

02-01-20b Ecclesiastes

Let's resume our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 7 by way of Romans chapter 7. And the conclusion here and the background information that's helpful to us is the status of the believer in Old Testament times. Believers did not have access to, did not receive the benefits of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that we have. And it limited what they could do.

It did not eliminate it. It doesn't mean that there was no righteousness by faith. There certainly was.

And you have your great Old Testament saints. But their ability to produce the fruit of righteousness by faith was limited because the ministry of the Spirit was limited. And God limited that on purpose.

It seems very unfair. You think, well, why not grant these things to the Old Testament saints? God had a purpose. And this is a large part of the theme of the book of Romans.

And it's also found in Hebrews. Looking at it from a little bit different standpoint, I think Paul wrote Hebrews also. And he is writing to the Hebrews and trying to explain to them the change.

And he talks about the shadow offerings, the Levitical priests who went in day by day, and the high priest who went into the Holy of Holies once a year. And he said, you know, these shadows don't fulfill the reality. Well, in the same way, the spiritual life of Old Testament saints was a shadow of the reality.

It was a foretaste of what would come later. And as such, it is valuable. You need the shadows.

All of the Old Testament things were written for our instruction. It wasn't just that the Old Testament saints lived through it, but it was preserved in God's words so that all of us, now and into the indefinite eternal future, can benefit from seeing what the law exposed. You have to first open up the human heart and show the human condition and show how little we are capable of, even after salvation, without God's strength, without God's enablement.

And most of the people who did mighty things in the Old Testament did have God's strength and enablement. God's Spirit rested on them. It talks about the Spirit coming upon Samson and coming upon David and coming upon many.

And you can infer that most of the ones who did excel in the Old Testament age had a measure of God's Spirit that was unavailable to the workaday Israelite. Well, all of that illuminates our passage here in Ecclesiastes. And what I want to do, we have had quite a bit of material presented to us in chapter 7. I want to just give a final summary of that so that we can move forward into chapter 8. And we're not going to do the whole chapter, but let's start at Ecclesiastes chapter 7 and verse 13.

Ecclesiastes 7.13. Remember Solomon has been looking at the righteous and the wicked, and it's going to be well with those who do well, and it's going to be bad for those who do bad. This was the expectation in the Old Testament, and based on the law, based on Solomon's own writings in the Proverbs. And yet, when you look around, you see that that does not always take place.

So, in verse 11 he said, you know, wisdom is good when you have a permanent possession, when it leads to a permanent possession, when you are able to grab hold of this inheritance. And wisdom is profitable to those who see the sun. These are the living, the ones who are living their daily life.

Wisdom is in the shadow, just like silver is in the shadow. People didn't find silver laying on top of the ground. They had to mine.

You remember the silver mines? They found ancient mines, and they found the graffiti from the slaves and the miners who worked in there. But silver wasn't laying out on the surface of the ground. You had to go where the sun was not shining.

You had to go in the shadow to find it. Wisdom is in the shadow like silver is in the shadow. But the excellence of knowledge, the best piece of knowledge you can gain, the epitome of knowledge, is understanding that wisdom gives life to the one who has it.

Wisdom gives life to her Lord, literally, to her Baal. So wisdom is the key to life. However, wisdom is not that life in and of itself.

And you find statements that seem to contrast with this, where he says, well, this wisdom didn't seem to do me any good. Don't be overly wise, he's going to say here in a minute. Well, that's because just getting the wisdom and having the wisdom is not the end in itself.

It's the means to an end. If you are the master of wisdom, if you are the Baal of wisdom, and you've gone into the shadow and you've found it, it's great. It can give life to its owner.

But it is not that life. The King Midas story points that out. Being able to touch something and turn it to gold doesn't necessarily mean that you're rich.

But then in verse 13, Solomon, and this is the section we're reviewing here, consider the work of God. Who can make straight what he has made crooked? The wisdom is good when it leads to permanent possession, when you wind up with Yitron, with profit in your hand. It is the silver found in the shadows that are cast by the sun.

