

01-07-29b Ecclesiastes

We resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 and moving into chapter 5. We've already noted that in the structure of Solomon's argument in chapter 4, he is looking at some of the pressures. They are labeled as oppressions in the New King James. It says life's oppressions and inequalities.

But we know that the refining process, the grievous answer that God has given the sons of men with which to be answered, is supposed to turn our attention to the issue of eternity rather than impermanence. Rather than being satisfied with heaven, rather than simply eating and drinking and seeing good in our labor, we should be looking for that which lasts. And ultimately that is going to be God and his purpose and his plan.

He is the one who has brought us through the Red Sea, has enabled us to leave behind the old man who is enslaved by sin and death and to live a new life toward God. And this has been true in every dispensation. And it was a great advance in revelation for Old Testament believers when Solomon set these ideas down.

The illustrations that he gives of the types of conditions which people sometimes fail to make that leap, they fail to be alerted to impermanence, they fail to raise their head from the daily grind and from what they are concerned with and ensnared by, the first illustration is the one who is rich. There is a one and not two. That's what it literally says in verse 8. There is one and not two.

There is no son or brother yet. There is no end to all his labors and his eye is not satisfied with riches. For whom am I laboring and depriving my soul of good? Good.

This is Tov or Tovah here, which is the feminine. And Solomon says, this too is Hebel. And the New King James says, it is a grievous task.

Well, the words translated grievous task here are the same words that we found back in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and verse 13. You remember back there we said this burdensome task God has given to the sons of men by which they may be exercised. And the word task and the word exercise are nouns and verb forms from the same word.

It is an answer. It is from anah. It's inyon, I-N-Y-A-N.

And this grievous answer, we find the word inyon used very often right after a question has been asked. Remember in chapter 1, the question was asked, what is the profit to a man from his toil? You have all these cyclical examples. And then in 13, it says, well, the answer that God has given the sons of men is a grievous answer.

It's an evil inyon. It's a ra-inyon. Well, the very same phrase here.

And once again, it follows a question. For whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?

This is Hebel and an evil answer. And this is the question that ought to be asked by the rich man.

It doesn't say in the text, he never asked. This is the question that should come up. Solomon sketches out this scenario.

He doesn't have the distraction of family or filial obligations. He's laboring strictly for himself. It's the thrill of accomplishment.

I saw a lady on Oprah the other night. I don't know how I end up seeing Oprah. I don't consciously make that decision.

But Patti was watching it too, so she's the woman. The woman now gave us to be with me. She did flip the channel and I did watch.

But and she thought this might have been some kind of a put on because this lady was sort of addicted to shopping and they had all this hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt on credit cards and things. And so Dr. Phil was on there telling them how to she had to quit being a shopaholic. But you can get and she said, well, I just love it.

I just love it for its own sake. I love to go out and shop. And we did not manage to endure through the whole program.

But they went through and tried to find out the reasons why she felt this uncontrollable urge to go shop and spend money. But this is sort of the picture of the rich man here. There's no end to all his labor.

He just when he gets things accomplished, he just finds other things to do. He's constantly expanding and revising and up building and investing himself in this endeavor. And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure? This is vapor and it is a grievous answer.

The answer to that question is unsatisfactory because what is the answer? For whom is he doing all of this? I mean, it's a it's sort of irony because he says, well, I'm accomplishing this and I'm depriving myself of good in the process. Tove can cover a wide range of meaning. Good things tend to bring pleasure or satisfaction.

And he says, well, I'm depriving my soul of Tove in order to do this. But who am I doing it for? I'm doing it for myself. But I'm depriving myself in the process of doing this for myself.

And that's an unsatisfactory answer. You want to talk about another cyclical, circular argument. Well, I'm depriving myself so I can provide for myself.

And I'm providing for myself so that I will enjoy it. But I'm not enjoying it because I'm so busy providing for myself. And it just runs around and around and around.

And this ought to cause you to stick your head up. They used to have a book that you cannot find in a bookstore, at least not a new copy. It was one of my favorite books when I was a very small tyke.

