

02-01-06b Ecclesiastes

Let's resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 7. And this was kind of like a pothole in the road for me. I had a really difficult time digesting and being able to talk about this section of the book and do it justice. But I'm going to make one more attempt, and then we'll move on here.

Beginning at verse 14, in the day of benefit, be for good. And in the day of calamity, look also at this. We don't seem to have the need to meditate so much when we're in the day of prosperity.

It's in the day of calamity that we start questioning things. We start looking around saying, well, am I on the right road? Am I doing the right thing? That is when Solomon says, look at this. Remember this.

Pay attention to this. Corresponding to this, meaning in the day of calamity, God works in the manner such that man will not obtain anything after it. Now, what has struck me anew as I've continued to chew on this verse, the first part of this verse is imperatives in the second person.

You be for good. You look also at this. And it's me to you.

You should do this in the day of prosperity. You should do this in the day of calamity. But when you get to the last part, he doesn't say, corresponding to this, God works in a manner such that you will not obtain anything after it.

He says, man will not. This generalizes and says, this is a principle. This is a teaching of Scripture.

This is the pattern of God's working for all mankind. And it's a very clever way to encourage someone to not be subjective, because it's not all about me in my calamity. When Solomon says, remember this, this is such as is common to man, do you see the shift from the second person to the third person here? He says, when you are in a day of benefit, you live in the good.

When you are in the day of calamity, you look at this. This is the way God deals with man. This is ha'adam.

God is at work such that man, ha'adam, will not obtain or find or lay hold of. And the verb there is matzah, M-A-T-Z-A. And you might want to make a note of the fact that that verb is used.

There are certain words that Solomon picks up and uses as a thread to bind several things together in different sections of Ecclesiastes. We've seen him use vapor. We've seen him use profit.

We've seen him use yaphay, good that is beautiful. Here, matzah is going to exponentially increase in frequency until we get to the end of this chapter. He uses it here.

God is at work in a manner such that man will not matzah anything. The word translated anything here can also be translated something. It has to do with some indefinite thing, but it's within a category.

So in this context, it doesn't mean that God is never going to let anybody figure out anything that is to come. But it reminds me, in fact, Dan made a very interesting comment during the break talking about in the business world. Sometimes you always see these charts and graphs and people project a trend.

They say, well, based on this trend, this is going to happen and that's going to happen. But if you have real erratic, I was watching the price of silver for a while and watching it from day to day. And I don't know what the influences are.

You'd have to construct a neural network and put in all the factors and try to figure out. And people try to predict the trend of the stock market and so on. People are all concerned about global warming because they have seen a trend of warmer and warmer winters.

But it depends on the scale over which you measure. If your granularity is very fine, if you're measuring often, you can see spikes. And for some people, it's month to month.

Like one month might be very, very good and another month might be just terrible and you have this real jagged graph. But as you step back and look at it in terms of years or in terms of decades, you might see a very gradual curve. And so it depends on how finely you parse your data as to whether it's a smooth curve or spiky.

Well, we like to think that we can look at things and predict what's going to happen. But a lot of times we can't. Sometimes we're in such a spiky set of data, whatever it might be, that we can't say that based on this month, this is what's going to happen next month or based on this year, this is what's going to happen next year.

And as Dan was pointing out, it can make it very difficult to budget. Buckner used to have this problem when I was there, that the donations and the bequeathed trusts and different things that they would treat might be gangbusters one year and nothing the next. Well, what does it mean to obtain or find or lay hold of something after the day of calamity? Some people have an expectation that every dark cloud has a silver lining.

Some people have an expectation that any time something turns dark, it's just going to all spiral unto death. And you project and you say, well, based on the way things look today, there is no hope. And they do something drastic.

God works in a manner such that man will not obtain anything after, will not find out, will not lay hold of anything after the day of calamity. God sometimes shows people emerging from calamity a better person, like Job, twice as much stuff as he started out with. Other times, people go

through calamity, and they are just in the post-calamity mode from then on.

