

02-01-20a Ecclesiastes

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study this morning to give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity that we have and to prepare our hearts and minds for the study of God's Word, shall we pray. Father, we thank you for the opportunity that we have to gather in a free country as free people without persecution or oppression. We are not in fear of our lives, we are not hounded, we are not having to be watchful and vigilant against those who would seek to destroy us.

We have a wonderful opportunity in this land to pursue our life before you with enthusiasm and with openness and it's a wonderful privilege. We know there are many parts of the world where that is not the case and we pray for those believers this morning who do have to be watchful knowing that there are those who would try to eliminate them. We thank you for our country and for the many blessings and the prosperity that we enjoy here.

We thank you for those who serve in the military and in the police forces and other capacities that ensure our safety and our freedom and defend us from external and internal enemies of all sorts. We thank you most of all that our lives have been made to transcend the immediate and the mundane through the work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that through him we have relationship with you, we have hope, we have insight into truth that is beyond comprehension by mortal man.

We have a bright future that awaits us, we look forward to the day when we will be released from the sin and the corruption that still binds us in this world and we will be free to look upon your face and to live with you in the eternal future. We thank you for your grace and faithfulness as we do journey through this life and have opportunities to learn and to grow and we pray that we will be ever mindful of our heavenly citizenship and our opportunity to bear fruit and to store up for ourselves an eternal inheritance. We pray that as we study your word this morning, God the Holy Spirit will make it real and alive to us and that it will fuel our desire and will clarify our view of this life as seeing everything in the context of your plan and your purpose.

We ask your blessing on us now, both those who are here and those who are not present with us. We pray that in all things our lives will reflect your glory and we pray it in Jesus name, Amen. We do not construct and obscure a believer's focus on the things that yield an eternal inheritance and there is no more important subject.

We don't always remember to think of our daily circumstances in this light. We are task oriented, we are problem oriented, we see a problem and we want it solved. The whole concept of stories that are told in our culture as it has been in humanity for thousands of years.

You can go back to the Greek tragedies, to the stories of the ancient writers all the way down to the present in whatever media or whatever form they are presented. We like to have a problem presented and then we like to see it resolved. When I studied literature at Navy they spent two or

three years pounding into my head the whole concept of in narrative you have characters, you have plot and in that plot there is a conflict of some sort.

No book will hold a reader's interest unless there is a challenge or a conflict, a problem that needs to be resolved. The story in a good story will build toward the climactic point where this problem reaches a peak and that's called the climax of the story and something happens to resolve the problem. Whatever else you have left in the book is what they use the French word denouement which is the tying up of the loose ends and explaining anything unexpected that happened to resolve the conflict or the problem in the story.

It appeals to us, that's why literature and other types of entertainment that tell stories are interesting because we like to see things solved. In our daily life we have the same sort of mindset. We encounter things, we have situations with people or with our tasks that need to be done.

I've got a flat on the van that keeps going down, I keep pumping it up and it keeps going down and at some point I've got to resolve that problem. I've got to pull the thing off and dunk it in the hot tub and find where the hole is. I have the patch kit but I just haven't taken the time.

It's kind of cold and the prospect of going out there and getting all wet, fixing a tire on a vehicle that I'm not currently driving doesn't really... So that's been hanging over my head for weeks but all of us have things. I guess that's not nearly as important as the fact that half our electricity is out at the moment which also is a problem that needs resolving. But because of that we get distracted from the higher and greater conflict, the higher and greater problem in which the entire human race is set as a factor and as a primary player.

And that is the great conflict in God's universe between God and His righteousness and His purpose and plan and everything that does not line up with that. It began with Satan and the angels who departed and were condemned with him. It continued with other angels who were disobedient and it has been reflected in mankind who fell in the garden.

But we lose sight of all that and we think if I can just get through today, if I can just get these 12 things on my list accomplished, it will be a good day. So both in the Old Testament and in the New, the Word of God tries to wake us up. It tries to through all different kinds of communication, whether it's narrative or didactic teaching or prophetic oracle or ranting passages of condemnation.

