

02-01-13a Ecclesiastes

As we continue our worship this morning, turn with me for our scripture reading to Proverbs chapter 5. Proverbs chapter 5. Our scripture reading last week was from Proverbs chapter 7, where we saw the seductive woman who waylays the naive youth in the streets. He's trying to go to his destination, but she seduces him away with her charms, with her superficial allure. There is a similar theme a few chapters earlier in Proverbs, and all of this bears directly on what we see in our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 7 as we finish that chapter.

But Solomon here says, My son, pay attention to my wisdom. Lend your ear to my understanding, so that you may preserve discretion and your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil.

But in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death. Her steps lay hold of Sheol.

Lest you ponder her path of life, her ways are unstable. You do not know them. Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.

Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the cruel one. Lest aliens be filled with your wealth and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and you mourn at last when your flesh and body are consumed, and say how I have hated instruction and my heart despised correction. I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers.

I have not inclined my ear to those who instructed me. I was on the verge of total ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation. Drink water from your own cistern and running water from your own well.

Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets, let them be only your own and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times and always be enraptured with her love.

For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman and be embraced in the arms of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray." Well, you may have recognized some of the same language in this chapter of Proverbs as we have seen in Ecclesiastes chapter 7. You recall, for example, the language in terms of bitterness.

In the end, she is bitter as wormwood in verse 4. And that idea of bitterness is found in verse 26 of chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes. I myself am finding more bitter than death the woman. And it goes

on to describe her.

Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of Sheol. What does it mean? Does this mean that you're going to get AIDS and die or you're going to get some sort of disease and pass away? This is talking about, in Old Testament terms, the same thing that we see in the New Testament that we discussed as recently as Friday night in our study of Luke. Operational death.

We saw Friday night the five decision points of faith. Five faith decisions, if you want to abbreviate that small enough to fit on the cassette label. Five faith decisions.

We decide to assemble. We decide to hear. We decide to understand.

We decide to exercise faith and to treat something as reality. And then we decide to act accordingly. And at every stage of processing the Word of God, from the decision to assemble through the decision to apply, failure at any one of those points leads to death.

Operational death. Fruitlessness. The withered branch that is broken off and gathered in bundles and burned.

And in the Old Testament communication, the same thing is true. You cannot be fruitful. You cannot have faith credited to you for righteousness if you are distracted by that which allures.

And it's easy to say, well, this is just a warning to young men to be moral and not to stray from the path and to not commit fornication or adultery. But that misses the larger application. What would be the application of this imagery, of this potential for disaster in the life of a believer, whether it's Old Testament or New Testament? Why is this type of language used? It's very specific.

It's very graphic. You get all the way down there to where you're talking about body parts and things that you see used in advertising and so forth today to try to attract. The adage in advertising is sex sells.

Well, why is that? Because they've got breath mints that they use all kinds of seductive imagery to sell breath mints. Most people are not going to rely on breath mints in that department. They're going to hope for a lot more.

But sex sells. Well, it's sort of an irony that Solomon says, okay, you want to talk about that which allures? Well, wisdom is crying out in the streets. She is calling out in the marketplace.

But she is a different kind of woman than the seductress. And the seductress is attractive. She is alluring.

She is almost irresistible. And we saw a lot of that description in Chapter 7 of Proverbs. But here in Chapter 5, Solomon begins in this section by saying, you've got to pay attention to wisdom.

If you want to avoid this trap, pay attention to wisdom. What allures today? Promises of financial

security. Promises of social acceptability.

You have a whole industry built around looking better and feeling better. Fitness and appearance. All of the things that seem to make for a happy life are put forward today as being the key.

Follow this diet. Use this machine. Participate in this program.

Join your local health club. Come down and have all different kinds of cosmetic surgery or use products that will do the equivalent. Look at these before and after pictures.

That is alluring to people. It strikes at the very heart of what we desire in our human nature. We want to be well thought of.

We want to be youthful. We want to be happy. And how many different things in our culture hook into that desire? It's everywhere.

And it's like the seductress on the corner because to the extent that we begin to put our faith or our hopes into, or even our love. You have the three Christian virtues. If you begin to love the things in the world, we're commanded to love not the world or the things that are in it.

But there are people that do. There are people that love dolling up and going out and being seen. It just contributes to their sense of self-worth.