You cannot look at a calamity and project what is going to be after it. God is at work in the day of calamity in a manner such that you can't predict. It doesn't say you yourself.

It says man cannot predict. You can't find a trend that, well, after every calamity is a benefit. And people like to try to console themselves with this and say, well, it's always darkest just before the dawn.

No, it's not. Sometimes it's always darkest just before the train light shows up in the tunnel, and you get destroyed. It's not always darkest just before the dawn.

Sometimes darkness leads to deeper darkness. You can't be going down in a cave and saying, boy, it's getting darker and darker. It's bound to get light soon.

The deeper you go, the darker it's going to get. God is at work in such a way that you cannot project. Well, why are you trying to project? What are you looking for when you're trying to find out the something that's going to be after the day of calamity? What are you concerned about? You're concerned about your circumstance.

You're concerned about what's my situation going to be. If my finances are on a downward trend, are they going to be better afterward? If my personal relationships are on a downward trend, if my this, that, or the other category of experience is on a downward trend, is it going to come up? Am I going to be a better person for having gone through this? Well, the fact of calamity by itself is not a predictor. You can't say every time, in the same way that when you look at someone or you experience yourself a calamity, you can't always say this is divine discipline.

Or you can't always say this is suffering for blessing. The fact of calamity, the fact of ra-a in one's life, is not a predictor. And God does that on purpose.

God is at work in the human race to demonstrate that you cannot predict on the basis of circumstances, because life is not circumstances. We're not here to live from circumstance to circumstance. And it's not a law of the universe, like Newton's laws.

For every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction. Well, we like to think that the calamity is an action, and that there's going to be some sort of equal and opposite reaction afterward. There's just not.

God has so designed human experience that you cannot look at any given calamity. Some people come down with cancer and go in for treatment, and it goes into remission. And they live for many more years.

Another person that looks just identical in every respect goes in for treatment, and they die. They have a day of calamity. And they cannot find out, just looking at that calamity, what's going to

happen afterward.

And God has designed it that way. Why? Well, you look at the end of verse 18. Fearing God comes forth from them all.

The goal, whether your calamity results in benefit, whether your calamity has long-lasting, negative, deleterious effects, the goal, what you're supposed to be finding at the end of it is not some tit-for-tat, some great yin and yang in the universe, and well, the good is balanced by evil, and the evil is balanced by good, and it all sort of evens out in the end. Not necessarily. God has purposely thrown off the equation.

You can't always add the one plus one and get the two that you're expecting in circumstances. Why? God is pointing us toward the fear of himself. God says, you know, you can't, I don't want you to find all of your answers and have the equations all balance out neatly in circumstances because you'll never look beyond the rising and setting of the sun.

God has put eternity in our hearts, and one of the ways that he awakens us to that is that things don't make sense. They don't always equate. They don't always come around full circle.

There are a lot of believers. Janelle and I were talking about this book, Friesen's Decision-Making and the Will of God, and Friesen talks about, in that book, the fact that there are believers who try to parse out and analyze what God was doing in each circumstance of life and say, well, you know, that bad experience that I had two years ago, I can see now that God was preparing me for this experience I'm having right now. That's not always the case, and it's not supposed to be the case.

If everything evened out, if you could get to the last day of your life and be clear-headed and look back and have a perfect memory and say, you know, I can see where every single thing that God did had a reason and it all tied together and it all is wrapped up in a neat bow and my life is a nice, neatly wrapped, fully taped, ribboned and tagged package and it's all perfect. It isn't. Why? Because this life is not all there is.

This life is just a prelude. It's the preface page to the great book that is our life that's going to go forward into the millennial kingdom and beyond the millennial kingdom into the kingdom of the Father. And we don't know what the rest of those pages are going to say, but don't think that the preface page is the whole book.

Don't think that boot camp is going to be the entire military experience. You can't even project forward from boot camp and say, well, I guess the Navy or the Marine Corps or the Army is going to be just like this boot camp. It's not.