And it was called Little Black Sambo. And you remember the little black Sambo is in there and the tiger gets to chasing him. And he starts going around and around and around the tree.

And pretty soon he turns into pancakes. Well, I don't understand the physics of that, but I remember the book. And he just goes around and around and around and around.

I liked it because it was the first thing I'd ever seen that had my name on it that was out there in the world. But you need to stick your head up out of that running around and around and around the tree and say, why am I doing this? If the tiger had stopped and thought, hey, it seems like I've been here before. This is a vicious cycle or a vicious circle.

Then you would realize you would come up against impermanence, Hebel. You would come up against the grievous answer, is this all there is? These things are there for a reason. Oppression or adversity or an unsatisfactory situation ought to turn us toward God.

It ought to make us realize we know that there are eternal things. It's in our heart. Well, what if he did have a son or a brother? One of the stipulations of this first scenario was there's no son or brother in the picture to say, oh, well, I'm doing this all for my family.

This is what people do. They say, oh, the reason I work 14, 16-hour days, the reason I take these three-month-long business trips and everything, I'm doing it all for you so that you'll have the nice things. You won't have to grow up like I grew up.

And I want the kids to have the best of everything, and that's why I'm constantly gone. If they were really getting the best of everything, their father would not be absent for weeks on end. But, you know, the argument is, well, in the first scenario, you can't throw in the family argument because there is neither son nor brother.

Well, in the second, you say, well, and these are tied together because verse 8 says there was one and not two. That's what it literally says in the Hebrew. Echad is one and Shani is two.

There's Echad and not Shani. There's one and not two. Now, in verse 9, it says, and this is sort of like a quote from popular culture, well, two are better than one.

They will have a good return for their labor. This is sort of put forward as an argument. Well, okay, it's because he's alone that it's pointless and circular.

It's depriving his soul of good as he goes out to accomplish good for himself, to get riches, but his eyes are never satisfied. Okay, so, well, maybe he needs to be doing it for someone else. And so, sort of the popular wisdom, two are better than one because they have a good return for their

labor.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with this statement. This is, in fact, true. What you have to think about is, what's your goal? God is going to seek what is pursued.

Are you just looking at your companion? You love your companion. You want to provide for your companion. Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

Now, what I think is fascinating about this second illustration is that the context here is you're doing labor. You're, so let's say instead of being a single guy like Nicolas Cage in the Family Man movie, here's somebody who's married, and they're doing it all for their wife or their wife and kids. And you say, well, you're going to have a good return for your labor.

You're going to pour yourself into this, and it's going to be worthwhile because there's a companion involved. But these three aspects that are mentioned, there's accident. Somebody falls, and the other one can lift them up.

There is adversity. It gets really cold, and the other person can help warm you up. Or there is oppression.

This is as close as I'm going to get to alliterating this Sunday anyway. But there's oppression where there's an adversary coming in and attacking, and one would not be able to resist, but two or three can do a better job of resisting. But in what sense does this tie back to them getting a return for their labor? This sounds more like your kind of path through life.

You don't think of labor involved when you're getting cold or when you're getting attacked by someone or when you fall down in your, you could say, well, maybe two people are plowing in the field. But my question is this. If either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion.

Well, what sort of a commercial is this where I've fallen and I can't get up? I mean, usually when I fall down, I can pick myself up. So what situation would there be where you would fall and not be able to get up? Well, this is talking about some accident, some misfortune that exceeds your ability to recover. You need someone's help.

We've been reading the best short stories of Jack London for our evening reading, and last night's story was about a man up in the Yukon Territory. And it was his first winter there, and he knew his way around. He was very practical-minded.

He had gotten some good advice and things, and he was trying to go from point A to point B, and he had been warned about the dangers of the cold. And you could tell when it got below a certain temperature because if you spit out into the wind, if that spit froze before it hit the ground, you're well down below zero. If it makes a crackling sound in the air and freezes hard and sort of the heat goes out of it so fast that it cracks, you know how ice cubes are when you drop them in warmer liquid, you've got ice and then it cracks.

