02-01-27b Ecclesiastes

We continue our worship this morning by turning for our Scripture reading to Psalm 90. Psalm 90. We have arrived at a point in our study of Ecclesiastes where Solomon, in talking about the various circumstances of life, the people with whom we deal, the circumstances, the situations, the problems and challenges as we struggle and go after goals and accomplishments, is putting that in perspective.

We have tried to summarize our approach. The human soul has been compared to a ship on the sea. I am captain of my own ship.

I am master of my own fate and so on. There are certain forces beyond our control. There are other forces within our control.

Solomon, in the Old Testament economy, having recognized that there are limits, even with unlimited resources as the king, and even with seemingly unlimited wisdom at his disposal from God, there are still forces and situations beyond his control. As he struggles with this, we have summarized the approach. How do you step back and look at the time and the life that God has allotted and make something of it, grab a hold of something that is eternal? One way that I have suggested to you that we summarize our approach to our daily living is to think in terms of principles, priorities and values.

You can organize your thoughts about any given situation, any decision point, any policy or pattern that you are either currently engaged in or that you want to adopt. Sometimes we want to make a change. We want to do something different.

We want to change a status in our situation. And so we sit down and we say, well, I want this to be different, or I want to achieve this goal. Well, you have to have some kind of way to organize your thoughts.

And so principles, priorities and values, and we've talked about this before, what is the difference between those three things? Very briefly, principles for a believer are the principles from God's Word. These are the standards by which we measure what is right and what is wrong, but not only that. Principles also tell us what is pleasing in God's sight, what is acceptable in God's sight.

We have seen the example of the nation of Israel looking at the law that God gave through Moses. I sometimes wonder when I say mosaic law over and over again that people are thinking mosaic like a pattern of tiles in the floor. Well, it's a mosaic.

It's got all these little pieces and it makes a nice pattern. It's the mosaic law, but it's the law through Moses, from God. And Israel treated that as a simple standard of right and wrong.

If you've kept the law, you're right. If you haven't kept the law, you're wrong. And in the New

Testament we see, especially in sections of Hebrews and other places, where it is demonstrated to us that life is more than right and wrong.

So, principles for a believer, you can apply these things to anyone, but we're talking about the realm of believers. Principles, for us, are the principles of the Word of God. And in order for our principles to be biblical principles, we have to know and understand the Word of God, and we have to import its thinking, its standards of measurement into our lives.

And you can see right away that one of the fundamental problems we have in our Christian world today is a faulty set of principles. The principles that guide most believers and most churches and most Christian ministries are faulty because they are incomplete. Certain things have been extracted from the Word of God and made to be standards of measure.

And while most of them are legitimate things that are a part of the life of a believer, it is an incomplete standard. That's why we emphasize the study of the Word of God, and we try to not just walk back and forth in well-worn ruts. We want to learn, we want to grow in our knowledge of the principles of God's Word.

Principles tell us what is cause and what is effect, as well as what is right and what is wrong. The principles of the Word of God tell us what happens in time. If you follow this path, you will be blessed.

If you follow this path, you will receive discipline and judgment from God. If you follow this path, there is the hope not only of eternal life in the age to come, but importing the blessings and the divine life and the pleasure of God back into this present life. We can partake of the eternal and partake of the divine even now in this life.

So our hope is not only for the future, but also for the present. All of that is a part of principles. What does the Word of God say? What is it that pleases God? What is it that constitutes the measure by which you know that what you are doing has value, has what Solomon calls Yitron, profit, something that will remain in the hand after this life is over.

Any other standards, any other set of principles, are going to be time-bound, earth-bound, temporary, and this is what Peter talks about. He says, what kind of people ought we to be, knowing that the elements are going to melt with a fervent heat, the earth is going to be burned up. Anything that is time-bound and earth-bound is ultimately vapor.

Well, those are principles. Now, it's one thing to have principles. You can have Dale Carnegie's principles of how to win friends and influence people.

That's a set of principles, and people measure how well they're doing by how much influence do I have? How many friends have I won? Well, principles, first of all, have to come from God's Word, but then we also establish priorities. Which principle takes precedence? What are the principles

that directly apply here? Paul gives an example in talking about the law of liberty versus the law of love. Those are principles.

Liberty says we are free in Christ. We don't have to worry about observing days. We don't have to worry about restricting foods.

We don't have the code of regulations burdening us that some people think we do. However, and that's a principle. The principle is there's nothing wrong, for example, there's nothing wrong with having a glass of wine.

The law of liberty says we are free in Christ. As long as it's not a breach of the higher standard of principles, which is morality. Adultery is always wrong.