Boot camp has a particular purpose to prepare us for things and you don't always know why they do what they do in a plebe year or a beast barracks or boot camp, but it becomes clear much

later on when you return as one of the drill instructors or as one of the upperclassmen or as one of the people who implements that program and now you have a much grander vision. Well, we don't get that grand vision in this life. We don't get that grand vision completely under the sun.

We take it by faith that God knows what He's doing in putting us through life. And sometimes we have a debility or a shortfall or a lack that is never resolved in this life. God is at work in such a way that man will not find out, will not lay hold of what the meaning and the purpose and the ultimate goal of all of this is.

Why? Because it forces us to realize that there's something beyond this life. We exist beyond the setting of the sun, fearing God, faith in God, belief in what God says, that God knows what He's doing. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, things that are yet future, that we haven't encountered yet.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. We're not supposed to see how it all ties together and how it all makes sense. That's why Solomon says, look, if you want some examples of how life doesn't balance out, look at verse 15.

I've seen everything in the days of my vapor, my transient time here on earth. I've seen the righteous perishing in His righteousness. That doesn't balance out.

But the righteous were supposed to be blessed and prosperous and get their five paragraphs of super grace blessing because they were faithful. It doesn't always turn out that way. And it is a misconception to think that just because you're faithful and just because you're obedient and just because you learn the Word of God, your life is going to suddenly detour into a wonderful flower garden lined with roses and with sweet-smelling savors all around and you'll never see a wrinkle or a furrow or a problem.

It's just not so. And it doesn't mean that you're going to be the best at everything that you do and that you're going to excel and that you're going to shine and you're going to be recognized and it's all going to come around and to the victor go the spoils and to the faithful go the rewards and God is going to raise me up and put me on a high hill and illuminate the world with me because I've been faithful and righteous and done what I'm supposed to do. It's not so.

Not yet. Not now. I've seen in the days of my vapor.

Why does he say the days of my vapor? He's not saying now by the time I see the millennial kingdom and by the time I see the kingdom of the Father, I will see the righteous perishing in His righteousness. It's under the sun. It's in the days of the temporary, the impermanent, the transient that things don't balance out.

Why? You don't have the whole equation. You don't have the millennium. You don't have eternity yet.

So what will suggest to you that there must be more to the equation? The fact that what you see here doesn't balance out, doesn't add up. I've seen the righteous perishing in His righteousness. I've seen the transgressor lasting, living long in His transgression.

That doesn't equate. That doesn't fulfill what God said in His word. What conclusion must I draw from that in the day of my calamity that things are not adding up and balancing out and making sense? It drives me to the inescapable conclusion that there is more to this life than this life.

There is more to my circumstances than my circumstances. It's not all coming to fruition and conclusion like a 30-minute, actually 23-minute and then seven minutes full of commercials, little sitcom episode. It's not going to be a Perry Mason case where everything's all tied up at the end just before Della and Perry and Paul walk out and switch off the light.

This life is like a two-parter. You watch something and you didn't look at the TV guide and you get all the way up and then it just cuts off and leaves all these loose ends and they say, to be continued. You say, oh, I didn't want to watch it to be continued.

I'm not even going to be here tomorrow night. And you're left hanging. Like, well, but what about these unresolved... And the bad guy got away and the good guy's all in trouble.

Well, that's this life. That's what Solomon is saying. God is at work in the day of calamity.

You don't think about that in prosperity. You think, hey, things are rolling along pretty good. Got security, got safety, got confident expectations, everything's bright and normal.

It doesn't lend itself to that kind of meditation. But the day of evil, the day of calamity when stuff is not going well and where you are left with something of a cliffhanger or something of an incongruity, this doesn't compute. It doesn't make sense.

What does it do? It points you to the fear of God. What is the fear of God? It's not cowering with an arm over our forehead. I always think of those medieval paintings of the people with their arm up, like, oh, God's coming.

It's like, oh, it's too bright. It's scary. The fear of the Lord is making wisdom the apple of your eye, recognizing that he has put the fixed landmarks on the horizon.

And it reminds me of the lighthouses. I was doing some work on the town of Hull for the Hull family website. We visited there a while back.