Why have you gone astray? Why are you faithless? Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? You've got your eyes on the wrong things and you've lost sight of who you are and why you're here. What could be more important than to know who you are and why you're here? In our modern culture, you look around and people are constantly trying to quote unquote find themselves. Well, the Word of God tells us who we are and it tells us why we're here.

And so these, you don't get passages that are much more central to that than what we find here in Ecclesiastes and in our scripture reading this morning in Romans chapter 7, particularly as it pertains to believers. And Romans, we know from our study of this book a few years ago, is a much misunderstood book. There's nothing more famous in Christianity, I think, than the evangelism method which uses the Roman road.

Romans 3.23 and Romans 6.23 and so forth, talking about sin and salvation and all that. And the principles are sound in that method of evangelism, but unfortunately it has led to a misapprehension of what the book of Romans is all about. When people come to Romans, they think, oh well, this is the book on how to get saved.

And Adam all died and Christ all shall be made alive. But the focus of this book is on operational life, fruitfulness for believers. The phrase that sums up Romans is righteousness by faith.

It was written to people who were being dragged backward into all of the failures of Israel under the law of Moses. Who thought that by an external set of standards for behavior, if you just conform, if you just show up at the right place at the right time, looking like you should look, doing what people expect you to do, you're righteous and all is right with the world. That is just not the case.

There is a different standard that is used to judge whether this day today produced any righteousness in the eyes of God. And it's whether or not what you did was done in faith. You could take a room full of, let's say just ten people.

You can see how my standards have shrunk. Ten people in a room makes it full. Take ten people, maybe all ten of them do the same thing this Sunday morning.

They all get up. They get dressed. They do their personal hygiene.

They get a cup of coffee and a bagel or something. They go to church. They sit.

They open their Bible. The plate is passed. They put some offering in.

They sing the hymns. They stand where they're supposed to stand. They sit where they're supposed to sit.

They hobnob in between Sunday school and church and after church and exchange greetings. They get back in their car and go home. They eat lunch.

They take a nap or watch a ball game or something in the afternoon. Maybe go back to church on Sunday evening in most places. And then come back home, watch a little TV and the day is over.

Well, all ten people engaged in the identical activities. Some of those people will have produced righteousness in the process and others will have not. You cannot say because you went to

church you were righteous.

You cannot say because you stood up and got a warm glow when you sung the hymn that you were righteous. You cannot say because you spoke kind words to somebody in the parking lot afterward that you were righteous. It does not depend on what you do.

It depends on what you think. It is why you do what you do that counts. You can be wise.

You can be skillful. You can get every place you're supposed to be exactly on time with everything you need. And that does not constitute righteousness.

Well, this scripture reading this morning and our passage in Ecclesiastes both address themselves to this issue. Let's begin in Romans chapter 7 verse 4. Therefore, my brethren, and the therefore harks back to Paul's discussion of the law. That Israel operated in the Old Testament age under a set of national guidelines.

The law had a civil code. This is how you deal with each other. It had a moral code.

This is your responsibility before God. It had a worship system that was very specific and very detailed. And Paul's point preceding what we're going to read this morning is that that system has been set aside.

With the coming of Christ, there's been a big period put at the end of that sentence. And we're starting a new paragraph now. So, because that has been set aside, Paul says, it's just as though you were married to a husband and then that husband died.

You were a woman and you were married and you had responsibilities. You're under the authority of that husband. But now the husband has died.

And his authority over you died with him. Because that authority functions in time. It functions when you're both alive and living in the same household.

Husband has died. The wife is freed from that law. And she can go marry another man and accept a new authority.

Because the old authority has been superseded. So, in verse 4, Paul says, That system of authority. People say, you know, my Bible, I don't see anywhere where it says we shouldn't still worship on the Sabbath and be under all of the... You know, there are people who went to church yesterday because they do not understand this principle.

