

02-01-13b Ecclesiastes

We'll resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 7. And this is some of the rougher sledding that you find. Ecclesiastes in general is something of a challenging book, partly because of its translation history and its interpretation history over the years. And this is one of the passages that really needs a lot of work, because like the Apostle Paul, who I think also was granted a great deal of wisdom and understanding from God, there are times when Solomon slows down and uses really good Hebrew, and it's all making sense.

And then just like the Apostle Paul, when he gets excited about something, he tends to start shortening his sentences and leaving out particles. And in the New Testament Greek, we call it ellipsis, where things are actually just left out. Paul gets in such a hurry, he just starts leaving words out and has unfinished sentences.

He'll start one thought and just jump off to another one. It can be a real challenge when your Greek professor says, okay, diagram all of the sentences in this paragraph. And he's purposely chosen something from Paul that you've got a subject and no verb, and you've got a thought that started up here, and then Paul gets off on another tack and never comes back and finishes, just like in conversation.

If you tape people talking and then go back and try to transcribe it, or if you read the transcription in a court trial, you'll see this many times in spoken conversation. We'll start a thought. In fact, I know I'm guilty of this even in teaching a lesson.

I'll start to say something and then I get off down a trail and never finish what I started in. I'm in good company. There's other people who do this as well.

But this is one of those sections because Solomon is being very emphatic, and he's trying to pull together a lot of the threads of what he's been talking about. He's talked all the way through his epistle thus far about seeking and turning his mind and his heart to try to find answers and to find explanations and find what it is that makes life tick. And by that I mean looking for that which is profitable, that which lasts, that which makes life have meaning and purpose and definition.

And he says, you know, in trying to sort out the wisdom and the right accounting, the right cheshbon, the right explanation and the way things are put together to where they work in a really great fashion, that's what cheshbon means. We don't have a good word in English that is an equivalent of it. You have to use several.

It can mean ingenuity or something that is ingenious, something that's thought out and very cunningly... It's translated cunningly wrought in some places, talking about the furnishings of the tabernacle, or the cunningly wrought band that went with the high priest's breastplate. He has a belt and it's described as being fashioned with cheshbon or with that type of thought. And to know, to come to an understanding and to be able to grip and perceive and have all the ins and

outs of evil folly and the follies and rantings.

And he says, you know what I am finding? I'm still finding this as often and as long as I've been looking. He says in verse 26, the thing that is more bitter than death. He's talked about things that lead to death.

He's talked about being devastated. Don't devastate yourself by getting out of balance in the area of righteousness or in the area of sin. Don't die before your time by running off the deep end on sin.

Don't devastate yourself by running off the deep end of righteousness and making it an end in itself. It is not righteousness as man accounts righteousness. This was the problem in Israel historically that Paul talks about over in Romans chapter 9 and 10 and 11.

And he says, what was the problem in Israel? They missed the righteousness of God and they sought to establish their own. They sought. They were seeking.

They were looking to find their own righteousness. So he says, I turned myself away from all these things and I turned my heart to know and explore and intensively seek wisdom and to calculate the answer, to account the right way of living life, to know evil folly and the follies of rantings and of course by implication to avoid them. And I myself am finding in verse 26, what is it that's more bitter than death? It's the woman.

That one, snares and nets are her heart and chains are her hands. Now, the normal order of things. What happened back at the fall? Turn with me back to Genesis chapter 3. The serpent deceives Eve and she makes a reckoning.

The serpent gives her a little different outlook. He says, look, you will not surely die in Genesis 3-4. God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

And here's the woman operating independently of Adam and independently of God. She's all on her own here. The woman saw that the tree was good for food.

She saw that it was pleasant to the eyes. She saw that it was a tree desirable to make one wise. She took of its fruit and she ate.

She also gave to her husband with her and he ate. Who is the initiator? Who is the idea person here? It's Eve. And you know what happens after that.

So then you have the fig leaf. There's no greater picture in Scripture of us seeking to cover our own sinfulness and establish our own righteousness than the fig leaf sowing project. God calls to Adam and he says, I was afraid because I was naked.

I hid myself. Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree? The man says in verse 12, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate. So the Lord says to the woman, what is this you've done? She says, well, it's the serpent's fault.