And the first lighthouse in America, the Boston Light in Boston Harbor is on Webster Island, which is just off the coast of the town of Hull. And I've got a big chart up on my wall in my office. And I have a thing about seeing beyond the obvious on the concrete.

And I have that chart up there because the chart of the south part of Boston Harbor with the town

of Hull there, it appeals to me because my family is named for one of my ancestors and so on. But I like that chart because in red ink are all of the shipwrecks. Everybody that missed the harbor for a period of 250 years is on that chart.

There are hundreds of shipwrecks. And I think of all the different circumstances. Everybody was trying to get into the harbor and all of these people missed it and hit the rocks.

And it's a warning. It's a reminder to me. Paul talks about, do not make shipwreck of your faith.

And how do you avoid shipwreck? Well, why did they put that light out there on Webster Island? That's the beacon. That shows you where the rocks and shoals are. And if you keep your eye on the light, even if it's stormy, even if you can't see the shoreline and you can't see the rocks and shoals, you don't see everything about the seductive woman.

You don't see her Egyptian linen. You don't see the aloe and myrrh that's on her bed. You don't see the aftermath in the full picture.

You can only see a little bit. You just have a few telltales, a few clues that are the tip of that iceberg, the most of which you cannot see. God gives us these things to look at.

And in the day of calamity, we meditate on that. And we think, where are my signposts? Where are my guides? I've seen everything in the days of my vapor. Under the sun, it doesn't compute.

The righteous perishes in his righteousness. The transgressor lives long in his transgression. Do not become excessively righteous and do not make yourself overly wise.

Why desolate yourself? This is a startling statement. Everybody in Israel, especially, Israel, they're in the business of righteousness. They're the righteous nation.

That's where righteousness and wisdom are supposed to dwell. Hasn't Solomon been touting the benefits of wisdom? Wisdom is in the shadow and the silver. That tangible, intrinsic value is in the shadow and it's wisdom.

Wisdom gives life to her baal, to her owner. How can he now say, don't make yourself overly wise? Don't make yourself overly righteous? Well, think about Paul addressing this same issue over in Romans chapter 9, verse 30. What shall we say then? The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained to righteousness.

The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained to righteousness. Why? What happened when the Gentiles came to Christ? Were they trying to be righteous? Were they trying to make themselves righteous? They were responding to the call for faith and deliverance, weren't they? They were responding to the call of God. God says, be reconciled.

Be fruitful. Seize and lay hold of meaning and purpose and definition. Be made right with God.

Enter into relationship with God through Christ. Find out why you are here. Enter into the plan and the purpose of God.

Their goal was not just, you know, I'm just not righteous enough. I think I'll go over here and believe in the God of the Jews and make myself righteous. That'll do the trick.

There are a lot of people who engage in religion because their goal is righteousness. They want to balance guilt. They want to assuage this feeling of sinfulness and inadequacy and fruitlessness.

So they say, well, I'll get into this system. I'll get some righteousness to balance out my wayward ways and the bad sides of me. Righteousness will be my goal.

The Gentiles, the church-age believers that Paul is talking about here, came in and they weren't looking to shine. They weren't looking to impress people with their righteousness. They responded to the call of God in Christ.

They did not pursue righteousness, but they attained to righteousness. This word attain, the Greek word that's used here, is the translation of matzah in the Septuagint. Matzah is translated by this attain.

Solomon says, what are you trying to obtain? If you're seeking to obtain righteousness, you're missing the boat. Seek the fear of God. Make as your signpost on the horizon the value that undergirds your priorities and your principles and the application thereof, pleasing God.

When you please God, you are declared righteous, but you're not going after the righteousness. It's sort of like when you excel in military service, they award you a medal or a ribbon, but you're not doing what you do. You're not pursuing.

You're not seeking to lay hold of the ribbon. At least you shouldn't be. There are a lot of people who do, and they're not well thought of.

But you don't do what you do to get the award. You do what you do because you believe in the cause, and you would be satisfied with what that ribbon or that medal represents. It represents approval.

