how to translate the Hebrew, they've translated it according to their understanding of what the book is saying, and it winds up being misleading. It says in chapter 2, verse 24, nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. And people say, see Solomon's decided well, he's apart from God here and you might as well just eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, and that's what Solomon is saying.

That is not what the Hebrew says here. It says there is nothing good in a man eating and drinking and enjoying his labor. That's not good, Solomon says, if you're just living in the moment and saying well, you can't take it with you, so just enjoy the moment.

Well, why is the Bible going to say that? Why is there going to be an inspired book in the Old Testament that says eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die? Live for the moment. That's what secular godless society does. Well, let's enjoy the moment and let's try to create moments of enjoyment.

Let's get high, whether it's high on chemicals or high on life, or let's involve ourselves in activities that are enjoyable. We enjoy making movies, we enjoy making music, we enjoy making our family and raising and we enjoy this, that and the other. There's nothing better, Solomon says.

That isn't what it says at all. Solomon says this idea is not good. It is not good to just eat and drink and enjoy what you're doing.

Turn with me back to the book of Genesis. Genesis chapter 6. He came to pass, men began to multiply on the earth. You have the sons of God, the daughters of men.

You have the men of renown on the earth in those days, verse 4. Genesis 6, 5. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and he was grieved in his heart. The Lord said, I'm going to destroy man off the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing, bird of the air.

I'm sorry that I've made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Talks about him down a little bit.

Then in verse 11, the earth was corrupt before God. The earth was filled with violence. The Lord,

God looked upon earth and indeed it was corrupt for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

And then you have God telling Noah to make an ark. Well, you say it's because they were all so evil that God decided he was going to destroy them all away. Turn over to 2 Peter, 2 Peter chapter 2. And we've reviewed this in the recent past.

You remember people who are all caught up in life. They're caught up in the love feasts. They're caught up in carousing and deception.

Verse 13, they're receiving the wages of unrighteousness who can at pleasure to carouse in the daytime. This is eating and drinking and making merry. They have eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin.

Verse 14 of 2 Peter 2. They have a heart trained in covetous practices. What does covet mean? It means I want something. I'm searching for something.

I'm going to seek to get something that I don't currently have. They've forsaken the right way. They've gone astray.

They are in down in verse 19, they promise liberty, but they are slaves of corruption, brought into bondage. These people are eating and drinking and making merry. That's exactly what happened in the days before the flood.

Remember when Jesus was teaching about his coming, Matthew chapter 24. Verse 36, the day and the hour of Jesus coming no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the son of man be.

For as in the days before the flood, what were they doing? Well, we just saw that over in Genesis 6, that their thoughts of their heart were only evil all the day. There was wickedness and corruption. How does Jesus describe those days? They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark.

And they did not know until the flood came and took them all away. Eating and drinking and making merry. This is a self-centered pursuit.

You're concerned with your daily provision. You're concerned with feast times and happy times. Let's have a party.

Let's get some pleasure out of life. Let's get pleasure out of our accomplishments. Peter talks about it in 2 Peter.

Jude talks about it in Jude. Genesis 6 talks about it. Jesus talks about it in Matthew 24.

And guess what? Solomon talks about it in Ecclesiastes chapter 2. It is not good for a man to eat and drink and simply enjoy good in his labor. This is from the hand of God that there has to be something more. And he says, I know about this.

Who can eat or drink or have enjoyment more than I? God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in his sight. What does it mean to be good in his sight? Well, remember our scripture reading in Psalm 103, to fear the Lord, to have his commandments and keep them. Then you have these things that are over and above the material things of life.

It's not just eating and drinking and having a good time. It is redemption. It is forgiveness.

It is transcending this earthly life, going beyond the sunrise and the sunset and partaking of eternal things. He gives in chapter 3, we've already seen this wonderful tightly woven poem in verses 2 through 8. There is a time and a season for these different things. And then Solomon asks the question again, what profit has the worker in verse 9 from that in which he labors? This is the same question that he asked back in chapter 1, verse 3. What profit does a man have from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? Well, there is a time for different kinds of labor.

There's a time to gather and there's a time to scatter. There's a time to build and there's a time to tear down. There's a time for all of these different types of labor.

These are all under the verb *asah*, A-S-A-H, here in the beginning of chapter 3. These are labors. These are activities. This is what you make or do in life.