He deceived me. Then God starts the judgment phase of this conversation. He talks to the serpent.

He's cursed. He goes on his belly. He eats dust.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head. You shall bruise his heel.

Then in verse 16, to the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow in your conception. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be toward your husband, but he shall rule over you.

So there's going to be this fixation of the woman toward the husband, but he has got to rule over the wife. That's the divine order in the fallen state. And this rule over we had already seen when we went through Genesis.

Remember back with Cain and his problems, God said, if you do well, will you not be accepted? But if not, sin is the croucher at the door. It wants to get a hold of you, but you must rule over it. You must master it.

Very same verb when God talks to Cain. He says, you've got to exert authority. You've got to have control over this crouching potential for sin that lies at the door waiting for you when you leave the place that you're supposed to be.

You leave the house. Here, the same thing. The husband is to rule over the wife.

Well, you get over to the New Testament. You look at 1 Timothy 2 and other passages that talk about the woman being in subjection, being silent in church, not teaching men and that sort of thing. 1 Timothy 2.14 and 15.

And it says she will be delivered in childbearing if they continue. And the very interesting thing, we were looking at this on the break, because when you look at the Greek of that passage, it's talking about the woman in the singular. And Paul says, he's talking about women who are modest, and he says, 1 Timothy 2.8, I desire therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting, in like manner also that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.

And that word moderation, if you have at least my edition of the New King James, it has a text note that says with discretion, to be discreet, to discern, to know when to act and when not to act.

Propriety and discretion or moderation, not braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing. This doesn't mean that you can't ever wear those things.

It means that is not your adornment. That's not what makes you beautiful. There are churches, I was looking at the Mennonites on the web here the other day to refresh my memory on what they believe.

And of course the Mennonites and some of the other offshoots of the Quakers and the Amish and so on, have the idea that women should never use any makeup whatsoever. And they base it in part on this verse. This does not mean... Because it says not with costly clothing, which means you can only wear stuff that you got out of the bargain bin.

You can never pay full price for anything because that's costly clothing. You've got to shop at the Salvation Army or the Goodwill or something. Well, that's not what it means.

That women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation. Notice, propriety and discretion or moderation is a part of the adornment. This is spiritual adornment.

This is beauty that is based on what's on the inside. It's not your braided hair. It's not your gold and your pearls and your costly clothing that adorns you, that makes you beautiful and makes you a credit to the faith.

But that which is proper for women professing godliness, good works. What are good works? They are rooted in faith. They're not just good works for their own sake.

You can't just sit down and wash any old saint's feet and claim it as a good work. It has to spring from faith. Then he goes on, and this is where it gets sticky.

Verse 11, Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. Well, any self-respecting woman is going to find this restrictive.

Even when you understand authority and you understand submission and you're all in favor of it, it seems a little bit demeaning. It's like, well, now why have I been chosen for this particular cross to bear? Am I not as smart or not as wise or not as something? The great analogy to this is the ministry of the Levites in ancient Israel. Remember the whole Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebellion.

What was that based on? Hath God not said we are all priests? We are a kingdom of priests? Why is it only the Levites get to minister? Why are they the leaders? Why are they the teachers? Why are they supervising worship? And the issue in the Korah rebellion was we're as good as they are, and they're right. They are as good as. No better and no worse in terms of intrinsic quality.

It is an assignment by God in the same way that God the Son has taken an assigned position in submission to the Father. And God the Holy Spirit, who is co-equal in every way with God the Father and God the Son, has taken upon Himself a submissive role to both the Father and the Son. God the Holy Spirit is no less.

He is not one particle less in any respect than God the Father or God the Son. They are exactly equal. They are similarly eternal.

They are all sovereign, righteous, just, loving, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. They are all three immutable, and they are all three absolute truth. They all three have a sense of humor.

They all three are compassionate. They all three are patient and long-suffering. But they have organized themselves in the Trinity in a pattern of submission, and it's for our benefit.

It was not always that way. At some point in the past, this is God's dealing with mankind, and God gives us this as a pattern. So you have this.