The excellence of wisdom is that it gives life, that you can have production, something that lasts beyond this life. Well, what can interfere with that? What thwarts the purpose of wisdom? How can you be wise and still not lay hold of life? Well, in verses 13 and 14, Solomon is going to take us through the three categories of subjectivity that we've studied in other contexts. What is

subjectivity, first of all? Well, it's the antithesis of objectivity.

To be objective is to see life as it is, to recognize truth, to understand life from the divine viewpoint. Subjectivity is to be subjective, to have a floating standard of what is good and bad, to not see life from the divine viewpoint, but from a human, flawed perspective. It's myopia, it's distortion, it's a flawed view.

Well, there are three types of subjectivity into which just about every failure of this nature can be classified. And that's, simply put, eyes on things, eyes on self, or eyes on people. If we're not looking at life objectively from the divine perspective, if we're not seeing everything in the context of God's plan, what are we focused on? Instead of looking at God and whether or not He's pleased, whether or not His standards are being met.

Friday night we talked about the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin. And when the finder returns to their friends and neighbors, they say, rejoice with me, for I have found this thing that was lost. And these are people who share the joy of the finder, of the owner of the lost thing.

They don't know the sheep, they don't have a part investment in the coin. They celebrate because the owner there, who is a picture of God Himself, is pleased. Well, is that our viewpoint? If not, then we're going to be looking at it from some personal objective, some personal desire rather than God's.

Well, in verses 13-14 here, Solomon gives us an example of the one category of subjectivity, which is eyes on things. He says, look, look at the work of God. Who can make straight what He has made crooked? This is circumstances.

God has put crooks in the world. God wrinkled up the landscape so that there are hills and valleys. There are mountains and crevasses.

We need the mountains to be brought low. We need the valleys to be filled in. We need the crooked ways made straight.

You remember the call in Isaiah that was echoed by John the Baptist? Make His path straight. Let the crooked and the high and the deep be leveled and straightened out. Well, God has left the world in a crooked condition.

Why? Well, when we get to the end of this passage, we're going to see it's because mankind made Himself crooked. God created man straight, but He made Himself crooked. It happened in the garden and we've been doing it ever since.

And so God basically altered creation to match us. Creation is in bondage to sin. This is another thing you see over in Romans.

The entire creation groans waiting for the redemption of the sons of God. That's Romans chapter

8. And God basically said, you've made yourself crooked? Well, I'll reflect that in creation. So who can make straight what God has made crooked? Don't think that you're going to find happiness or fulfillment in straightening out the crooked, in undoing what cannot be undone because it's an act of God.

This is eyes on things. I want my circumstances to be better than they are. I want to straighten everything out.

I want my city, you know, towns would be built up for some oddball reason. It might have been a trading post or an intersection of two roads and someone would put a trading post there or a store. Somebody else would settle nearby and it would kind of grow haphazardly.

And then pretty soon they would be big enough and they would have a commission and form a government and have city planners. They would try to lay out the streets. They would say, you know, what would really be great is if all of our streets were north and south and east and west and we'll number all of the north-south streets and we'll use letters or the beginning letter of the alphabet for all the east-west streets.

But they can't do it because it's too late. The city has already grown with these diagonal lines that followed a river or a railroad or something. And they can't go back and plow up all the roads and rebuild the city from scratch.

It's too late. It is the way it is and you've got to deal with it the way it is. You've got to solve the problems.

And you can't just make all of your streets north-south and east-west exactly a mile apart and all your subdivisions and you have to deal with it as it is. And that's the point here. Who can make straight what He has made crooked? It's an act of God.

Don't think that you can straighten out the world and achieve something permanent. You can't. So there are going to be prosperous days and there are going to be calamitous days.

You're going to have good days and bad days. When you have a good day, rejoice. You've beat the averages.

In the day of adversity, in the day of calamity, ra-a, evil, consider. God has appointed one as well as the other. This is the crookedness that God has appointed in life.