Murder is always wrong. Theft is always wrong. But in the area of freedom, there's nothing wrong with having a glass of wine.

That's the law of liberty. That's a principle. There's also the law of love, which is a principle that says I will not do anything that will cause my brother to stumble.

And there are many situations where for a believer to partake of alcoholic beverages, whether they are immediately in view of someone else or not, just the knowledge that the person does that or keeps it in their house or whatever, can cause another believer to stumble. There are other cases where it doesn't. It's not a hard and fast rule.

It depends. And this is where priorities come into play. What is most important to me? Do I have nothing to worry about in this area? If there's no one in my periphery that's going to be caused to stumble by this, then fine.

It's a liberty. If there is someone who maybe comes out of a denominational church background or has had alcoholism in their family perhaps and has a real phobia about alcohol, what does the law of love say? The law of liberty says it's fine. There's absolutely nothing wrong with circumspect partaking of alcoholic beverages.

But the law of love says if this is causing or can cause someone to stumble, then I'll just refrain. Paul said, I have the right to lead about a wife. I have the right to be supported by the churches.

But he says, I don't do those things because I don't want to cause anyone to stumble. I don't want there to be grumbling and complaining that, well, we're having to support your whole family, we're having to buy boat tickets for your wife, and what if you start having kids? He says, I won't encumber myself in that way. I don't want to be a burden to the churches.

So Paul did not marry, did not lead about a wife. He says, I have the right, the law of liberty, but I will not because of the law of love. Well, to sort out principles and decide which ones take precedence, that's priorities.

What are your priorities? What is most important to you? For believers, the highest priority should be, in the light of the greatest commandment, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength. Our priorities will fall into place, ordered by what is most pleasing to the Lord. And of course, that is woven into the Word of God as well.

And then the third category is values. Because you can have principles, you can be operating out of a biblical set of standards of what is right and what is wrong. You can be prioritizing those things as well.

But what is your ultimate goal? What are you employing? Why are you even bothering to establish priorities? Why are you bothering to learn and apply principles? Values indicate your goals. What are you seeking to achieve? And this is difficult for us to see sometimes because our soul is a bubbling stew. Long, long time ago, when I was very young, I remember there was a commercial.

I don't remember what it was for now, but these witches were around the cauldron and they put in a large red-eyed no-nose nothing and an eye of newt and one thing and another. It all goes in this bubbling stew. And once they drop bat's ears and things in there, you don't know what's in it.

Well, our soul, a lot of times, is that way. We can't hardly sort out. We are full of mixed motives.

Values, that's where we seek to define and order what we're about. That's what Solomon is talking about in Ecclesiastes. Ultimately, if you look at life under the sun, the value is, what is it that is profitable? And this is profitable in God's view.

So, to boil it down in simple terms, do we live our lives to please God? Do we live our lives to please ourselves? When we apply principles, when we establish priorities, why are we doing that? What is our motive for so doing? Are we wanting a happy life? Are we wanting to avoid discipline? Are we wanting to be pleasing in God's sight? Do we want the approval of the Father? Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Is that the defining motivation for what we do? What do we value? Do we value God's pleasure, or do we mainly value freedom from challenge? Well, all of this comes into play as we move through time. There is a time, Ecclesiastes chapter 3. There is a season.

There is a time for every thing. There is a purpose. A time for every purpose.

Well, this subject has arisen again in our current chapter, chapter 8 of Ecclesiastes. And Psalm 90 talks about that as well. So, keep in mind, as we talk about time, we're not just saying, well, time comes, it's brief, life itself is like a vapor and all that.

The point is, what do you do with your time? And in realistic terms, when we talk about time, what are we going to do with the rest of this day? What are we going to do with the coming week? We can all look at our calendar. We can look at our daily planner. I now have one of these little

pocket planning things that has a calendar in it.

I can hit the button and look at the calendar and see, well, I've got to be here on this day and there on that day, and I've got to get this, that, and the other task done. But, in the employment of time, to make any sense out of it at all, and to redeem the time, this is where we start thinking about our principles, our priorities, and our values. Psalm 90.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. This establishes our widest context, doesn't it? Even beyond time, God is there, and God is our God.

You turn man to destruction and say, Return, O children of men. In other words, it is not so with mankind. We are not eternal.

We haven't existed from eternity past. There is not preexistence of souls, as some would like to believe. For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

You carry them away like a flood, they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up.

In the evening it is cut down and withers. For we have been consumed by your anger, and by your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins, in the light of your countenance.