Well, it's kind of reverse cracking that takes place. When it gets below 50, minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit, you spit out into the wind, it crackles in the air, and it's kind of one of the rules of thumb that they used to use up there to tell how cold it was. You spit in the air and it crackles.

You say, wow, it's getting down below 50. Well, this old-timer warned the man and said, nobody should travel alone if it's that cold. Well, this guy thought, you know, I think I can make it.

I'm going to go rejoin my man up on the banks of the creek there off past the port. So he set out and he had a dog with him, and he's doing fine. He knows that there are places where water is flowing from underground springs, and even though everything's frozen solid, the Yukon River itself is frozen clear to the bottom, the springs, which have living water, if you will, will skin over with ice, but there's water underneath, and heaven help you if you step on that and break through and get wet because you will instantly freeze in weather that cold.

And so you have to watch for the signs that you've got one of these areas and skirt around it. And, well, he does fine. He sees these.

He goes on. He makes good time. He's making four miles an hour, doing very well.

It's in the afternoon, and he's keeping up this pace. By 6 o'clock that night, by supertime, he'll be with his companions, and he's really doing pretty well. Well, about that time, he steps, completely no clue that it was there, but he steps into one of these underground flows and gets soaked about halfway to the knees, his feet in moccasins.

He says, okay, keep a cool head. This is recoverable. So he immediately goes, and he's got to stop and build a fire, and he's kind of lamenting the fact that now he's not going to be on time, and it'll be after dark, and it's more dangerous to travel after dark.

But he stops. He's got his birch bark. He's got his matches, and he builds this fire.

You've got to build a fire just right because you're on several feet of snow, and if you don't build it right, the fire will melt the snow, sink into the snow, and be extinguished. Well, he knows all of this, and he does it right, gets himself warmed up and all. And actually, the first fire he built, I think, was just to warm up from his exertions of the day, and he stopped and ate his lunch and made a big fire.

Then he fell through the ice, and so he had to make this second fire. And when he makes this second fire, he's in a little bit more of a hurry, and he builds it under a tree because the dry wood and stuff is nearby. He gets the fire going.

He's just starting to feed it the larger sticks. But as he's been pulling this brush and so forth, what he didn't realize is the very slight tremors in the ground and next to that tree, it's been a breathless, windless scenario for a few days, and the snow is piled high on the tree branches,

and it's just enough of a wiggle at the very top of the tree when he grabs this one branch that the snow at the very top of the tree falls off the branch. Well, it hits another branch and another and another, and it creates this sort of snow avalanche in the tree that comes down and totally extinguishes his fire.

Well, what he didn't realize is it wasn't just 50 below or 60 below. It was 75 below, and he had underestimated how cold it was. And when his fire goes out the second time, he's already frozen so solid that he loses the ability to build another fire.

He can't work his hands. He can't grab his matches. He's trying to get them with the heel of his hands, and he underestimated it.

The whole point of the story is he thought he could do it alone, and the old-timer had warned him. He said, never travel alone if it's more than 50 below. And he begins one of his last conscious thoughts before he slips off into oblivion and freezes to death.

He imagines himself back at the warmth of the fire, talking to the old-timer with the pipe and all, saying, you know, old hoss, you were right. Shouldn't travel alone if it's colder than 50 below. And he had sort of been laughing to himself at this guy.

You know, they're kind of old women. You know, as they get old, they get too careful and all. But he found out the truth of it as he froze on the trail.

And so the idea is in the popular culture that, well, if you have someone else there, they can help you, and it's going to make things better. And that's what Solomon is talking about here. Two are better than one.

They have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. Woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

And this is talking about, obviously, you know, we fall down, at least I do, fairly regularly. And I can get myself back up. This is some sort of fall.

This is an accident. It just represents an accident that you can't handle by yourself. You need someone's aid or you're not going to get through it.

Then you have in the second example, verse 11, if two lie down together, they keep warm. How can one be warm alone? Well, you know, on a hot summer day, you can be too warm. You can be kicking the blankets off.

What kind of scenario is this? It's too cold for one person to be out by themselves. It's like the guy in the Yukon. You need someone else.