And they've completely deconstructed and misconstrued the book of Romans. And it's a tragedy because they don't understand that the Old Testament authority has been superseded. Not the principles and not the righteousness, which are unchanging.

But that particular authority that prescribes certain behaviors. Paul says, We have a different set

of authority. We're not authority-less.

We're not antinomian. That's the theological term for no law. Namas is law.

And put the A in front of it. It's a negative. If you hear about antinomianism, it sounds like some kind of strange term.

But it just means people who don't recognize any authority. We're free in Christ. We can do what we want.

He says, If you are fruitless, you are not functioning under the new authority. If you function under the old authority, if you try to put yourself back under the dead husband, you're going to be fruitless. You can't stay married to the dead husband, nor can you disregard the new husband.

We have to understand what our new authority is. Paul goes on to say, And he's contrasting two things, isn't he? He says we have the old and the new. When we were in the flesh, what is in the flesh? It's got to be either the old husband or the new husband.

And what is it? It's the old husband. They were in the flesh because the Holy Spirit's full-orbed ministry that we enjoy today was not functional for Old Testament Israel. It doesn't mean they didn't have the Spirit.

It doesn't mean that He didn't minister to them. But the power to effect righteousness, the power to live, that was not the same in the Old Testament as it is in the New. And there was a reason for it.

And that's exactly what Paul is talking about. When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. And this sounds like, well, God gave the law and that just made us sinful.

But a better way to understand this, arouse is really not the best way to express this idea. We have sinful passions. There have been sinful passions ever since Eve looked at the fruit and decided she had to have it.

That was a sinful passion. Cain had a sinful passion. All of the human race since Adam and Eve fell have had sinful passions.

It isn't so much the idea of aroused as it is exposed, something that is brought to the fore, something that is made prominent. These sinful passions were exposed by the law. They were at work all the time.

You remember in another place where Paul talks about the fact that the spirit of Antichrist is already at work in the world amongst the sons of disobedience. But it is exposed. It's brought to light.

It is made manifest when it comes in contrast, when it's exposed to the light, when the light shines on it. The sinful passions which were exposed by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. So when the law came, it just showed us how non-productive and fruitless all of these passions are.

But now, this is under the new authority, we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by. There was a death involved. The old authority is gone.

So that we should serve in the newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. That's like saying there's a mugging going on in the alley and somebody shines a flashlight in there and exposes it.

We say, look at that evil flashlight. The flashlight is not evil. It exposes what is evil.

It exposes the crime that is going on. Is the law sin? Certainly not. On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law.

The law is the light that shines and exposes it, brings it out. I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.

You notice a lot of that is in italics. Apart from the law, sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. Now, this is one of the most misunderstood sections of Scripture. People think it's talking about the lost, the unsaved, the hellbound sinner, and it's not.

It's talking about the believer. Who was the law given to? Did the law come to unbelievers? Not at all. The law was given to believers.

God did not come down to Nineveh and give the law. God did not come down to any city in Egypt. He didn't come down and carve the law on the side of a pyramid or on the side of the Sphinx.

Who did He give the law to? Israel. Which Israelites got the law? The ones who came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb. The law is for the saved.

So when it says this is what the law did, who is the law doing it to? It's doing it to the saved. If the law was supposed to provoke unbelievers to accept God and become saved, God would have told the Israelites take this law and go ye forth into all the land of Canaan and show them this law that they might be shown their sinfulness and realize their need for salvation and come and become proselytes. Wouldn't that make sense? Wouldn't God... Would God not have given Israel a missionary calling to go and communicate the law? You can search your Old Testament and

you will not find a single command, not a single encouragement, not a single line that says Israel, take the law to the Gentiles that they may be saved.

Why? The law is not for the Gentiles. The law is for the Jews. The law is for the Israelites.

The law is for the saved. They, when they have been brought up under the law, when they have grown and learned to produce righteousness by faith in the Old Testament economy, were to shine as a light to the Gentiles. So this is talking to believers.