It contributes to their self-esteem. People need to be appreciated. It's built in.

Everybody has a need to be appreciated. It's as natural as the need for food, clothing, and shelter. And the need for a lot of other basic things.

Go look at Maslow's hierarchy if you want to get a summary of that. Well, here is the lips of the immoral woman in verse 3 that drip honey. It's sweet.

You can see it. Before you even taste it, you can see it. I don't think they really had prostitutes and immoral women running around with honey dripping off of their mouth, do they? This is metaphoric language.

It would be like somebody on a model or something with grape jelly all over her mouth. Dripping honey is the promise of sweetness. You look at it and you see it dripping.

The promise is if you partake of those lips, you're going to taste sweetness. Her mouth is smoother than oil, but in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death.

What is this talking about? The superficial, alluring things of this life. We have to analyze our own existence. It's easy to say, well, of course, those young men, they're off to look at the teenage pregnancy rate.

Shame on them. We don't stop and think, what are the things that allure me? Who is the immoral woman with the honey-drenched lips that are smoother than oil in my life? What is it that draws me and hooks into my soft and insecure places in my soul and draws me in a direction other than toward the Lord? We all have those things. They can be rooted in our past.

They can be rooted in our insecurities. They can be rooted in our natural areas of weakness and our sinful nature. But we all have them.

And Solomon says, watch out. There are things that look great, and they're not. In the end, it will be bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

What is it that's sharp as a two-edged sword in the New Testament? It's the Word of God that is sharp for a beneficial reason. You read stories. I remember there was a paperback book that came out years ago about the scalpel murders.

And this whole mystery revolved around these series, you know, a serial killer that seemed to have the skills of a doctor, where the scalpel that's supposed to be used for beneficial surgery was instead used to destroy. Well, you get the same idea. Do you want a sharp two-edged sword to do you good by exposing and rooting out what is rotten and corrupted and unhealthy within the soul, the thoughts and intents of the heart that need to be critically examined? Or do you want the sharp two-edged sword of bitter wormwood to puncture you? Girls have these hamsters, and as you're learning to deal with them, everybody, I guess, sooner or later gets bitten.

The bad thing about a rodent bite is it's a puncture wound. If you remember your biology and your health knowledge, puncture wounds are the most difficult to treat because the bacteria gets punched deep into the flesh past your defenses. And, you know, you get infections, and a lot of times you have to get tetanus shots and things, or rabies shots, when you get a puncture wound because it pierces.

And a bitter, piercing wound in the ancient world was virtually impossible to recover from. There's no topical treatment you can do, and they didn't have surgery in those days. So, watch out for the sharp two-edged sword behind those attractive features.

Feet going down to death, steps laying hold of Sheol. Lest you ponder her path of life, her ways are unstable, you do not know them. You cannot always tell the end and how something is going to end up by looking at it.

You have to judge it ahead of time. If a guy knew beforehand, you know, hindsight is 20-20. A lot of people, if they knew how things were going to turn out, would never start down a particular road.

We have to develop the skill of identifying a bad road without being able to see its destination. You know, there was an old country song about 40 miles of bad road. Well, you don't want to

have to travel all 40 miles to find out that there's a terrible destination at the end.

You want to be able to identify that road and don't take it. Lest you ponder her path of life, her ways are unstable, you do not know them. Therefore, hear me now.

You cannot judge a book by its cover. One of the oldest truisms in the English language. And it cannot be identified.

You know, human wisdom says, well, you've got to try to figure this out by cause and effect. But we have an advantage. We have the Word of God that helps us identify these things in our life if we take the time to meditate.

That third step after assembling and hearing is understanding, which requires meditation. God gives understanding to those who meditate on His Word. It's a ministry of the Spirit.

Therefore, hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house. And this is the old nip it in the bud principle.

When the Word of God tells you, when the Spirit of God tells you through the Word that something is not in keeping with God's will, with God's plan, with God's purpose, when it doesn't have that which commends it, then stay away from it. There are people who tantalize themselves. I remember when I was in seminary and we were studying the problem of pornography addiction, which leads to all kinds of other immorality and how prevalent it is in the Christian world and how prevalent it is among Christian full-time ministers.

The story was told about a man who came in for counseling to the chaplain who was teaching this course, the seminary chaplain at the time. He said there was a man who came to him and he said, chaplain, I've got this terrible... He was a seminary student in a graduate degree program. He said, chaplain, I've just been wrestling with this and I want to come in and have you help me.