I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man who would be in silence. She may be sitting there in silence thinking a lot more right thoughts and drawing a lot better conclusions than all the men who are speaking and talking and having their say and standing up and praying. And in many ways, it's a greater challenge for the wise woman to remain silent with her thoughts during the worship service when this is talking about assembled worship.

Paul in another place says, if she has questions, let her ask her husband at home. You speak out all you want at home. Pray all you want at home.

And obviously, we have a format of worship here where people don't interrupt me and ask questions and say, well, you know, I think that would be inappropriate probably for anybody. But there is a time and a place. And the whole idea is that there is a structure and there is an established order of things that God set up.

And we observe it. And the woman has an assigned place, bless her heart, in submission to the men. And God help all women because men are no better than the women and in some cases not as good, but they have an assigned place.

There are a lot of staff NCOs that are smarter than the officers they work for. But they follow their orders. They salute and say, yes, sir.

Aye, aye, sir. They go and do what they're instructed to do because they are good subordinates. They may be smarter.

They may be better educated. They may have three or four times the time in service, but they observe their place because they are not serving that officer. They are serving the service to which they have committed themselves.

They are honoring the Marine Corps or the Navy or the Army or whoever it is they've signed up with. And their service to that dingbat officer is a credit to their devotion and loyalty to a higher organization. When you salute someone, you're not saluting that person and their worth and their qualities.

You have no idea. The guy may be on his way out. He may be in the middle of a court-martial.

But even an officer that is being court-martialed for dereliction of duty and is guilty and found guilty when he walks out of the courtroom, every enlisted man he encounters is going to salute him. Every enlisted woman that encounters him is going to salute him. Why? Not because he deserves it personally, but because he bears the rank.

And until it's taken away from him for cause, it is the rank that you salute. And the same is true in the area of any kind of submission. Men are supposed to be submissive to Christ.

Women are supposed to be submissive to men. If there's not a man in between you and Christ, you're so much better off. You can just be submissive directly to Christ.

But it is all because you honor the Father. It is the Father you honor when you exercise self-control and when you respond in submission in whatever role you have. Employee to employer, wife to husband, child to parents, and when they're in the minority, and so forth.

Do not permit a woman to teach. For Adam was formed first, and then Eve. Why does he say that? Does it mean because you're created first, you automatically get the perks? Who planned creation? God the Father.

What Paul is saying here by implication is this is the plan of the Father. If God had wanted Eve to be in charge, he would have created her first and said, you need to help me and I'll create this man. But he didn't.

Adam was formed first, and the subject here is implied by God. This is God's design. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.

And as a part of the judgment for being deceived, you wonder what would have happened if the servant had approached Adam and if he'd have been the one to see that the fruit was good and desirable to make one wise, and if he had eaten, and then he said, hey, Eve, come over, then we could have a completely opposite. We'd have a matriarchy instead of a patriarchy. And God would have said, Adam, because you hearkened to the voice of the man, or Eve, because you hearkened... or whatever.

I've confused myself now. But if he said, Adam, because you led her astray, now you're going to be submissive. But Adam was not deceived, the woman.

So it's kind of luck of the draw there. Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing if they

continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control. Well, notice, she is singular.

The ones who continue are plural. So where does the they come from? It doesn't say she will be saved in childbearing if she continues in faith, love, and holiness. It's the children.

Women, like men, have a natural desire to teach and to exercise authority. But that role has not been allowed by God in the church in the same way that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the rest of the Israelites, as much as they might love God and want to serve in the Levitical sense, are not allowed to. They don't belong to the right tribe.

But can they serve in other ways? Can they exercise that function in areas other than conducting the worship life of Israel? Can the other 11 tribes, actually the other 12 tribes in Israel, do things that are similar to what the Levites do, but not in that formal context? Absolutely. So where is the woman who is denied the privilege of teaching and speaking in church? Where can she be delivered of this need? And Paul uses sort of a, not exactly a paranomasia, but it's sort of a quickie word picture here. Because he says, well, if she wants to deliver herself of this burden that she has to speak the truth and to teach, well, she can give birth to children because she is the primary teacher for them.

And she will be delivered, she'll be vindicated, and she'll be justified. And her teaching and speaking will be vindicated if her children continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control. How can she teach self-control to her children? She has already developed it by remaining silent in church and respecting the authority of her husband, even when it's undeserved on his part.