I was alive once apart from the law. When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. I found out how fruitless and unproductive I was as a believer.

The law showed me that I was not producing the fruit of righteousness. I was operationally dead. Dead in the sense of no spiritual production.

The commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. What did Jesus say when He came? I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly. Well, if life is a reference to salvation, then is there such a thing as a more abundant salvation? This is what the Charismatics believe.

Well, you can be sort of saved, but until you get the second blessing, you're not abundantly saved. And again, it's an error based on a misunderstanding of the difference between the lost and the saved. Jesus came to Israel to be their King, to bring them into the Millennial Kingdom, to bring them back to fruitfulness.

I want to bring the grain into the storehouse. I want to have the vines heavy with grapes and figs. I've come to hedge about the field and give it another year before it's cut down and see if it will produce fruit.

That's why Jesus came as the King of the Jews. But sin revived and I died. Verse 10 of Romans 7, the commandment which was to bring life I found to bring death.

Why? Look at verse 11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. It showed me that I wasn't righteous at all.

It showed me the inability of my human soul to produce good. Therefore, the law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good. There is not a thing in the world wrong with the law and with the standards that God put in it.

Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not. The law did not produce death. The law showed the sin that was producing death.

Sin, though it might appear to be sin, was producing death in me through what is good so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. You cannot search for a cure until

you find that you have the disease. There are people that go blithely along smoking and doing all kinds of unhealthy things until they are diagnosed with cancer.

Then they say, Aha, I guess I better change my ways. There are people who are indiscriminate about their diet until they are diagnosed with high blood pressure and high cholesterol and one thing and another. Then they say, I have got to take steps.

Well, is the doctor evil for showing them the x-ray with the spot on the lungs? Is the doctor evil for showing them the test results that show the high cholesterol and the hardening of the arteries and the high blood pressure? Not at all. That is a good thing. It is good to know what is the matter with you.

Go sit in Dan's chair and he looks at teeth and finds that something is decaying away. Well, it doesn't make Dan a bad guy because he points out the decay in a tooth. It is good because now you know what is the matter and you can try to fix it.

We know that the law is spiritual, verse 14, but I am fleshly, sold under sin. Now, this is a historic present because Paul at the beginning of this passage pointed out two conditions. The old husband and the new husband.

The old authority and the new authority. And he is contrasting them. He has already set that up.

Remember, he says in verse 5 and 6, if people would pay attention to verse 5 and 6, they would not get fouled up in verse 14 through 25. Look back at verse 5 and 6. I am not even going to read this until we go back and look at those. When we were in the flesh.

This is historic. This is in the past. This is Israel under the law.

The sinful passions which were exposed by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law because the old husband has died. The law has been set aside.

It has been superseded by a new authority in Christ. That's the key to this chapter. For when? That's Old Testament under the law.

But now, New Testament, under the higher authority of Christ. So now in verse 14, we know the law is spiritual. Well, the law is a moot point now.

The law has died. So when he uses the present tense and he says we know that the law is spiritual, he's putting himself back in past time. He says, remember back when we were under the law? Here I am under the law.

And he starts using the historic present. It's common. In fact, if you have a New American Standard Bible and you go through the Gospels, you will see in the Gospel of Mark, time and time

again, the verbs are marked.

I forgive if it's with an asterisk. I believe they're marked with an asterisk in the New American Standard to show you that when Mark is telling a story in past time, he's using the present tense. He says, they get in the boat and they go across the lake and they see a man.

And as they get out, and he tells the whole story in the present tense. People do this today when they tell stories to each other. They say, so there I am.

I'm in the cafeteria and I see this guy and he comes up and he says, and we use the historic present even in English because it draws the reader right into the situation and you're living it along with the main character. Well, that's what Paul does here. He says, let's have a flashback here.

Here we are back under the law. This is before Christ. The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

We're not sold under sin in the New Testament. Look at chapter 8, verse 2. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. You'd be amazed.