And there is a time, there is an appointed time, there is a season for each of these. But what do you carry away? Yitron, the word profit there means when you balance the books and you subtract the expenses away from the income, what are you left with? Are you in the red or are you in the black? What do you carry away from it? And Solomon says, where is the profit? Where is that which you can hold in your hand and take beyond the setting of the sun? He says in verse 10, I have seen the answer which God has given the sons of men to be answered with. And it says occupation and a task and that's just wrong.

It's an answer. This is a question that comes up. Anybody that stops and muses on life for a while and we tend to do this more toward the end of our life or when we are faced with death, either the death of a loved one or our own imminent death or a near miss, people that have a brush with death, stop and ponder the meaning of life.

Well, the question is, what does it all mean? What's it good for? What should I be looking for to take from life? What is the point? Well, Solomon says, I've seen the answer that God has given the sons of men to be answered with, with this question. He has made everything beautiful in its time. I want to give you a corrected translation here because again, the interpretation that people have put on Ecclesiastes has made it almost impossible to understand what he's saying here.

Verse 11, He, God, has made everything beautiful in its time. And the word beautiful is yafeh in Hebrew, Y-A-P-H-E-H. That is the same word that we saw in Ecclesiastes 5.18 when we looked forward.

We sort of skipped to the end of the book a little bit to find out what Solomon is talking about because if he says it's not good to simply eat and drink and do these things, well, where is the good? Well, he says over in 5.18, the good that is beautiful, there is a good that is beautiful. And that's what partakes of God's work. Good that is beautiful is to eat and drink and to enjoy the good of your labor in which you toil.

All the days of his life, which God gives him as his heritage, every man to whom God has given riches and wealth and given him power to eat of it, to enjoy it. Two people can live life, they can eat and drink, they can engage in labor. One of them, it's not good to simply do that.

The other, it's good that is beautiful. What distinguishes the two? Both of them observe the times, a time to build up, a time to tear down, a time to reap, a time to sow, a time to gather, a time to scatter. You can look at the externals of someone's life and everyone is doing their job, paying their bills, raising their families, driving their cars, washing their clothes, doing their dishes, engaged in the tasks of life.

One person is going to reach into their life and seek to lay hold of something and they're going to open their hand and it's empty. Another person doing those very same things, going through those very same times, is going to find that there is good which is beautiful, good which partakes of the eternal, that God has created in that same set of tasks, those same toils, those same labors, those same exertions and tasks of life. What is the difference? Well, the key is coming up.

The thing that distinguishes grasping the wind and grasping the good that is beautiful is coming up right here in chapter 3 and he says God has put this task in front of every man. God has given an answer for the sons of men to be answered with. He has made everything beautiful in its time.

It is possible for all of these things to be Yahweh, to have that transcendent beauty that partakes of eternal things. Two people washing dishes, one has nothing to show for it except the set of clean dishes that you can't take with you into eternity. Another person can be doing that same set of dishes and there is something that makes it different and they are laying hold of Yahweh, they are laying hold of beauty that God has put in that task and they are going to have something eternal to show for that dishwashing session and it is an amazing thing that the mundane normal tasks of life can transcend this life and you have something beyond the accomplishment of the task to show for it.

This is what Solomon is talking about. Think about it. Solomon is the wisest man that ever lived.

You are not going to get the worst human viewpoint of all time in a book that Solomon writes. He is writing about transcendent things, not mundane things. He is not saying, well, there is nothing

better than eating, drinking and being merry.

He has wisdom from God that transcends anything in the Old Testament age and he is teaching something that you can't find on the surface of the law of Moses. You don't find it on the surface in the prophets or in the other writings that talk about practical life and be obedient so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God gives you. This is beyond that because that is temporal.

That will bless you during your life. Solomon says, I want more. I want to know what transcends this life, what goes beyond the under the sun.

Well, this is it. God has made everything beautiful in its time. If you can recognize that it is a time to reap, for example, God has made that reaping beautiful.

It is possible to have Yahweh beauty in that task. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts. And literally it says also eternity He has given in their hearts.

What does this mean? It means we know that there is something more. We are not just animals. You look at animals and they go about their tasks.

Birds gather food, they eat, they fly around and find materials to make their nests, they take care of their young. They do these tasks that are assigned tasks for them as birds. I was digging out here in the yard and saw just dozens and dozens of earthworms.

Well, even an earthworm. Rebecca asked me if an earthworm has a brain. Because you cut them in half and a lot of times they will grow back and the two parts will make new earthworms.

And she said, well, where is their brain? Doesn't only one half have a brain? Doesn't an earthworm have a brain? Whatever little minor nervous system earthworms have, they are programmed to do what earthworms do. They crawl around in the ground. They are more useful for plants.