In fact, he gets the wild fantasy that he can kill the dog. He heard a story once about a guy that

got caught in a blizzard and he slaughtered a steer and crawled inside his body and used the warmth to ride out the storm. So he gets this wild idea that he can do this with the dog.

But the dog realizes that this guy is starting to act a little nutty and he stays away from him. The guy does finally grab the dog, but his hands are so frozen he can't grab his knife or do anything more than just hug the dog. And, of course, the dog gets away and he freezes.

Two lie down together, they keep warm. But if you think about this, here is recovery from an accident, recovery from adversity, or in the third situation, this is an attack. This is opposition.

Somebody comes up and does something. Two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

When it comes to opposition, the more you have in your party, the better. This is the idea of circling the wagons. That's why the ships traveled in convoys.

This is why wagon trains were wagon trains. Safety in numbers. But all of these accomplish under the sun goals, don't they? I want to get back to where I can continue to eat and drink and enjoy my life.

I want to get back to the way things were. I'm cold, I want to be warm again. I've fallen, I want to get back up.

I'm under attack, I want to be out from under attack. So, it is true, as far as earthly things go, that two are better than one. Companionship is a wonderful thing.

There is safety in numbers. There is benefit in companionship. But the same question ought to surface as what surfaced in the first example.

For whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure? Why am I so anxious to survive this accident or endure this adversity or overcome this opposition? What's my goal? Remember, God will actively seek out what is pursued. And Solomon doesn't repeat the question in the second scenario. But the question sort of asks itself, doesn't it? You say, well, is survival just an end in itself? This is the same thinking that is behind a lot of the dieting and fitness and watching out for free radicals and all the rest of it that goes on today.

People just assume that longer life is preferable. And you have the people that say, well, why should I deprive myself of pleasure just to spend an extra two years in the nursing home? And they raise that very issue. Maybe longer life is not necessarily better life.

Maybe quality is worth more than longevity. But this is all under the sun. This is an earthbound type of view.

Then you get to the third. This is where we find quite an interesting example. A poor yet wise lad

is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction.

Well, if you think about this at all, do we know of an old and foolish king who would not receive admonition, who was supplanted by a youth who had been born poor in the kingdom? Who was the first king of Israel? Saul. Did he become an old and foolish king who would not receive warning and instruction? Did the Spirit of God leave him? Did Samuel the prophet leave him because he wouldn't listen? And was he in fact supplanted by the youth who was born poor in his kingdom? And yet all the living under the sun thronged to the side of that second lad. Some people come to this and say, well, there was the old king, then there was the first young lad, and then the second young lad.

This is the same young lad. It's contrasting the old and foolish king. And it's just saying the second one, the lad who replaces him.

There's no end to all the people, to all who were before them. And even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him. For this, too, is habel and grasping or chasing.

One guy says shepherding. You know, you've heard that expression, it's like herding cats. Well, one of the ways of translating this verb is to shepherd, to chase after, to keep control of, to gain control of.

So there's one commentary where every time he comes up to this phrase, he says shepherding the wind. You get the picture of a guy there waving his crook and staff, saying, come back here, breeze. You know, completely futile.

But it's the idea of nothing in your hand when you open it back up. You reach out and grasp, you open your hand, there's nothing there. So, again, what is the big success story in Solomon's day? Where does someone look and say, well, now here's an example of accomplishment.

Look at King David. He started out as the youngest of all of these sons of Jesse. He was poor.

He was imprisoned. He was chased down and was a fugitive and an exile. And yet he rose to become king.

And all the living under the sun thronged to his side when he replaced the old and foolish king. Everybody said, wow, this David is great. He became king over all Israel.

And he built a great kingdom. And people say, well, now surely there's some permanent accomplishment. There's something that's intrinsically good and lasting.

But Solomon says there's no end to all the people, to all who were before them and the ones who will come later will not be happy with him. You remember by the time that the latter years in the reign of David, what's the whole story of the Absalom rebellion? Absalom stirred up hate and discontent against David. And David was driven from his throne.

David was exiled out of his own kingdom. You can be the flavor of the month and then your popularity fades. You succeed in achieving something or pleasing a bunch of people and being their favorite and things change.