There are probably not one in a thousand, as Solomon says, who can read this portion of chapter 7 and get it right because they don't look at what precedes it and they don't look at what follows it. You get any commentary on Romans and it's going to tell you that this is the current situation of believers in the New Testament and it's just not the case. The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

This is true in the Old Testament. Why? Because even though you're a believer and even though you're in Israel and even though you're living in the land of Canaan and you're learning the law, you have not yet been redeemed. You're in the anticipation of redemption.

And the entire human race was sold under sin until Christ came. You can't say that you've been redeemed when the Redeemer has not yet come. Your salvation and your redemption is in prospect, where ours is in retrospect.

Okay. The law is spiritual. I am carnal, sold under sin.

We're talking about this is life under the law. I am flashing back to it here. What I am doing, I do not understand.

For what I will to do, that I do not practice. But what I hate, that I do. If then I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

This is life under the law. We don't have to agree with the law about anything. Now the law is gone in the sense of an operational authority.

We learn a lot from studying the law. It's a tremendous picture of Christ and His work. You get more Christology out of the Old Testament than you do out of the New.

The law of Moses is a beautiful explanation and explication of everything in Christ. But back in the day that they were living under it, because redemption had not been effected, because Christ had not yet come, the law was there to show us our problem. It wasn't there to cure it.

The law was not a cure for sin. The law exposed the malady. And the Israelites labored.

And we think that seems awfully unfair to those Old Testament saints that they never really got the power to live the life that God was calling them to lead. God gave them this requirement of the law and it was impossible for them to fulfill it. Yes, that's exactly right.

Congratulations, you have just seen God's purpose in the age of Israel is to show that man without divine power cannot live in a way that pleases God. You say, well, now you had Moses and David and Daniel and so on. Sure.

But the greatest Old Testament saint was John the Baptist. And John the Baptist is less than the least in the kingdom, Jesus said. Figure that out.

Why can Jesus say that? Of those born of woman, there is none greater than John, Jesus said. And yet the least in the kingdom is greater than he. Why? Well, what is the kingdom? What is the millennial kingdom? Just think of some of the promises.

I will pour out My Spirit upon you. I will take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Israel is going to get the chance to live the life that you and I live now.

They didn't have the ministry of the Spirit that was necessary to truly produce righteousness by faith the way that we can. That was their inheritance. That was their covenant promise.

They are God's firstborn. And to reflect His glory in righteousness by faith in a full-orbed sense, you have that going on. David was a man after God's own heart.

Abraham was declared righteous by faith. You have your great Old Testament saints. But it is a pale foreshadowing of what is possible in Christ with the indwelling Holy Spirit, which they did not have in the Old Testament age.

People had to have a ministry of the Spirit. God gave His Spirit to Moses and to David and to other great believers who had a prophetic ministry or a communication ministry or a leadership ministry in Israel. Kings were given the ministry of the Spirit when they were trying to do God's will.

But it was just a glimmer of what was to come. And we, the younger son, like Jacob, have gotten the inheritance before the older son. We have the gift of the Spirit.

We get the first chance to live the Spirit-filled life, the Spirit-empowered life. Israel is going to catch up with us in the Millennial Kingdom. God says, I will pour out My Spirit in that day.

Your old men will see visions and your young men will dream dreams, and so forth. Remember in Joel and Amos, the prophecies and Peter says in Acts, this is what they were talking about. He's saying this is the ministry of the Spirit that was promised to Israel.

But guess what? The church is getting it first. Well, we don't have time to reteach the whole book of Romans, but here we are under the law. And it's important for us to understand this because this is the context in which Solomon is writing.

And this is the glass ceiling that Solomon is bumping his head against. He says, you know, I've been given this wisdom by God. I'm trying to live by wisdom.

I'm analyzing life by wisdom. And you know what I'm figuring out? All of the strutting and fretting of the hour on the stage that man does, all of the life that we lead under the sun and all these different things we pursue, we're not really creating. We're not laying hold of that which is eternal.