I have this problem with pornography. I can't seem to stay away from these quote-unquote adult materials. And the chaplain said, well, how is it that you fall into this? He said, well, as I drive back and forth to work, I pass right by this adult bookstore and I just can't help myself.

I wind up going in there. Well, the chaplain talked to him two or three times and got out a map and got to looking at where the man worked and where his home was. The man was going out of his way.

The path he was taking was not the best route to get from home to work. He was choosing a route that took him past the adult bookstore and then wondering why he couldn't stop himself from going on in. Well, he had already caved.

He had already made a bad decision that led him in a path of temptation that he was not

equipped to resist. And you remember on Friday night when we talked about those stages, if you have to succeed, you have to flip a positive switch at all five points to reach the point of application that is faith credited as righteousness. And if you fail at any one point, your others are gone by default.

You have to start with a desire to hear the Word and assemble. Go to the place where it is found. Don't settle for a place where you get mostly straw and very little nourishment.

And when you hear it, you have to decide you're going to listen to it. You have to decide you're going to understand it. You have to decide that you're going to make it the object of your faith and you have to decide to put it into application.

Failure in an early step obviates all the rest of the steps. You never get that far. And it's the same with avoiding sin.

Solomon says, look, if you don't want to cave in and be allured by the honey-drenched lips, don't go by the house. Map your path in such a way that if you've got a weakness in that area, you don't just put yourself in a way of a temptation that you have no hope of resisting anyway. A lot of people struggle with repeat sins, with clusters of sins, and patterns of besetting sins.

The sin that so easily besets us. Remember that passage in the New Testament. It says, laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, let us run with patience, that race.

Well, if you're on the racetrack, you're not going to be on some side street that leads past this alluring woman's door. How do you lay aside a besetting sin? Well, don't put yourself in the position where it is a potential. And sometimes that means removing things out of our life.

Map a different path to get to and from work. Do not go near the door of her house, lest, and this is otherwise, so often in the Old Testament. You remember the famous passage, Go to this people, God tells Isaiah, and preach to them, so that seeing they will see and not perceive, hearing they will hear and not understand.

Make the heart of this people hard, I'm paraphrasing here, lest they turn and repent, and I heal them. Well, the word lest there means otherwise. If they would hear and understand, if they would see and perceive, if they would not harden their hearts, that's what otherwise means.

Otherwise, they would turn, and God could heal them. It doesn't mean lest. He's not saying that.

I don't want you to help them turn and change their mind because I want to punish them. He's saying when you go, this is what's going to happen. Otherwise, if it didn't happen, they would turn and I would heal them.

Well, you have the same idea here. Verse 10 is translated lest, but it means, and verse 9, the same. Otherwise, if you do go near the door of her house, you're going to give your honor to

others and your years to the cruel one.

What does this mean? Your honor and your years to the cruel one. The honor that you could accumulate by a lifestyle of faith. The years that you could be spending redeeming the time, buying it out of this present evil age, and investing it in treasure in heaven.

Lest aliens be filled with your wealth. Who's he talking to here? This is Israel. These are believers.

And he's saying, you know what? Gentiles are going to end up with the blessings and the fulfillment of covenant promises that were originally given to Israel because when all of the individual Israelites become generations, and generation after generation fails in this regard, aliens will be filled with their wealth and labors are going to go to the house of a foreigner. This is sort of a foreshadowing of the last will be first and the first will be last. And the promises that were made to Israel will be taken away from them and given to another.

When your flesh and your body are consumed and you say, how I have hated instruction and my heart despised correction. I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me. Listening to the Word of God and being instructed thereby, going through those steps we studied Friday night all the way to the end will ensure that we do not wind up, as it says in verse 14, on the verge of total ruin.

Right in the midst of the assembly and the congregation. Here's someone who assembled and yet didn't heed the voice of instruction. Made it past step one of assembling.

They're in Israel. You cannot hardly help but assemble in the Old Testament age. Well, this illuminates for us what Solomon says over in Ecclesiastes 7. And if you'll turn there now, let's review beginning in verse 23.

All of this I tested or tried with wisdom. I said I would be wise, but it was far from me. Far away is what that was, and deep, deep.