The ones who will come later will not be happy with him. This is impermanent. What's the this? The whole idea that rags to riches, success story.

That too, it's all trapped under the sun. So you think and if you think about analogies to this in our own circumstances, we like the feeling of accomplishment that comes from overcoming adversity. Everyone likes to get a good deal or to achieve something that was difficult, that is admired by others.

They say, wow, you know, I can't believe you started with this and you ended up with that. Or I can't believe that you started here and you ended up there. Look at the team that you build.

Look at the companionship. Look at the things that are talked about in that second section. You know, you were able to keep warm because you had, you know, there's a lot talked about, well, it's all about love.

It's all about teamwork. It's all the bonds that you build with others as you go through these adversities. And then there are the solo pilots who go and they do it all themselves.

They pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and there isn't anybody else involved. Well, Solomon says take any of those examples and you still wind up asking yourself the question and coming up with that grievous answer. So you are a rags to riches story.

So you did build a great team or benefit and build bonds and have all kinds of admiration from others and even become king when you started out poor. Same idea pertains when you think about Joseph in Egypt or you think about Moses out there being a goat herder and rising to lead Israel. But I think that there's a strong echo of the Saul and David scenario.

It's fresh in everyone's mind. Solomon probably hears about that a lot. Well, you're a pretty good guy, but you're not the man your father was.

I remember the heyday of King David and this sort of thing. Solomon says, you know, he was real popular and then they weren't happy with him either. It's all Hevel and grasping the wind.

So this is an observation. We saw a set of observations at the beginning of the book and then Solomon gave us some conclusion. He gave us that in Chapter 2, verses 24 through 26, you remember? Talked about the impermanence of things and then he said, It's not good for a man simply to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.

It's from the hand of God who can eat and have enjoyment without him. To a person who is good in his sight, he's given wisdom and knowledge and joy. While to the sinner, he gives the answer

of gathering and collecting.

He's given him the inyan so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. Well, this missing God and missing the Eternal, that was the first sort of conclusion that Solomon gave us. And now in Chapter 3, verses 9 through 15, we've had a second look at the truth of the matter.

He asks the question again, what profit is there to the worker? Talks about God making everything beautiful in its time and putting eternity in the heart. And so 9 through 15 of Chapter 3, that was kind of the second conclusion. And now in Chapter 3, verse 22, we have a third statement.

There's nothing good in a man simply being happy in his activities. That is his portion. God has built that in and that's part of the grievous answer.

God built it, but that doesn't mean that that's all there is. For who will bring him to see what will occur after? Who's going to raise his consciousness to realize that there is something beyond? God is looking for motives. We've seen Chapter 4 and now we move into Chapter 5. And here is the first time that Solomon gives the medicine.

He starts to give the antidote, gives the practice. He's going to move into the advice mode here. This is the exhortation and it's the first time.

The first four chapters have all been observation and drawing of conclusions. Now Solomon is going to go into the let me tell you what you ought to do mode based on this. What does he say? Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools.

They do not know that they are doing evil. Do not be rash with your mouth. Let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.

And the idea here is somebody is coming to the house of God. So let's say that you've taken all of this on board. You've absorbed Solomon's line of reasoning and argument here.

You say, oh, I see. God, you've got to go to God to get the permanence and get the joy that passes understanding and so forth. So, okay, I'm going to run down there to the house of God.

Solomon says, look, you're on the right track, but be careful. Guard your steps. The New King James says walk prudently when you go to the house of God.

You're pointed in the right direction, but don't goof this up. Draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools. And if you skip on down and read this, he says, do not be rash with your mouth in verse two.

He says, let your words be few. And then verse three, we're going to have to fix this. But in the

New King James, it says, for a dream comes through much activity and a fool's voice is known by his many words.

So the picture here is you figured out that God is the key. He's put eternity in your heart. He's going to be measuring.

He's the place where the answer is. So you're going to run down to the house of God. Solomon says, slow down.