You can't teach something unless you've already learned it. Jesus Christ learned obedience through the things that he suffered, and he calls for obedience from us. He teaches us obedience because he learned it himself.

The woman who learns faith, love, and holiness with self-control in whatever authority structure she finds herself under young women under the authority of their father, married women under the authority of their husband, employed women under the authority of their employer, single women under the authority of Christ Himself, whatever authority you're under, what should you be doing? Faith, love, and holiness with self-control. And you have the opportunity to pass that on. It speaks beyond just the family and physical children.

Paul tells Timothy about the older women teaching the younger. Women who have learned these things can pass them on to children in the faith by their example and by speaking the truth in love. So it doesn't mean that you can't find wisdom.

Just the opposite. The Bible is replete with examples of faithful women. But what is Solomon talking about in Ecclesiastes 7? He says, Look at what I have found.

One by one. One to one. To find the reckoning.

What is he looking for? He's looking for someone who has found the reckoning. Otherwise, this verse makes no sense. Because he just says one man from a thousand I have found.

Well, found for what? What kind of man was he looking for? He's looking for a man who has made the right reckoning. Who has reckoned life rightly. I'm looking at them one by one to find someone who has found that that I myself have had trouble finding.

I have intensively sought this and repeatedly sought this reckoning and I have not obtained it. I have not sought it. I have not found it for my own self.

And you know the history of Solomon with his 700 wives and 300 concubines and so forth. And the deterioration of the kingdom that God gave him. Even with all of that wisdom, it is not enough to have wisdom.

You have to have understanding. You have to complete that loop that we've studied. So, with regard to this reckoning, looking one by one through all of these people, a thousand people, one man in a thousand I have found.

Not saw. But a woman in all of these I have not found alone. A woman alone.

And what does this mean, alone? Well, in Israel, there were never supposed to be women alone. That's why you had the Levirate Law. The widow should be married by the brother.

And this is a picture. We don't practice the Levirate Law today, thank the good Lord. But it was a picture in Israel like so many other things.

The woman was supposed to be sheltered under the umbrella of the authority of her father. This is the reason you had the bride price and you can see it pictured with Jacob and Laban. There is the transfer of care and protection and authority from the father to the husband.

That's the picture. What does it picture? It means that in the divine design for fallen humanity, the woman must always function in submission to the authority of the man. Function under authority.

The man has the responsibility to exercise authority. The women have the responsibility to submit to that authority. And of course, men have to submit to the authority that's higher than them.

It's just where you find yourself in the authority structure. But it is difficult because you think, well, if men and women are equal, then how come there aren't the same proportion of men and women because the men are functioning more or less independently? There is a proclivity just because of the initiating and responding features that God has built into our souls. It's not as rough on a man to function under authority.

Think about the centurion. He says, I have soldiers. I say to one come and he comes and to another go and he goes.

And I myself have men over me and I respond to their orders. We're sort of built for that. We exercise authority and you exercise it by learning it.

That's why they have boot camps and plebeians and beast barracks and that. We live in a world of authority and exercise it and we get that out of our system. But the woman, because she doesn't have that authority assigned to her by God and has basically the same sort of desires as the men, this is an area of hardship.

This is an area of chafing that is natural. It's built into the system. It's part of the fallen nature.

And you don't get the outlet. Why are men abusive? Well, they've got somebody to go beat up on. They can abuse their authority and a godly woman is not going to do that.

And so you've got this tension. This is where you've got a great opportunity to learn self-control. You don't have the same outlet.

And so a woman alone, if she does, say, well, I'm going to jump the traces and I'm going to get mine. I'm going to pray with my head uncovered, so to speak. I'm going to take charge.

I'm going to wear the pants in the family. I'm going to be captain of my ship and master of my fate. And I reject this whole thing.

I'm going to march for suffrage and I'm going to join the feminist movement and be a big fan of women's rights and push it all out of shape. Well, that's a woman alone. That's a woman that has departed consciously and intentionally from the pattern of divine authority.

And you cannot depart and find the reckoning. You're not going to find the life that yields your throne. You're not going to find the profitable life if you, as a woman, depart from that which God has told you to remain with.