Who will find it? And find there in verse 24 is matzah. And this is a word that is used over and over again in this section of Scripture. I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and an explanation, a reckoning, the understanding, the accounting of how things are.

This is the word cheshbon, C-H-E-S-H-B-O-N. I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and cheshbon. The verb form of this noun was used of the skilled workmen who used their ingenuity to construct the implements that God directed for worship in the tabernacle and later the temple.

It was used of building defenses on the walls of Jerusalem to repel arrows and catapult rocks and things. They had ingenious defenses that were mounted on the walls to fend off attacks. But the

word kashab, C-H-A-S-H-A-B, kashab, its root meaning is to reckon, to account.

Remember in the Old Testament, it says both in the Psalms and it's quoted in the New Testament that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness? That's the verb kashab. It was reckoned to him. It was accounted to him.

When he was analyzed and a conclusion was drawn about his faith, the conclusion was righteousness. So Solomon says, I made a big effort here to know and explore. What is it that he found when he made this effort? Well, verse 26, I myself am finding, and this is matzah again, M-A-T-Z-H-A, in a participle form meaning this is ongoing.

I am finding more bitter than death. The woman. Now what is it that's more bitter than death? Earlier in this chapter, Solomon talked about death, didn't he? Remember in the beginning where he said a name is better than good ointment or good perfume? Martin Luther, I don't know if I mentioned this when we went through verse 1, but Martin Luther, when he translated this into German, and I'm translating his German into English, basically said a good odor is better than a good deodorant.

A good odor is better than a good perfume. It's better to smell good intrinsically than to try to cover up your bad smell with perfume. That's what Martin Luther understood from this verse.

A genuinely good reputation is better than something you use to try to cover up a bad smell was his take on that. A name is better than good ointment. Whether the ointment is used as a perfume or whether it's used as a salve.

The word is used for both. So it can be understood either way. The day of death is better than the day of birth.

You remember in the intermediate section of this chapter when he said do not try to pursue righteousness overly much. Do not become excessively righteous in verse 16. And do not make yourself overly wise.

Why make yourself desolate? Well, this seems to say just the opposite of what we saw. Solomon says if you're wise, you're going to avoid the woman whose steps lead to death and you're going to avoid giving away your honor and becoming desolate in the end by listening to wisdom. Well, how do we reconcile these two viewpoints? Solomon here says I turn myself and my heart to know and explore and to intensively seek wisdom and the explanation, the calculation, the accounting that would help me to know evil folly and the follies of rantings.

Some of the translations say the follies of madness. I wanted to avoid making mistakes that would lead me to the profitless, vapor-filled life. What am I finding? More bitter than death is the woman.

That one. Snares and nets are her heart and chains or bonds are her hands. The good one before the face of God will escape from her but the transgressing one will be captured by her.

So what does wisdom tell us? When you test the various paths you can take through life, what does wisdom conclude? Well, Solomon says when I turn my heart to know and explore and intensively seek wisdom and the accurate accounting of how life works, to know evil folly, I found that the worst folly that there is, the quickest way to end up with nothing is to be snared by that woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are chains. How do you escape from her? It's the same thing we heard in Proverbs chapter 5 and Proverbs chapter 7. Heeding wisdom, becoming good before God, pursuing that which is good. All the things that we've seen in these first six and a half chapters of Ecclesiastes, the one who is towed before God, who is good before the face of God.

This takes us back to Ecclesiastes chapter 2 and verse 26. God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in his sight, but to the sinner he gives that evil answer of gathering and collecting and yet he doesn't retain it. It vanishes.

It goes away. Same thing here. The one who is good before God.

How do you become good before God? What is the testimony of the Bible on that score? We know what that answer is. It is to understand the word of God and to live thereby. It is the life of faith.

The just, the righteous shall live by his faith. So Solomon is working his way to that conclusion here. The one who is good before the face of God, the good, actually it says the towed before the face of God will escape from her.

But the transgressing one will be captured by her. The one who doesn't observe the boundaries. That word for transgress means to cross the lines.

Well, where do you find the lines? Those are the lines that are in the word of God, that God has communicated, that God has given in the Old Testament. He gave it in the law. Now, verse 27 and 28 is where we have lots of questions.

Look, he says in verse 27, this I have found. Once again, we have matzah. This is what I found when I looked and did all that intensive seeking, says Kohelet.