He didn't appoint life to be straight. So don't expect it. Don't fool yourself and don't be surprised when the second law of thermodynamics asserts itself and everything put together starts falling apart.

The crookedness of this present world is the result of an act of God. It cannot be straightened out by man. So do not base your happiness on circumstances, because you are likely to be unhappy

a good deal of the time.

The world is crooked. And if you try to base your happiness on circumstances, you will be unhappy. And you will not achieve profit by improving circumstances.

There are people who look and say, you know, all of these hungry children in some far off land, I'm going to join feed the children. I'm going to become a part of the Peace Corps. I'm going to do this and that.

Nothing intrinsically wrong with those. Remember our principle from Romans. It is not what you do, it's why you do it.

Probably many wonderful people engaged in these things as an act of ministry, but they look at it as an act of ministry, not as a way to improve the world. They are not saying, because I am feeding the children, I am establishing something permanent. I am earning a profit.

It's because what they do, they do heartily as unto the Lord. And whether it is feeding children or doing another load of laundry in your house, it's why you do what you do. It is the faith that you exercise.

It is treating the substance of God's Word as reality. Treating it as truth. And your righteousness in feeding hungry children is no different than your righteousness in doing a load of laundry for your family.

Or in going to your job and grinding through another day of what may not be pleasant work. There are people who think that the intrinsic nature of what they do, well, even if I'm having a bad day, the fact that I'm helping to clothe the naked and feed the hungry and visit the sick and afflicted, there are people who work for charities, who work at churches, who think, well, it doesn't really matter what I'm thinking or why I'm doing it, the fact that I'm there and I'm pitching, that counts. Solomon says, no, it doesn't.

It is not any effort you make to straighten out the crooked world that gives you a profit. You will not achieve lasting benefit. You will not take something in your hand beyond the setting of the sun just by improving circumstances.

Nothing wrong with improving circumstances. Jesus commends those who give a cup of water to one of these little ones. But he says, in my name, because of me.

And it's a lot more than just saying, in the name of Christ. They hand out wafers at some churches, in the name of the Father, and it's just meaningless babble. What do you think? Why do you do what you do? So, verse 13 and 14, subjectivity, eyes on things.

Don't think by gaining better circumstances, by improving your lot or that of others, that you have gained a profit. Man will find out nothing that comes after him. You might change circumstances

today, but after you're gone, what are the circumstances going to turn into? Who knows? He says, I've seen everything in the days of my vapor.

And in verses 15 through 18, he illustrates the second area of subjectivity, eyes on self. I'm going to get into self-improvement. I'm not just going to prosper myself in my circumstances, or improve the lot and life of other people, and promote myself and gain a profit.

I'm going to improve myself. This is self-improvement. This is Dr. Phil, Phil McGraw.

I'm going to resolve my inadequacies and become a better person and get everything figured out. I didn't even know his last name until I was on the airplane and I saw an ad in the USA Today because Dr. Phil, his son now is in the game. And I guess Dr. Phil, his father before him was a talking doctor, and Dr. Phil is now his son.

And so it's like a three-generation business. Well, subjectivity, eyes on self. What does 15 through 18 say? There's a just man who perishes in his righteousness.

There's a wicked man who prolongs his life in wickedness. Do not be overly righteous. Don't be overly wise.

Why should you destroy yourself? Don't be overly wicked. Don't be overly foolish. Why should you die before your time? What is the point? Making wisdom or righteousness an end in themselves is self-destructive.

You can think, well, now I'm on the right path. I have found the wisdom of the ages. Who is that other guy that talks on Channel 13? Dave somebody or other.

He's got the wisdom of the ages. He's consulted all the wisdom masters and he pulls together everything from the Bible to Muhammad to Confucius to Buddha and Mahatma and all these other people. He's like Walden Pond and Emerson and Thoreau and all that.

Well, making wisdom or righteousness an end in itself. Of course, the righteousness end, this is what Israel fouled up in. Missing the righteousness of God, seeking to establish their own.

They missed the boat. It results in self-destruction. Ignoring wisdom and righteousness is likewise deadly.