And there are legitimate outlets for this, as Paul points out over in 1 Timothy 2. But now take a look at this. Solomon is emphasizing this. He says in verse 27, Look, this is what I found, says Kohelet.

Looking one by one to find the reckoning. Who has spanned this gulf? It's far away and it's deep. Trying to find wisdom and the cheshbone and to avoid evil folly and so on.

Look at this. One man in a thousand finds it, but a woman alone, I never find a woman alone that has found it. Then in verse 29 he says, Look at this.

I have found that God made man, and this is mankind in the sense of the human race. God made man straight. This is the opposite of crooked.

We've seen crooked things earlier in the book. Who can straighten what God has made crooked?

Well, this is one thing God did not make crooked. Man crooked himself in the garden.

And God made crooked creation afterward. This is the thorns and thistles and the carnivorous animals and so forth. And by extension, all of the difficulties and challenges that face us and the fact that we cannot on our own please God or live a life that results in profit.

God has made that impossible and He's put eternity in our hearts to show us that because we are fallen, we need Him. We need a mediator. We need relationship with God.

We need Him to give us the way to carry something beyond this life. God made man straight, but what happened in verse 29? They have sought many reckonings. They have sought many heshbon.

There are lots of alternative explanations of what constitutes the worthwhile life, aren't there? You never hear it more often than when somebody dies, a celebrity dies, and they are eulogized and their life is reviewed and old film footage is showed of them. And what is the calculation? Well, these are the charities. This is the impact that they made on others.

But what is the true measure? Man has sought many different ways of reckoning what constitutes a profitable life, what is worthwhile and sound. God made man straight. This goes along with what Solomon said earlier that God has put eternity in our hearts.

We know that there are eternal things that we should be paying attention to. God made man straight, but they have sought many reckonings. And not only do we have a word in verse 29 that should have belonged in verse 28, the word alone, but the first verse of chapter 8 should be the last verse of chapter 7. Because this verse, 8.1, says, Who is like the wise? And who is knowing the interpretation of a matter? This is what Solomon is looking for when he is searching up in verse 27 and verse 28.

Who is like the wise? And who is knowing the interpretation of a matter? The wisdom of a man lights his face. And literally it says, the strength of his face is changed. Who is like the wise? Who knows? And this is a participle.

Who is knowing? Or who is the knowing one? It's not really a good way to render it in English. Who is like the wise? Who is knowing the interpretation of a matter? Who knows the interpretation? Well, interpretation is a synonym. It's another way of talking about peshpon.

But here the word is from Peshar. P-E-S-H-E-R. And Peshar has the idea of, just what it says, interpreting, making sense of something.

So who is going to be able to do that? It's the one that has the wisdom, that lights his face, and changes his countenance. So, what is the sum of our study in this chapter? There are so many things that distract. There are so many things that can take us away from the narrow road that goes through the straight gate that leads to life.

And they are in the areas of subjectivity. You can get your eyes on self. You can start feeling the need for self-justification, self-vindication.

You can make righteousness an end in itself, to swash guilt complex, to fill in inferiority, to compete, to be well thought of. And that leaks over into eyes on people. What is my reputation? What does man judge me to be? All of the different things that we pursue, and we can be distracted by that which allures.

It can be people that allure, it can be circumstances that allure, it can be ideals or ideas that are attractive to us, that we want to pursue. The woman whose heart is a snare and a net, what kind of woman is that? Instead of being subject to the authority of her husband, what is she doing? She is exerting control over him. What does a snare and a net and a chain do? They control the man who is ensnared or netted or chained.

And this is the woman, the man wanders into her heart or into her hands, and she controls him. She is the authority. She has jumped the traces.

She has assumed the place that God has assigned to the man. And guess what? What happened to the participants in the rebellion where they were going to try to assume the position of the Levites and the sons of Aaron? The ground cracked open and swallowed them up. And there was fire in the camp.

All kinds of bad things. That's God's attitude toward rebelling against His structure, the ordained authority that He has put in place. And people today, you wouldn't believe the kind of arguments that are made for women to be ordained and women to pastor and women to hold authority and positions of management and leadership in church and parachurch organizations and in the seminaries.