It represents that the granting authority is satisfied and is impressed with your work and your effort and your pattern over a period of time of selfless devotion to duty. The righteousness that God assigns to us is a reflection of his glory, and the privilege of reflecting his glory goes to those who are pursuing a life of faith, who are living heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. And you cannot help, as soon as you start seeking righteousness, you're either seeking it because you want to impress people or because you need it for some personal benefit, some deficit you feel in your soul, and you want to get this righteousness so that you can cling to it and say, well

now see, I did some bad things over here, but look at this righteous thing.

Why do you think people give to charity? Why do you think people hand a dollar bill out the window to the guy on the corner? Balance, tit for tat. I had some bad things, but you know, I'm generous. I give.

God won't turn me away at the pearly gates because I've done some good things also. That's seeking righteousness for its own sake. Do not become excessively righteous.

The only way to become excessively righteous is to pursue righteousness as a goal. That's my focus. Whatever it is that's righteous, that's what I'm going to do because I want to be righteous for some reason.

Also, do not transgress excessively and do not become a fool. Why should you die in what is not your time? Don't blow the nose out of proportion on the face and don't cut the nose off despite your face either. The face needs a nose.

Get a nose that's the right size and the right shape. Put it in perspective. There are people who just go totally into the grace mode.

They say, you know, Christ died. All my sins are paid for. I've had a friend of mine tell me that 1 John doesn't have anything to do with the Christian life.

It's all about salvation. And that confessing your sins, that's what you do at the point of salvation. And that once you're saved, you don't have to worry about sin.

Christ, Jesus paid it all. All sin is forgiven. And that forgiveness and cleansing is salvation, forgiveness and cleansing.

And once that happens, hey, go to town. Be like a free son. Just aim for that great big wide piece of target.

Don't worry about a bullseye. Don't worry about any kind of specific will of God. You know, don't do obviously terrible immoral things.

But hey, life is a great big arena. Just throw your dart. And if it hits anywhere, yeah, you're okay.

It's the error of license within grace. Liberty turning into license. That's what Solomon says here.

If you make a goal out of righteousness, by the same token, don't say, well, since righteousness is not a goal, well then, hey, you know, all's fair. You'll die before your time. Verse 18, it is good that you take hold in this.

Matzah means to find and lay hold, attain or obtain something. It is good. Now that's not the verb that's used here in verse 18, but it's a synonym.

Take hold in this and also from this, do not allow your hand to rest. Do not cause your hand to rest. This is the causative stem in Hebrew.

For fearing God comes forth from them all. And what are them all? It's the days of calamity. It's the things you think about.

The inequities of life that you encounter in the days of calamity. Why are there inequities? To point us to the fear of the Lord. To recognize that life goes beyond the setting of the sun.

And in that context, wisdom, verse 19, helps the wise more than 10 rulers who are in a city. Who are the rulers? They're the wise ones. They're the experienced ones.

They're the ones who have risen to a position of authority because they are thought to have a grip on things that other people don't have. You see these people running for office. Who do you vote for? Well, you try to find the guy that you think is gonna do the best job because he's got experience, he's got knowledge, he's got a track record of some sort.

Who are the rulers in a city? The same thing. You find the 10 best people. Kind of puts you in mind of the dialogue between God and Abraham back in Genesis.

Remember when God tells Abraham, I'm not gonna hide from you what I'm about to do. Old Sodom and Gomorrah down there, I'm gonna blow them away, fire and brimstone time. And Abraham says, wait, my nephew Lot's down there.

And he says, well, if there were a hundred righteous men in the city, God says, no, if there were a hundred, well, what about 50? What about 20? What about 10? If there were 10 righteous men in the city, God wouldn't destroy it. Well, here Solomon says, if you've got 10 rulers in a city, helping the city, preserving the city, being the salt and light in that city, if you've got wisdom, you're better off than that city. It's better than 10 rulers who are in a city.

For a man is not righteous in the earth that will do good and not sin. You're going to encounter all kinds of things from without and within. Men outside are going to sin against you and cause your calamity.