If you say, okay, so wisdom and righteousness are not the key, well, then I'm just going to throw that out the window and be completely foolish and completely evil. Well, that is just as deadly. You can't make it an end in itself, but nor can you just throw it out.

And people want to push everything to an extreme. This is a reminder to guard against extremes. Balance is the key.

Solomon says, look, you've got to lay your hand on this and not let go. You've got to grasp this.

Here's the key.

Get a hold of this because you'll have something in your hand that lasts. He who fears God will escape all of these negative consequences from imbalance. You overemphasize wisdom and righteousness and you destroy yourself.

You underemphasize wisdom and righteousness and you lose your life. He says, look, wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of a city. It's more helpful to the wise than the best of human counsel.

What are rulers in a city? What does that have to do? A city is a place where a lot of people dwell. As soon as you congregate the people you have these problems and you need wise people to sort it out, make laws, adjudicate, settle disputes. Well, you could have ten of the best adjudicators and leaders and settlers.

We just had a mayoral election here in Dallas trying to find a good leader for the city. Heaven help them. And it doesn't matter if they elect ten mayors.

Wisdom is better than all of the human advice, all of the human leadership, all of the human wisdom. This puts in its place all of the self-help books. But, remember, it is not an end in itself.

It's the means to an end. And if you make it an end, it's like the guy on the MTA. You know, Charlie getting the sandwich through the window on the MTA.

He's riding the subway and he can't get off. Well, you don't ride the subway as your life goal. It's a way to get from one place to another.

Well, you want to have a good subway. You want to have a great subway system. You want to have great transportation.

But, you know, they have car commercials now where all people do is make some excuse to go drive their car. To me, that is so moronic. Oh, you need some completely non-essential thing? Let me get it.

They're fighting for the keys and trying to go get it just so they can drive their car as an end in itself. To me, I appreciate a good car. But a car is a way to get from point A to point B. I don't want to just walk out and go drive my car, sit in my car and drive.

Well, that's what some people do with wisdom. That is a trap we can fall into. We get wisdom and we just want to sit in the car and drive around and not get anywhere.

Solomon says, look, you can't arrive there without a car. Don't throw it out. But don't spend all your time in the car either.

Get in the car and go where you're going and get out. So, wisdom helps the wise, more than ten rulers of the city. But, making wisdom a righteousness in and of itself.

So that's the second area of subjectivity, eyes on self. Well, verses 19 through 22 give us the third area of subjectivity, which is eyes on people. You think, well, it's all about getting along with people.

I need Dr. Phil or I need Mr. Dave or one of these other guys to help me figure out my interpersonal relations and find out why I'm codependent and why I'm insecure and all these other things. He says, no, there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. Don't take to heart everything people say.

This is human interaction. Some people think the answer to life and fulfillment in life is relationship. There's a poster you can get, one of these motivational things.

It says, a hundred years from now, they won't know what my bank balance was and they won't know whether or not I got there on time, this, that and the other. But, what will last is perhaps the effect that I had on a child. Words to that effect.

It's something that's got a big guy holding on to a little guy's hand. And he says, you know, the only thing you can do that lasts is have an impact on a child. Carry your good forward into the next generation.

It's nonsense. But that's the idea people get. It isn't my personal reputation, because they recognize that's going to fade.

My righteousness, my wisdom, that's not going to work. It isn't fixing circumstances and changing the world. That's not going to last.

It's my effect on people. It's my impact. And the church has swallowed this hook, line and sinker.

Look at all of the modern programs. Look at the emphasis in the big crowd-catching parachurch ministries and so on. It's all about impact.

And they've turned impact, which is a noun, into a verb. And said, you want to impact people. The only place it is legitimate for impact to be used as a verb is in the artillery.

Because in the artillery, rounds do not land. You know, you have to teach lieutenants and raw artillerymen this when they come to school. And they say, oh well, I think I saw the round land.

They don't land. Airplanes land. Projectiles do not land.

They impact. Projectiles impact. But people, and I suppose you could say, you know, it can be used as an adjective.