They say, oh, well, this was a cultural thing. It's like wearing a veil. It's just not done anymore.

And they fail to look at the pattern of Scripture. This is what happened in the Korah rebellion. And God expressed His attitude.

It doesn't have anything. And they always use the idea, oh, well, it's demeaning. It says we're inferior.

And it's not. But the woman whose heart is a snare and a net and chains her hands, this is outside the divine design. It's rebelling against authority.

The transgressing one is going to be captured by her. So where is the reckoning that you seek? And it's so hard to find. It is finding that wisdom.

It's not just wisdom for its own sake. It's not wisdom to get over in life and make sure that you

have financial security or that you have respect or that you have a happy life. It's the wisdom that lights your face and changes your countenance, transforms your face.

That's the wisdom that constitutes the straight path. That is the wisdom that is found in the shade, that silver that is in the shadow cast by the sun. God made man straight, but they have sought many reckonings.

People have a hundred different ways to be happy and a hundred different ways to have a fulfilled life. Solomon says, you know what? There's probably a reckoning for every one of those thousand men that I looked at. Each one of them has come up with a reckoning.

God didn't give them all those reckonings. God made them straight. He didn't make them crooked, but they've gone down all of these crooked paths.

The women have jumped the traces and gone down these crooked paths. I haven't found a woman alone that's been able to latch on to this reckoning, to this heshbon. But there is a wisdom that lights the face.

And the strength of the face, this is sometimes used to talk about a people of fierce confidence who would come. It's a strong confidence. The fierceness of the face, the hardness of the face, the sternness is what strength implies here.

But it literally says, the strength of his face is changed. What does that mean? Well, your face, when you're before the face, that's what you're looking at. That's the direction that you take.

That's the priority that you set. And this all boils down to values. What does heshbon really mean? It's how you evaluate.

It's how you assign a value. Where is the scale of values? Where is the set of values that we are to live by? There's not one man in a thousand that has found it. And a woman alone hasn't found it.

Because the values that please God and result in a life that yields profit after the setting of the sun is within the authority structure that God has set up. It's within the wisdom that God has given us and nowhere else. And God has designed the authority structure so that women are able to partake.

That's why God sends men into the ministry. That's why God makes the men the spiritual leaders of the house. It is for the benefit of women.

Well, almost any statement you make can be taken amiss and people get offended. But that's what the Word of God teaches. And it's an encouragement.

It's designed to be... Solomon says, don't waste your time going through all the stuff that I've gone

through. Don't go picking through a thousand people. I'll just give you the reckoning that I myself, my soul, intensively and repeatedly sought.

It is being like the wise and knowing the interpretation of a matter. This is a summary of what we talked about before about having priorities and principles and values. Who is like the wise and who knows the interpretation of a matter? How do you know how to look at a situation and make the right decision and draw a conclusion that is not just going to get you over in this life, but is going to give that life that is valuable after the setting of the sun? You'll have something in your hand other than vapor.

Who is like the wise? Who knows the interpretation of a matter? The wisdom of a man lights his face. When you've got the wisdom that is not only on the inside, but it changes your face. It lights up your face and the strength of your face is changed.

Where you point your face, your values are different. That's cheshbon. That's wisdom that counts.

That's a reckoning of life that comes from God and not all of the crooked reckonings that man has sought out. Well, that's a pretty big chunk to chew on. I encourage you to meditate on this.

I sometimes feel inadequate to explain and illustrate, but the heart of the matter is there are many things that distract us and there is only one right path. A thousand wrong paths, one right path. We want to be that one man in a thousand.

We want to be the woman who is within authority and finds the path that lights your face and changes your confidence because that's what pleases God. The one who is good before the face of God will escape these things. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you that you have provided for us and you've given us resources to overcome our inherent corruption and sinfulness and perversity. The ministry of your Spirit, the power of your Word is sufficient to change us, to light our confidence, to show us the path in which we should walk. We know that there are only a minority of human beings who find that path.

We pray that we may be among them. We pray that you will not let us rest, that God the Holy Spirit will constantly remind us and convict us and rebuke us and instruct us in righteousness through your Word so that we may be approved and thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.