And once again, he's introducing, he's reminding you of everything we know about Kohelet from the first six chapters. Everything we know from chapter one. I, Kohelet, was king in Jerusalem.

I have tried all of these different things. And he says, look, he says, pay attention. I'm qualified to tell you this.

This is what I have found, says Kohelet. And literally, it says, one to one to find the cheshbon.

Nothing in there about adding.

It says one to one to find the accounting, to find the reckoning, to find the explanation. Same word we had up above in verse 25. Well, what does it mean, one to one? Or one by one, perhaps? This is the Hebrew preposition, the lamed, the letter L, prefixed to the infinitive for matzah, once again.

So you have matzah and cheshbon, both here. One to one to find, to matzah the reckoning. So, what kind of reckoning is this? Well, actually, in my opinion, there should not be a verse break here because verse 28 begins with the conjunction which.

One to one to find the reckoning which my soul intensively and repeatedly sought. One by one, or one to one, to find the reckoning which my soul intensively and repeatedly sought. I get intensively here because this is matzah, once again, in the Piyal.

I'm sorry, the next verb is matzah. This one for seek is in the Piyal. It's an intensive word for seeking.

And we have an adverb here that normally means yet. And you'll see it translated in a lot of places that I'm seeking and have not yet found. But this is a past tense.

It says, I sought it. And you can consult Kyle and Delitch and all the other great experts in Hebrew. And this word that is often translated yet here means repeatedly.

Again and again, in the past, I sought this and I did not find it. So, this is what I have found. One to one, to find the reckoning which my soul intensively and repeatedly sought and I have not found.

One man from a hundred I have found, but a woman in all these I have not found. And then we need to add one more word because they took the last word of verse 28 and stuck it down in 29. The last word of verse 28 is the word alone.

Matzah occurs three times in verse 28. And you'll see why I'm harping on that word here in a minute. So, once again, look, Solomon says.

Kohelet says, look, this I have found. One to one, to find the reckoning which my soul intensively and repeatedly sought and I have not found. One man from a hundred I have found, but a woman in all these I have not found alone.

The last word, even in the Hebrew Bible that you buy on the store shelf has been put down with verse 29. But you do a word study on it. Every single place it's found, the word alone follows what it modifies.

Over and over again in the Old Testament Scriptures, this word follows what it modifies. So, this

changes our understanding of verse 28 a little bit because it sounds like, well, I found an upright man here and there, but I've never found an upright woman. Some of the English translations even put the word upright in there, but it ought to be in italics because it's not found in the original at all.

One man from a thousand I have found, but a woman in all these I have not found alone. Well, what kind of reckoning is he trying to do? He's trying to find the one before the face of God who will escape from the woman whose heart is a net and a snare and whose hands are chains or bonds.

More bitter than death is the woman, the one whose snares and nets are her heart, chains are her hand. The good one before the face of God will escape from her. The transgressing one will be captured by her.

And then he says, look, in the light of what I've just been talking about, this alluring woman, the same type of thing he talked about in Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7 that is a metaphor for all the things that distract us from a life that pleases God. One by one, looking at people one by one, Solomon deals with thousands of people in Jerusalem. He's got a thousand women in his harem before all is said and done.

One man from a thousand I have found, but a woman in all these I have not found alone. What is he saying? This, of course, is not to be taken as exactly one man out of every thousand. There's exactly 0.1% I think it would be.

But there's one man in a thousand, Solomon says. One man in a thousand is going to escape this snare, is not going to be distracted. He says, it took me forever to figure this out.

I sought, I reckoned, even I myself have not obtained this status of escaping from the woman whose heart is a snare. He says, even I have intensively and repeatedly sought this, and I have not obtained it. I have not found it.

One man from a thousand I have found that has done this, that has escaped the alluring woman. But a woman in all these I have not found alone. And what is he saying? The life of wisdom, the life that is guided by wisdom, the life of the one who is *to'v* or good before God, one man in a thousand is going to find it.

But a woman by herself, even in a thousand, Solomon says, I haven't found the woman alone who achieves this. Doesn't mean that women don't achieve it, but they don't achieve it alone. There are lots of independent women.

These women that he's characterizing in Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7 and in verse 26 of this chapter, what kind of women are they? They're independent women. My husband is not at home. He's away on a long journey.