You are going to fail and sin and cause calamity. In the illustration there, he says, look at verbal sins, look at cursing. He says, you'll hear your servant cursing you from time to time.

But don't take it to heart because you yourself have cursed. Here's an example from the area of mental attitude sin, expressing itself in verbal sin. You do it yourself, other people do it to you.

Don't stumble over it. Don't decide that there needs to be some kind of equity. It needs to be resolved.

I've got to defend myself. I've got to make sure my servant doesn't curse. People fall down in this

area by having a subordinate or parents having children.

And we were talking about that a little bit on Friday night after the holidays when you see other people, you go around and see their kids and you think, oh my gosh, this is of course not the case in my family or in my circle of acquaintance. But you see little terror children, little juvenile delinquents running around. You think, what is going on with these children? I heard two different accounts from two totally separate and distinct churches of the Christmas program running completely amok because the children were uncontrollable little hellions.

And it just made a shambles of the Christmas program. Well, why is that? Because parents don't want their children to curse them. They don't want to be ill thought of.

And so they want to be their buddy and want to be their friend. And they don't want to be thought of as the bad guy. Solomon says, look, don't take the words that they speak to heart.

If you hear your servant cursing you, you know that you in your heart have cursed others. We are sinned against and we sin. That is not the driving criteria of life on what we do.

Well, try to live your life in such a way that no one curses you. Try to live your life in a way that you're never going to curse someone else. Sin is going to happen.

We're going to bring calamity on ourselves. Other people are going to bring calamity to us. All of this, I tested out.

I tried with wisdom, he says. I said I would be wise, but it was far from me. Solomon did the very thing he warns against up here in verse 15 or 16.

Do not make yourself overly wise. Solomon says, I tried to make myself overly wise. I tried everything with wisdom.

I said I would be wise, but it turned out to be far from me. I didn't achieve what I was after when I made myself wise, when I said I would be wise. Far away is what that was.

This is just literally out of the Hebrew. Far away is what that was. And deep, deep, inaccessible.

Who will obtain it? Who will matzah it? Who will find it and seize it and lay hold of it? How are you going to lay hold of this goal? If you make, this is what has happened, I think, in a lot of doctrinal churches. A lot of strong teaching emphasis are people who say, well, the way is through knowledge of the Scriptures. And so I'm just going to immerse myself in knowledge of the Scriptures.

That's my goal. I'm going to live for the knowledge of the Scriptures and everything is going to come out fine. And then you say, you know what? I did that.

Heard a tape a day. You know, I went to church every time the doors were open, immersed

myself in the teaching of the Word of God, and I still had problems, and I still failed, and I sinned, and I didn't seem to experience the growth and all of the different categories of blessing that I was expecting and that I thought were going to happen to me. It was far away and it was deep.

Who can attain it? Who can seize? Who can matzah this? Where was the last place we saw matzah? Up in verse 14. In the day of benefit, be for good. In the day of calamity, look also at this.

God works in such a manner that man will not matzah anything after it. Even if you think you're on the right track by making wisdom itself your goal, you're not going to be able to matzah. You're not going to be able to lay hold, to find and seize this thing.

Solomon says, I tried it. I tried all of this with wisdom. I said I would be wise, but guess what? It was far from me.

Far away is what that was, and deep, deep. Who will obtain it? If I can't, and I'm the king, and I've got all this wisdom, who will obtain it? Verse 25. I turned myself and my heart.

Very interesting. It seems almost as though they're two separate entities. You know, Solomon has dialogues with his heart.

I said to my heart, you know, I will test you with mirth. I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom. And heshbon.

This is ingenuity, skill, an explanation, an answer. It's solving the puzzle. It's answering the riddle.

Heshbon is a very difficult word. This is H-E-S-H-B-O-N. Heshbon.

It's a difficult word to translate. I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and the answer to the riddle. Heshbon.

The ingenuity, the ingenious solution, the explanation, the cunning plan. All of these are wrapped up in that word. And to know evil folly and the follies of rantings.