We're not really getting that inheritance that we should get. And Solomon is struggling under this very thing that Paul is talking about. Solomon is the man who is seeing the law of God as spiritual and recognizing that he is fleshly sold under sin.

Keeps getting entrapped by the woman whose heart is a snare and a net and whose hands are chains. Keeps getting diverted and dragged aside. He said there's not one man in a thousand that can escape this trap.

And a woman alone never escapes it. If I do what I will not to do, verse 16, I agree with the law that it's good. I know better.

I know this shouldn't be happening. I can see the way things should be. I just can't make it happen.

It's the sin that dwells in me. It's the sin I can't escape from. Look at verse 18.

I know that in me, in my flesh, nothing good dwells. To will is present with me. And this is what the Calvinists have never figured out.

The fact that in your flesh, nothing good dwells doesn't change the fact that you can will for the good. To will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. All of Reformed theology could be corrected if they would just read and understand this one verse.

Because it is not the will that is corrupted. It is the ability to carry out what you know to be right. You can know that you're sinful and you can know that God is there and that He is the righteous standard and that we need to live to please Him, but you have no ability to change it.

You can will to please God. You can wish that you were good and that you were pleasing in His sight, but the wishing and the willing doesn't bring it about. Solomon says the same thing in chapter 7. We'll see it in a minute.

To will is present with me. You read Calvin. Go read Calvin's Institutes.

And Calvin says, you know what? With the fall and with the corruption and total depravity, man can't even will to do good. Well, he somehow went to sleep when he got to this part of Romans because Paul says, look, to will is present with me. It's how to perform what I know to be good.

I can know what is good. I can recognize it. I can want it.

I just can't affect it. For the good that I will to do, I do not do. I want to.

I wish I could. I just can't. The evil that I will not to do, that I practice.

Now, if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. There is a power within me that overcomes my better judgment, that overcomes my desire, that overcomes my will. I find then a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into what? Bringing me into captivity. This is still the present tense that he started using back in verse 14. Now, I ask you, as a common sense American citizen, when you look at that, the law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members, does that match what Paul says in the same context about the life of believers now? What does it say in 8.2? The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The present is, we have been made free from the law of sin and death. Made free. In the past.

We are not captive. So either there is a contradiction in Scripture or people have misunderstood the time it is being spoken of. The law in my members warring against the law of my mind in verse 23, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members, this is pre-Christ.

This is Old Testament problem. And he says, living in that day, and Paul himself, before he came to Christ. He is in the transitional generation here.

He was an Israelite living under the law. O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? He says, I need deliverance from this. And there is like a parenthesis here.

He says, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I've been delivered. He can't hardly wait to get to his conclusion.

He is setting up his premise and he is so joyful that this is no longer the case. He says, look, I

thank God. Who is it that delivered me from this? It was Jesus Christ our Lord.

But he wants to finish his point in verse 25. So he says, so then with my mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, I serve the law of sin. And that was the condition in Solomon's day.

That was the condition before Christ. But he goes on in chapter 8 in Romans to say, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. And you can skip the last part of that if you have a New King James.

That's a scribal error bringing something up from verse 4 into verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Has made me free. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

The problem was solved when Christ came. That's the point in time. Previous to Christ coming in the flesh, sent by God the Father, you are under the law of sin and death.

Even when you want to serve God with the law of your mind. And Old Testament saints got credit for their desire to please God and to serve God. Even though they couldn't always perform it.

David makes some colossal mistakes. Moses makes colossal mistakes. Balaam makes colossal mistakes.

What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin. He condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Walking according to the Spirit is a new thing as a result of Christ coming and putting sin to death in the flesh.

So now, we don't have to be trapped that way. Those who live according to the flesh set their mind on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit set their mind on the things of the Spirit.

Well, if you don't have the opportunity to live according to the Spirit, your mind is going to be constantly dragged into the things of the flesh. Isn't that what we saw in Ecclesiastes 7? All the different ways that you can be entrapped and ensnared and chained in the things of the flesh. For to be fleshly minded, verse 6, is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace because the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, is enmity against God.