I'm down here on the street corner. I've got the honey and I've got the perfumed and scented bed sheets and I've got all of these things. She is unsupervised.

What is the biblical principle in the Old Testament and in the New? What does Paul say? Why is it that women are not allowed to speak in church? Why is it that the woman is not allowed to pray with her head uncovered? The head covering is the symbol of the husband's authority. And a woman that is out from under authority, that is functioning without some kind of guidance, even one in a thousand, you're not going to find, that finds the path of wisdom. That is why the biblical model is that the woman was to exist under the authority of her father until a husband came along and purchased her, married her out from her father's house and brought her under his own authority.

This is a woman alone. I have not found a woman alone in a thousand who has found this life, who has found the life of wisdom, who has found the way to be good before God. It doesn't mean they don't exist.

What is he saying? He says, I haven't found it. Well, Solomon doesn't have the best judgment about women anyway. It doesn't mean they don't exist.

It means they're very, very rare. It is exceedingly difficult. Not impossible, but it's difficult.

He doesn't say it will never be found. He doesn't say no man can find. He doesn't say God has not found.

He says, I've looked around one by one. I've been going through the people here in Jerusalem one by one. Well, you know the status of things in Jerusalem.

That kingdom is about to be divided after Solomon's death and judged because they don't know up from down. They don't know which leadership to follow. They've got lousy kings coming up.

But the point is, as Solomon goes through the people in his periphery one by one, one man in a thousand he finds who can escape these snares. But he says, I have not found a woman in all of these alone. And what's he implying here? It's very important to observe what God's Word teaches, what wisdom teaches.

We require authority. Well, now you have people. I know several ladies who are not and never have been married.

They're not living under their father's roof. Does that mean they have no hope of living a righteous life before God? Not at all. The principle, and again, these are all pictures.

The woman is a picture, right? The woman on the street corner is a picture. The woman under authority is a picture. It is a picture of submission to God's plan.

Are you able to submit to those authorities that exist? The marriage picture, the church as the bride of Christ is a picture of submission to the Word of God. It all goes back to what Solomon is teaching in Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7. Do not despise the teaching of the Lord. Do not despise wisdom.

Do not shake off the authority of God's Word. It is expressed in marriage. It is expressed in the family.

One of the places where this heshbone verb is used is in the story of Jephthah and his daughter. There is a place where a man made a terrible vow and had to keep it. It was bad judgment.

He wasn't guided by wisdom. I have found, and this is clarified by verse 29, Solomon says once again, look at this, two times now, verse 27 and verse 29, he says, look, I need to call your attention to this. Why does he say this? Because this is difficult.

This is some rocky ground to get through. You wouldn't believe the Hebrew here. But he says, look, this is what I've found.

As I've tried to find the heshbone, as I've tried to find the reckoning, I've intensively sought it. I've repeatedly sought it. I myself have not obtained it.

But I've found one man in a thousand who has. Who has found that wisdom. Who has found that reckoning.

The true accounting. A woman in all these, alone, I've not found. What does that also tell us? He probably has found women who were not alone who achieved it.

Women who were quietly submitting to the authority of their husbands. Women who were quietly submitting to the authority of their fathers, like Rebecca in her household. A far greater woman of faith than probably any of her male family members.

You have many examples in the Bible of faithful women. You have Hannah, who was a woman of faith. You have Ruth, who was a woman of faith.

You have many examples, but all of them, you see them in the context of submission to God's will. And by extension, submission to whatever immediate authority there was. Well, a woman who does not submit to authority is not going to find the path of wisdom.

You'll never find a woman alone, Solomon says. He says, I've looked through a thousand and I've not found a woman alone who understood the true reckoning, who found the path of righteousness, who found the way to be good before God. He says, I haven't found it.

I've gone one by one. I counted them off one by one by thousands, and I never found one. And verse 29 here gives us the summary of this.

And once again, he says, look, this is what I have found. God made man straight. That's what it literally says.

Look at this. I have found, matzah once again, that God made men straight. The word doesn't mean upright.

It means straight. Remember a couple of times earlier in our context, we found that what God has made crooked cannot be straightened. But God made man straight.

But they, mankind, had sought many peshmon, many reckonings, many alternate understandings, many alternate explanations. Well, that's quite a bit to chew on. Let's pause and take our break.

When we come back, we'll make sure we understand that and then draw some conclusions from it.