You can have an impacted wisdom tooth. There are other kinds of being impacted that are very unpleasant. But I don't want to be impacted in any sense of the word.

I don't want an artillery round falling on me. I don't want my wisdom tooth up under the gum. And I don't want the other kind of impacting, least of all.

So the whole emphasis on impact is the idea it's eyes on people. It's subjectivity. It's the effect I have on others.

Even the mania for winning people to Christ is often undergirded by a desire to be appreciated. Or a desire to see that you have made a difference. I made a difference.

I wasn't here very long, but while I was here, I made a difference. I made a difference in the lives of people. I touched people.

People I warmly remembered at my funeral and in my eulogy. And Solomon says, look, wisdom is helpful more than any kind of human counsel, but remember that for every person that you impact for blessing, you're liable to curse them as well. People are a curse to other people.

And he says, we can be just as much a curse to others as they are to us. If you take to heart what people say, good or bad, all you're going to be reminded of is that we're basically a curse to each other. You'll hear your servant cursing you, and you'll think back, well, you know, I've cursed other people.

He says, if you try to go down the road of impact, you're going to find that you do more harm than good to most of the people you're around, even people you love. You know, Mills brothers, you always hurt the one you love. You can't achieve a positive balance in the area of impact.

We are all sinful. We're all corrupt. And a lot of times what you think is good is actually not good.

Have you ever been miserable because somebody was trying to help you and trying to be positive and they thought they were helpful and they weren't? They thought they were being a blessing and they weren't. Because they were doing it completely in the human realm. It's an entirely different thing when believers bless other believers through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit and the gifting of the Holy Spirit.

And I'm not discouraging anyone from doing what they do in that regard. But if you go out with the mission in life, I'm going to go out and improve somebody's day today. I'm going to be the cause of joy and rejoicing for some other person today.

That's my goal. That's an end in itself. He says, look, you're just going to curse others.

Others are a curse to you. You're a curse to others. It has no lasting value.

Eyes on self. Eyes on people. Eyes on things.

You're going to miss it. And Solomon concludes in verse 23. He says, look, I've checked all this out by wisdom.

I said I will be wise. It was far from me. Even knowing the content of these truths, if we could actually remember this, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, from now on, just knowing the content of these truths is not enough.

For to be wise, not just to have wisdom, but to actually be wise, to function wisely, to ride that piece of transportation to its destination, Solomon says, you know, it's distant and unattainable. It's far from me. I keep getting on the train and I keep falling off and I don't seem to arrive at the destination.

Kind of reminds you of Paul in Romans 7, doesn't it? What I will is present with me, but how to perform it I find not. I've got the wisdom. I know what life ought to be.

I ought to be fearing God. I ought to be pleasing in God's sight. I've got that wisdom.

But to attain it and to reach it, it's far from me. For wisdom to truly be profitable, we must escape the allure of all of the things in this world that drag us off the bus that leads to eternal fruit. So, in this section 23 through 26, he pictures it just like he does in Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7 and many places in the early sections of Proverbs, where he personifies the allure of worldly things as a woman.

And he says there are both intangible and tangible allures. He talks about the heart of the woman being traps and snares. He says the hands of the woman are chains.

Well, the heart is the intangible part, right? When you're dealing with the heart of the woman, this is her affections and it's the intangible. It's the relationship aspect. It's trying to please her and be well thought of by her.

And being attractive. She's attractive to you. You want to be attractive to her.

It's the intangible things. Her hands, this is getting into the tangible world. So you could think of it as mental versus physical or intangible versus tangible.

But all these different things in the world, sometimes we just want to be well thought of. Other times, we want to acquire physical things. Look at kids at Christmas.

They think they're going to die if they don't get a certain thing for Christmas. Three weeks after Christmas, that same thing that they could not live without, almost literally, is collecting dust in the corner of the closet. We don't learn a lot, even as we grow older.

We must escape the allure of the world and not be trapped by its attractions. That's the point of

23 through 26. Even if we know these truths, they're not going to do us any good if we get waylaid, if we are ensnared.