They reproduce. They move from place to place. They get up out of the ground when it is too wet and they are about to suffocate.

Even an earthworm accomplishes its tasks. But what is the point? Well, for mankind, it is more than just doing the tasks that men do. God has put eternity in us.

And the verb here is not time. He has given us this knowledge. He has given eternity.

Eternity He has given in their hearts. And now there is a real bad mistranslation here in verse 11 where it says except that no one can find out the work of God. That is not what this says at all.

It is not the word except. This is literally from the lack of which. It is a compound word formed from a couple of prepositions and the word for lacking.

God has put eternity in their hearts from the lack of which no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. If you don't pay attention to what God is up to, why did God put me here? If you don't acknowledge the eternity that's in your heart, God has put the knowledge of himself in the heart of every man. Remember Romans 1? Turn over quickly to Romans chapter 1. Paul talks about the same self-centered pursuit of pleasure and fulfillment that we saw in 2 Peter, that we saw in Genesis chapter 6. He talks about it in Romans chapter 1. Verse 18, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Because what may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them. God has put eternity in our hearts. We know there is more to life than eating and drinking and making merry.

Since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, his eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse. Because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were they thankful, but they became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened. Every normal human being knows that there's a God.

God the Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. God has placed the knowledge of himself in the heart of every man. He has put eternity in our hearts.

The question is, once we confront that reality, how do we respond? What do we choose to do with that knowledge? Well, that is going to determine whether we end up grasping the wind or grasping beauty, grasping eternal glory. So verse 11 literally says, He has made everything beautiful in its time. It's the same word that's used, there's a time for every purpose under heaven at the beginning of this chapter.

Well, God has made everything beautiful in its time. It is possible to turn every task into something that lasts beyond the grave. And now this is a piece of wisdom worth getting.

The wisest man of the Old Testament age is about to tell us how to transcend the mundane earthly tasks of this life. God has given eternity in their hearts from the lack of which man has not found or attained to the doing which God is doing from the beginning even to the end. What is God up to? Why has he put us here? What's the point of life? Well, you've got to lay hold of that eternity that he's put in the heart.

If you lack that, if you ignore it, that's going to make life a mystery. You're not going to know what the purpose of life is and you're going to choose false goals and you're going to set false priorities. You're going to think, well, the biggest thing is to be well thought of, to leave a good name behind, to benefit mankind in some way.

This is exactly, that's a virtual quote from Bill Bixby. He was saying, well, I just want to do some good and make a positive impact before I go. He said, what more can you ask for than to do good for others in your life? That's what I want to do.

He was trying to make awareness of cancer in one thing and another. But what does Bill himself take away from this life? Granted, you benefit from the work that others have done in medicine and science and technology, even theology. We stand on the shoulders of men who have done great work in all different areas of life, but what does the man himself take forward? Does God give credit for helping others? Does God give credit for benefiting mankind, for building a pyramid, for coming up with the, you know, does Jonas Salk get credit for the polio vaccine at the judgment seat? What is it that you hold in your hand that makes your life worthwhile? Well, this question God forces us to ask because He's put eternity in our hearts.

And without that, you're never going to know what God is up to, what the point of life is. You're never going to find out what God is doing from the beginning, even to the end. Now look at verse 12.

Solomon says, I know that there is nothing good in them. And it's Ein Tov. He doesn't say there's nothing better than for man to do these things.

He says, I know there's nothing good in them. There is nothing good in them because whether rejoicing or doing good in his life, you notice it's quite a bit different than what's in your English translation there. I know that there is nothing good in them, these men, because whether rejoicing or doing good in his life, and even every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his labor, it is what God gives.

And looking at what's before you on the page and looking at what I just said, you probably may, or it's dazed and confused. Solomon says, I know there's nothing good in them because whether rejoicing or doing good in his life, and also every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his labor, it is what God gives. And you could put in parentheses or in brackets, it's what God gives that counts.

The issue is what God gives, not what man does. This rejoicing and doing good and eating and drinking and seeing good in your labor, that's not what counts. It's what God gives that counts.

God makes things beautiful in their time. God puts eternity in our hearts. That's what counts, not the eating and drinking, not the enjoyment that we get from a job well done.

That's not what counts. What counts is what God gives. That's what verse 13 says.

And it's just scrambled in the English translations, whether you look at a New American Standard or a New King James, and you'll notice the word is there is in italics because the verb isn't even there. It is what God gives, and it's emphatic in the Hebrew. The verb is not even there.