Guard your steps. You need to be listening more than you're talking when you go to the house of God. What is the house of God? That's the place of the presence of God, the place where the word of God is taught and exhibited in the Levitical offerings and so on.

He says, do not be rash with your mouth. Let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. Don't treat God as the big genie of the lamp.

I want to focus especially on verse three. Well, we can start in verse one by noting quickly that they do not know that they are doing evil. It is an evil thing.

Even if you're going to the house of God, a lot of people go to the house of God, but they're not guarding their steps. They're offering the sacrifice of fools and that is evil. You can't say, well, at least they're in church.

That's not good enough. At least they're going to God. At least they're acknowledging God in some fashion.

That's not good enough. Many will come to me in that day saying, Lord, Lord, in your name, we did this, that and the other, and he's going to say, I never knew you. Well, just going to the house of God doesn't solve everything.

There's a lot of people that think, well, if I just hear my tape a day or if I just make sure I attend Bible class or if I just pray before every meal and do what has been called the nod to God from time to time, that's going to be all right. Go there to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools. Well, what is the sacrifice of fools? It's a lot of talking.

You're going to go down and tell God what needs to be done. You're going to tell God what the plan is. You're going to sketch out the agenda for him and enlist his cooperation.

And we tend to do this in prayer. And it's not 100% our fault that we do this. We've had a long history and tradition in the church of abusing prayer.

We decide who needs to be healed and what needs to happen and what needs to be built and how much money needs to be gained and all of these other agenda items that come up in churches and in the lives of believers. And we go to God and say, Oh, Lord, this, that, and the

other, and this is what needs to be done, offering the sacrifice of fools. When you go near, go to listen.

Do not be hasty in word. Do not be impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. That's how the New American Standard translates that, and that's pretty good.

For God is in heaven and you are on the earth. Therefore, let your words be few. I remember my example during the break where I was in homiletics class and I was talking about how my illustration in my little sample sermon, I was talking about how believers are down in the trenches, we're in our fighting hole, we can just barely peek over enough to see the enemy and maybe squeeze off a few rounds and duck back down.

God is able to see the entire battlefield. And we see somebody take a round, either we take a bullet or somebody next to us takes a bullet, and all we can do is get on the radio and yell, medic, medic, corpsman, corpsman, send out the ambulances, get the stretchers, get the, you know, get the medical supplies. And we spend all our time jamming the bandwidth of the tactical radios, asking for medevac.

Bring in the choppers for medevac, where God is back there, looking at the battlefield saying there are objectives to be achieved, there is ground to be taken. We've got to advance against the enemy. But he's got a whole division of believers down there who can do nothing but get on the radio and yell for medevac.

Well, that's what this is talking about. Don't go to the house of God. Don't come to the presence of God.

You know, we talk about going before the throne of grace. You're going to the dwelling place of God. You're going, in Israel's heyday, that was the temple and the tabernacle.

That was where you went to address your requests to God. That's where you offered sacrifice. That's where you entered into fellowship and communion and worship of God, was at that place.

Go near to listen. God has something to say. The psalmist in Psalm 66 is going to declare wonderful things about the work of God.

Well, listen to that. Don't go down there with the sacrifice of fools. What am I going to offer? I'm going to offer God a lot of advice on how He ought to run His plan and what He ought to do next.

And then you get to verse 3. It says, For the dream comes through much effort, and the voice of a fool through many words. Well, the word dream is legitimate. It's got the definite article.

It's not a dream. It's the dream. The dream comes, but the phrase through much effort, you'll never guess the word, the noun that is in that phrase.

It is the noun, inyon, I-N-Y-A-N. Same one we had in chapter 1, verse 13. Same one we had in the last chapter where it talks about the grievous answer with which man is answered.

This is rav, which is many or much. And this is, what is a dream? What does the Bible have to say about dreams? We don't have time to look at these passages, but I could take you back to the Psalms or to Job. Get a concordance and look up the word dream in the Old Testament in the books that might have preceded Solomon.

Why do dreams come up? It's kind of like vapor. Why do we talk about a vapor? What is its distinguishing quality? It vanishes quickly. It's ephemeral.