You don't get the plural of follies in the English translations, but the second reference to folly is plural here. So I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and heshbon. The big solution, the ingenious answer, the cunning plan, the key that unlocks it all.

And to know evil folly and the follies of rantings. Here's another reference to halal in the P.A.L. Something over the top. It's translated madness in a lot of cases.

But it's the folly of ranting, just going on talking about one thing and another. And I myself am finding here, verse 26, this is a participle form of matzah, once again. This is our third reference

in this passage to matzah, verse 26.

I myself am finding. It's the participle. It's an ongoing.

He doesn't say I found in the past. He says I'm finding still, more bitter than death, the woman. I myself am finding, matzah, the participle, more bitter than death, the woman.

And we have sort of a division marker in the sentence. He just stops. It's like he can't even find words to describe her.

And there's sort of a strange grammar here in the middle of the sentence. It's like as soon as Solomon says the woman, he kind of has to stop and think. And his sentence kind of falls apart at this point.

I myself am finding, more bitter than death, the woman. That one, snares and nets are her heart and chains are her hands. More bitter than death, the woman.

That one. It literally says that she. That one.

It's the one in the feminine. That one woman. That woman.

Snares and nets are her heart. This is the word order in Hebrew. Snares and nets are her heart and chains are her hands.

Well, this is not every woman. He's not a misogynist. Not every woman is evil, satanic and bad.

But this woman is. What woman is it? Snares and nets. That's her heart.

Her hands are chains. She gets a hold of you and you're ensnared. You're entrapped.

You are dragged away from the right path. Well, we just saw a detailed description of that woman over in Proverbs chapter 7. Snares and nets are her heart. Chains are her hands.

The good. And this is Tov. The good one.

In this case, the good one before the face of God. L'panei ha Elohim. Before the face of God.

The good one before the face of God will escape from her. This is actually the word for deliverance in the Nifal, which is the passive. And it means will be escaped.

And it comes to mean to deliver oneself. The good before the face of God will deliver himself from her. But the transgressing one, and this word translated sinner in your English, is a word that means to sin by crossing the line.

By transgressing a boundary. The transgressing one will be captured by her. We can deliver ourselves if we are the good before God.

If we are Tov before God. If we are transgressing ones, we will be captured. How do we avoid the snare? How do we avoid the allure? How do we avoid being the simpleton that is taken in and diverted? Well, this woman, Solomon is not talking about literal women here.

He's talking about that in life that ensnares us and takes us away. We have to look at our own life and decide what that principle is. What is that circumstance or that relationship or that factor in our life that ensnares and entraps us the way a beautiful but shallow woman ensnares and entraps the unwary.

If you're good before the face of God, notice the contrast between the one who is seeking to be overly righteous, a righteousness of our own manufacture. Back in Romans 9, verse 31, Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.

They stumbled at the stumbling stone, the stumbling stone and rock of offense. But whoever believes on him will not be put to shame. It's faith that makes us good before God.

It's not us pursuing our own righteousness. We don't make an offering of our righteousness like Cain's tossed salad and bring it before God. We do what is right in the eyes of the Lord and we are declared righteous by Him.

So he says, the one who is good before the face of God, this is in God's sight. Good in God's sight. Not good because you pursue your own righteousness and bring it to God like a sacrifice.

Good in God's sight will escape from her. The transgressing one will be captured by her. Well, verse 27 is very fascinating.

Kohelet is going to tell us what he has found and he's going to add one plus one, but we'll have to save that for next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you that you have given us those markers, those guides and lighthouses that we can guide our lives upon. We can base our values and our priorities and make our decisions in that light based on your word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enliven these truths in our soul that we'll be able to see the application in our specific circumstances, the challenges that face us.

And we'll be ever mindful of the fact that this life is but a prelude of what is to come, that you're preparing us and that as Solomon says, all of these things lead us to the fear of God. We pray that our lives will be pleasing in your sight, that we will be the good before your face and that as a result, we can cling to the straight path and be prepared not only in this life, but in the life to come to be pleasing to you in every way. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.