Well, how do we escape entrapment in the world? It's in verse 26. The one who pleases God will escape all of these snares. We live to please God.

Kind of reminds us of what's back up in verse 18. It is the fear of the Lord that ought to be grasped and retained, whether it's a prosperous day or a day of adversity. Fear of the Lord.

Down here, he repeats that in a different way. How do you escape these entrapments? Living to please God. The one who pleases God will escape them.

Well, he goes on in verses 27 and 29, the portion we've covered most recently, and he basically says one man in a thousand can be found who is going to seek out and find this answer. He uses matzah about five times here in rapid succession. It's all about what you seek.

What are you seeking? Solomon says, I'm seeking these things, and I'm seeking anybody else that has sought and found the answer. Everybody is looking for the explanation. Everyone's looking for the key to life.

Everybody recognizes that there's a problem that needs a solution. He says there's but one man in a thousand that finds what he's telling us here, that it's the fear of the Lord, that it's living to please God that is the key. That is the end.

That is the purpose and goal of wisdom. Wisdom as an end in itself, wisdom that seeks to fulfill one of the areas of subjectivity, is going to fall short and you're going to wind up empty-handed at the setting of the sun. It is wisdom that carries you toward the fear of the Lord.

It is wisdom that leads you to living to please God that is the issue. But one man in a thousand can be found who will seek it out and find it. A woman alone will never find it.

And understand it. God made mankind straight. But they have sought out many other explanations.

No, it's not as simple as what God says. It's not just about living to please God. It's not fearing the Lord.

It's impact. It's possessions. He who dies with the most toys wins.

It's about personal fulfillment. I want to do all of these things before I die. I want to climb Kilimanjaro.

I want to circumnavigate the world in a blimp. I want to achieve this position. I want to exceed my father.

I want to beat out my siblings. Whatever it may be. People set all kinds of goals in life and they say, this is the goal, this is fulfillment.

I want to win an Emmy. I want to win an Oscar. I want to be recognized in my field.

I want to earn a Master's or a Doctorate. Whatever it may be. This is what Solomon says.

God made man straight. It's kind of like, here's man at one end of the road and here's God at the other end of a nice straight road. And man just wants to get off the straight road and go anywhere but down the road to God.

There's got to be some other thing. There's got to be some other way to be fulfilled. God made mankind straight.

Who made mankind crooked? We did. We did it to ourselves. And we continue to do it to ourselves.

Just like Paul talked about. There's no reason in this age particularly to be entrapped and ensnared and held captive by sin. We have been delivered.

This is what Solomon was banging his head against. Where is the deliverance? God made us straight, but we keep diverting ourselves into all of these crooked roads. Well, what is the likeness of that one in a thousand man? What does the one look like? If you're trying to seek and find somebody that really does figure it out.

If there was a spiritual Dr. Phil that got the answers and was going to be able to communicate it to you, Solomon says, I'm looking and looking and I haven't found the man. I look through a thousand and I finally find one who has this figured out. What does he look like? Well, that's what he tells us in chapter 8 verse 1. What is the likeness of that one in a thousand man who lives wisely and knows how to interpret his situation? Knows how to rightly interpret circumstances and people and self? Well, he can be identified by his changed countenance.

It shines in his face. It changes. And what is the countenance? What is your countenance? It's your outlook.

You can recognize the outlook of someone who has got this figured out because they're not fazed when circumstances go up and down. And I don't mean they take no note and that they're insensitive and numb to life, but it doesn't break their stride. All of us are going to respond.

We're going to have better days and worse days in terms of enthusiasm and attitude and overt joy. We're not full of Novocain. But the man who has got this figured out has a changed countenance.

Countenance, you can substitute outlook. What is your outlook? We grieve with those who

grieve. We rejoice with those who rejoice.

If we lose a loved one, we're going to be sad. We're going to miss them and so on. But what is our outlook? We grieve not as those who have no hope.