It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And this is a choice we make.

Ten people spend their Sunday doing those activities. If they do it in the flesh, they're not pleasing God. If they do it in the Spirit, they're pleasing God.

Same exact activities, it all depends on did you do it in faith? Did you do it looking at the Word of God as reality under the ministry of the Spirit? You are not in the flesh, verse 9, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you, is at home in you, is comfortable in you, finds a harmonious environment in you. Now, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin.

The Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is at home in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. You can be operationally alive if God the Holy Spirit has a living ministry within you.

People get all tangled up on this and think it's talking about salvation. Well, if you're not saved, you don't have the Spirit. If you have the Spirit, you're saved.

And if you're saved, you're productive. And if you're productive, you're rewarded. And they just flatten everything down and miss the whole point of this passage, which is that Christ in coming and dying for us and giving us the gift of the Spirit, the full-orbed ministry of the Spirit in this age has delivered us from operational death.

Now we can live the life that was promised to Israel that Jesus tried to give them when He was trying to initiate the kingdom in the first advent. And they couldn't see it. They wouldn't see it.

They were satisfied with their own righteousness. They missed it. And just like Esau, God said, Fine, I'm going to take your inheritance and I'm going to give it to the younger son.

And you're going to see the younger son and you're going to be jealous. I will make you jealous by those who are not a people, He told them in the Old Testament. How are they going to be jealous of us? Why should they be jealous of us? They're saved and we're saved.

Why are they jealous? Because we are already enjoying the things that are yet future for all of those dead Old Testament saints. They looked forward. Moses longed to see our day.

The Bible tells us. Why? Why would Moses... I mean, wouldn't you think, Man, if I could be Moses, I wouldn't care about being a church-age believer. You're Moses.

You know, the picture of Charlton Heston there is a mighty man of God with a streak in his hair and parting the sea and doing all these amazing things. Why would Moses envy us? Why would Moses look forward to our day? Because Moses recognized this same truth. Willing to do what is right in God's eyes, but not having the ministry of the Spirit able to do it.

Why? Because Christ had not yet come. The Spirit was not yet given. Christ was not yet glorified.

We have that which was promised to Israel and which they're going to get when they're raised in the millennial kingdom. They will then spend the millennium living the Spirit-filled life that we

already enjoy. So you think, well, what an incredible hardship.

It seems so unfair for the Old Testament saints that they didn't have what we have. God will catch it up in the millennial kingdom. They will get everything that they missed in the Old Testament age.

But we're already there. We are the firstfruits. This is what Paul told them back in Ephesians 1 when he said, we who are the first to hope in Christ.

Let me find that passage and read it to you right quick because a lot of people kind of wondered what he was talking about. He says in Ephesians 1, verse 11 is the one I'm talking about. He says, in him, verse 7 of Ephesians 1, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.

A lot of this didn't make sense. You read the book of Job. Job says, I need a mediator.

I need something I haven't got. A lot of the Old Testament saints struggled with this, Solomon and so on. So that in the dispensation of the fullness of time, this is Ephesians 1.10, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

In him. In him also we have obtained what? An inheritance. What is Solomon saying in Ecclesiastes? Wisdom is good when it comes with inheritance, when there's permanent possession, eternal possession.

We have obtained an inheritance being predestined, according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. We're the church age, and yet we're the first to hope in Christ. And I believe, I'd have to double check, but I think that that verse 12, I don't think that's Pisteia, I think it's Elpis.

We who hope in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. It's all about the ministry of the Spirit that comes to us through Christ.

Christ said, I'm going to leave, but I will send you another comforter. He'll lead you into all truth. He will take of the things of me, and he will give them to you.

This is what was missing in the Old Testament age. Well, we could go on and on. I could reteach Romans, but let's pause and take our break, and when we come back, we'll see the application of this in Ecclesiastes chapter 7.