It's impermanent. Same thing with a dream. The psalmist talks about the enemies and how, like a dream, they will vanish away.

Job says, I was in torment by day, and then even my dreams at night kept me awake and terrorized me. But a dream is an unreal thing. It's not reality.

And it's temporary. It's an unreality that does not last. Whether it's a good dream or a nightmare, it's unreal and it doesn't last.

Those are the distinguishing qualities of a dream. There are some people who say, oh, well, God communicated via dreams. You have very little precedent in Solomon's day for that.

You have later examples of the wise men being warned in a dream or Joseph being warned in a dream. But you don't have the word dream used in terms of divine communication very much prior to Solomon's time. So when he introduces the idea of dream, what is it? Well, it's a lot like a vapor.

So, and notice the parallelism in verse 3, because in Hebrew it's real clear, because the same word that's translated much in the first phrase and the many words in the second, it's the same word. It's ravah, it's rav, R-A-V, which means much or many. So a dream comes in many answers, and the voice of a fool in many words.

It's parallel. Well, what are the many answers? It's the many words. The voice of the fool, what is the voice of the fool saying? Well, he's creating, he's building all these castles in the air.

He's got all of these scenarios. He's got the answer to the problem. And it's like a dream.

He fabricates this thing while he's talking, but it has no basis in reality. It doesn't last. The whole subject here is let your words be few, because if you go fantasizing before God, here's my fantasy island answer, here's my half-hour sitcom problem and solution when I go to God.

I've got it all figured out, God. If you'll just do this and this, everything will be great. Well, you're going to find this fantasy, this dream, this unreal ephemeral thing with all of these answers, the

many answers, the inyon that the hasty person is going to bring before God.

It's the voice of a fool in many words. When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it. He takes no delight in fools.

He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

Why would someone go make a vow to God? They've got their heart so set on a particular scenario coming out a certain way, just like Jephthah, that they want to throw something in, they want to sweeten the pot. They want to influence God to answer this prayer and to do this thing. And they say, Lord, I'll do X if you will do Y. Well, Solomon doesn't say don't ever make a vow, but he says if you make a vow, you better pay it.

It would be better to not vow than to vow and fail to fulfill it. Do not let your mouth cause your body to sin is what it literally says in verse 6. If you boil this down, Solomon has said, look, you want to try to lay hold of eternal things. You want to get beyond the rising and setting of the sun.

You want something in your hand when you open it. You don't want Hevel. Well, you realize that God has that eternal power and He's put it in our hearts and it's available to us.

But when you run down to God, don't get that one thing right and then immediately trip and fall and make the same mistake that everyone makes, where now you're going to use God as your genie of the lamp to accomplish all of these same Hevel, under the sun goals. Don't be so quick to speak. Go to the house of God and listen.

Listen to the things of God. Absorb when you go to the house of God. Don't be producing the many words that characterize the voice of the fool.

Don't be bringing in the dreams, you know, with all whatever respect is due to Martin Luther King. I have a dream is not the idea. I get so tired of hearing people preach.

It just happened recently with a well-known TV guy where they say, oh, where there is no vision, the people perish. You've got to have a dream. You've got to have a vision of ministry or a vision of accomplishment.

Solomon says, if you start dragging that stuff down before the throne of God, you're just going to be the voice of the fool uttering many words. You've got the answers. Oh, God will every Bible in every language by the year 2000 or, you know, 2000 converts in the year 2000.

They had all these programs for the turn of the millennium and big pushes to get the entire world evangelized by the year 2000. You remember that in the last decade? Well, what's different? People had this big dream, went to God, made vows and promises. Oh, God will do it.

Well, we're where we've always been. We need to be careful that when we do recognize where eternity lies and where intrinsic good and genuine joy and genuine lasting fruit is to be had, to not get that one thing right and then rush in to the throne room and foul it all up. This is Solomon's exhortation.

He's going to continue it and we will continue our study of it next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you that you have not only pointed us in the right direction, but you guide each step that we take on the road that follows your plan and your purpose.

We pray that we will be able to walk in the light, that we will, through the preparation and the transformation that your word accomplishes, be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.