Well, by extension, that's true in every area of life. All of us have great confluence of circumstances where everything seems to buoy us along and it's all going well. And we think, boy, you know, things are just falling into place like the pieces of a simple puzzle.

Other times it seems like we are swimming against the tide. The coefficient of friction is so high that we're not only not advancing, we're one step forward and two steps back. It's like Sisyphus down there, pushing the rock up, but then it's rolling right back down.

Well, that's such as is common to man. But what is the outlook? There are people who even in that circumstance say, you know, I know why this is. I know that it's a crooked world.

God has made it this way. There's a reason. There's a purpose.

I'm still living to please God. I still fear the Lord. I still have confidence in all of His promises and the principles and doctrines of the Word of God.

And sure, I feel the blows. I stagger under the weight. I get hit and buffeted, but I don't fall down.

And I keep pointing right down the straight road. I'm still trudging. We are bent but not broken.

We may be slowed but we're not stopped because of outlook. And outlook in the New Testament is the word *elpis*, which is hope. Faith, hope, and love, the triad of Christian virtues.

What is the motivation that undergirds our faith? What is the motivation that fuels our love for God and for one another? It's hope. That's outlook. Solomon in the Old Testament is reaching for New Testament truths.

He's at the very pinnacle of Old Testament wisdom and knowledge. And he says, you know what? Wisdom that leads to fearing the Lord and that leads to living in a way that pleases Him is hope. It's the confident expectation that even though I can't see... What is Job's conclusion after forty chapters of dialogue and misery and all of the things? Did they try different doctrinal solutions? Such a fascinating book.

Because these are friends who know the Word of God. They're spiritual men. They're Job's friends.

And he's a righteous man. Who is he going to have as his closest friends? He's not going to have a bunch of godless reprobates who are out to just make a buck and dwell in some form of subjectivity. These are godly men.

They know a lot about God. They talk a lot about God. And what are they doing? They're wrestling with his crooked condition.

And they're saying, how can we apply wisdom to this and figure it out? How can we get the conclusion? And they're struggling with the very same thing Solomon is. You see these struggles to break free of the captivity of sin in the Old Testament. And they come to the same conclusion.

Job says, I need a mediator. I need someone to bridge the gap between me and God. I need someone to give me that hope.

And he says, you know what? As he's thinking his way through his problem, he says, I do have hope. I know that I will stand on the last day and I will see my Redeemer from my flesh. He knows when he has his possessions restored, and yet God only gives him the same number of children.

He doubles everything else, but he has the same number of children. He knows the other children are going to be there in the eternal future. It's hope.

It's outlook. And that's what chapter 8, verse 1 is talking about. What is the likeness of that one in a thousand person who figures out how life works? It's their outlook.

It changes their countenance. It makes their face to shine. Well, he's going to go on to talk about a fourth area where people try to master circumstances and try to achieve profit.

And it's in the area of organization and authority. If I could just get a grip on things, if I could organize it, if I could get authority working the way that it should, if I could straighten out government, that would be the answer. And you could almost make this a fourth area of subjectivity because it is the appeal to human power.

And I've always thought in terms of self and people and things, but I may, just for our purposes, invent a fourth area of subjectivity because it's looking to someone who's got the power. I suppose it could be a subcategory of eyes on people, but it's really an appeal because sometimes I want my own power. If I could get out from under this bad system, if I could get out and fix the system, if the system were better.

And that's what he's going to talk about now as a fourth area of where people think that they can get it done under the sun and in this life. And so that's where we'll pick up next time, but let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word together.

We thank You for the clarity and the insight that Your Word gives us as we look at our own life, our own circumstances, and at the short time that we have here on this earth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enable us through our meditation and our prayer and our thinking on Your

Word to rightly divide Your Word, to understand it properly so that we can apply it correctly in all of the various decision points of our lives. We pray that we can establish good priorities.

We will be able to apply the principles of Your Word properly and that all of these things will be done with our eyes on You and the fear of the Lord and walking in a way that is pleasing in Your sight. We know that this will please You and it will bring glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name.

Amen.