It's the noun form from the Hebrew verb natan, which means to give, but it's a noun. And it's translated here the gift of God, but it sounds like he's saying, well, eating and drinking and enjoying your labor is the gift of God. That's not what it says.

It says those things are not good. What is good is what God gives. You've got to be looking for what God gives.

So let's say you're washing your dishes or driving your car or doing your laundry or performing your employment or raising your kids or doing whatever it is you do, mowing the lawn, planting your flowers, all of the different tasks of life. Is it the enjoyment that you get out of that labor? Is it the sustenance that you get from it, the eating and the drinking? No, it's what God gives. God can give you something in the doing of those things, Solomon says.

There is a good which is beautiful. There is a beauty. There is an eternal intrinsic value that can attach to those things.

God gives it. We can't perform it. God has put it in our heart and we have the responsibility to find it.

And he continues this thought in verse 14. Solomon says in verse 14, you notice he started in verse 12, he said, I know something. He puts himself into the equation.

He says, I know that there's nothing good in them, whether rejoicing or doing good, every man who eats and drinks and sees good in his labor. It's what God gives that counts. Verse 14, he says again, I know that everything that God himself does will be eternally.

I know that whatever, everything that God does himself, and there's a pronoun there that makes it emphatic, what God himself does is what lasts. That's what's eternal. There is nothing to add upon it and there is nothing to diminish from it.

And the last part of that verse says, and again, this is really scrambled in the New King James, it says, God does it that men should fear before him. Literally it says, for God has done that which they will fear before him. God has done these eternal things that can't be added to, they can't be subtracted from.

And there is a day coming when people are going to recognize that that's the value. A lot of times people get to the end of their life and they think it was pointless, I can't take it with me. What God has done, that is what they're going to respect, what they're going to recognize the value of.

Verse 15, what is, it has already been. That which will be already is. And then it says, God requires an account of what is past.

What it literally says is, God will intensively seek what is pursued. This is talking about Judgment Day. You can look in vain in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy to find any

mention of Judgment Day, that there's going to be a resurrection and a judgment.

We're all familiar with the fact that when the Lord comes back, we go to the judgment seat of Christ and we're accountable for our thoughts and our actions. But in the Old Testament, in the Pentateuch, it was all consequences in your life. If you do well, you'll be blessed.

God will prosper you. You'll live long in the land and your children will be many and all of that. You don't, can you think of a verse in the books of Moses that talks about Judgment Day? They hadn't gotten that far in the progress of Revelation.

Solomon is broaching this subject. He says, look, there is a Judgment Day coming and God is going to intensively search out what it was you were pursuing. What did you pursue as you did these different tasks that are in the first part of the chapter? Reaping and sowing, planting and plowing, building up and tearing down, mourning and laughing, dancing and weeping, casting and gathering, embracing and refraining, all of these different things that you did, what were you pursuing? What were you after? Were you just doing it for its own sake or were you looking for that Yahweh beauty that God put the knowledge of in your heart? You know that there's something more.

You know that there's something eternal. Are you pursuing the eternal in what you do or are you just living for the moment? God is going to seek it out. God is going to, this is a PL stem, it's the intensive in Hebrew, when it says, all of these things that have been and which will be and that are now, God is going to examine them.

He's going to seek out what are you pursuing in what you do? What is your goal? Are you seeking to please God or are you seeking to please yourself? This is the difference. If you do things to please yourself, you're grasping the wind. If you do things to please God, you have laid hold of something that is eternal.

That's the message in a nutshell. And it's a question we can ask ourselves. Are we putting God into our life as the genie to make things better, as the problem solver? But we're really, He is a means to an end.

The end is our goal, our objective, what we want to accomplish. I want things to be a certain way and I think I'll pray and try to do things to please God so that He'll help me accomplish my objectives. Well, God is going to intensively seek out what it is we're pursuing.

He sees the thoughts and intents of the heart. Or do we, in effect, abandon ourselves to the plan of God and say, God, if it's your will that this be done or that that be done, it's like Jesus in the garden at Gethsemane. He says, not my will but thine be done.

That is the truth that Solomon has hit upon and it's an amazing truth for the Old Testament age. There's no precedent for it in the scriptures. Solomon broaches this judgment day idea and that

God is examining the thoughts and intents of the heart in what you do.

So what does this tell us? What's our conclusion? There is a way to convert everything we do into eternal weight of glory. It's the thoughts and intents of our heart. So the question is, how do we accomplish that? Well, that's what Solomon is going to talk about in the next section.

So we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll see how to convert the temporary and the mundane and that which is unique and eternal and that unto the ages. Let's pause here and take our break.