For all our days have passed away in your wrath. We finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years, and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away.

Who knows the power of your anger? For as the fear of you, so is your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long? And have compassion on your servants.

O, satisfy us early with your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let your work appear to your servants, and your glory to their children.

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands. To paraphrase and summarize this psalm, God is eternal, God is from everlasting to everlasting, man is not so.

Why? Because of sin, and because of the consequences of sin expressed here in terms of God's wrath and God's anger. Because of that, remember Adam had the promise that as long as he

was obedient, there was no termination to his life in the garden. He and Eve might be there yet, except for sin.

But we are consumed by God's anger and terrified by God's wrath, and this is why we are grass that grows up and withers. We finish our years like a sigh. He says that because our lives are limited, their boast is only labor and sorrow.

It is soon cut off and we fly away. That's verse 10. Well, if the psalm ended in verse 12, we would think, well, the Bible says that this life is sort of a waste of time, we've just got to get through it.

Its boast is only labor and sorrow because of sin and because of God's discipline and the anger that He expresses towards sin is why we only last 70 or 80 years and even then we're just like grass that blows away. But the key is in verse 13 and following. Return, O Lord, how long, and have compassion on your servants.

Satisfy us early with your mercy. When God tips the cup of His mercy in our direction, we can be satisfied and we can rejoice and be glad all our days rather than having days that boast only labor and sorrow. He says, make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us and the years in which we have seen evil.

Even in affliction and even in a fallen world and all sorts of mixed circumstances, we can be glad and we can rejoice. How is that possible? Let your work appear to your servants and your glory to their children. When our lives are set in the context of God's plan and purpose, it's like Romans 8, 28 and following.

All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are recalled according to His purpose. This gets back to the idea of values. Whose purpose are we pursuing? If it's God's purpose, then all things will work together for good.

People wonder why they operate according to biblical principles and teach and talk about biblical principles and prioritize ministry and prioritize the things of God in their life, and yet they still end up in dire straits or they still end up scratching their head and wondering what went wrong. And it is the value set that is lacking because deep down underneath our appearances and our strutting and fretting and posturing and our deceiving ourselves, we really haven't established the value of living to please God. It's convenient to reserve most of our life to please ourselves and choose certain times and certain places to please God.

This is the typical picture of attending church two or three times a week, and when people are at church or when they're engaged in a church function, they're thinking one way and speaking one way. Then on Monday morning when they go back to work, that's all kind of put on the shelf and we take off our church shoes and put on our work shoes and go in, and it's a whole different world. Well, in the business world, it's got to be this way.

You can't operate in the business world with those principles for church. Those principles are for Saturday afternoon at the miniature golf course and Sunday afternoon at the potluck, but now we're in business. You can't survive on those principles, and so values don't last, they don't persist, and the priorities change and even the principles change.

And well, of course, this is just natural competition. It's understood. Everyone does this.

This is just the way business is conducted. This is the way it's done. Well, that is where values are incomplete.

That's where principles are incomplete. That's where our priorities are all ultimately incomplete. We have to be consistent.

We have to be operating to redeem the time. So the times are important, aren't they? We have to know what time we're in. It's the same time for us all the time.

It is always time to live to please God. There's not a time when we can set those values and priorities and principles aside and adopt another set. Every time we do, Paul compares this to a marriage.

Remember when he talks about the law in terms of the first husband? He said, but you're bound by that covenant until the husband dies, but once the husband dies, you're free. He talks about this in Romans. Once the husband is dead, you're no longer under that authority and you're free to be under a new authority.

Well, he says, what a tragedy once that husband has died to try to dig him up and prop him in the kitchen chair and say, well, I'm under your authority again. And he was talking to believers who were seeking to go back and operate under the law. The Judaizers were saying, well, the law has not been revoked and even though you're believing in Christ, that's fine, but you've still got to keep the law.

Well, these were two competing worldviews, two competing sets of values, two competing sets of principles and priorities. That's what we have to guard ourselves from. So anytime we see Ecclesiastes 3 or Psalm 90 or over in Ephesians, redeeming the time, Corinthians, talking about how we spend our time, all of these go back to what is our goal? What is our purpose? What are we after? Well, let's turn back now to Ecclesiastes chapter 8 because this is a challenging chapter to begin.

We saw that the first verse actually belongs at the end of the last chapter and completes and summarizes the thought there that as we are tempted to be subjective in the area of people, subjective in the area of circumstances, subjective in the area of eyes on self, who is the wise man? He is the one who has the wisdom that changes his countenance, changes his outlook, the fallen countenance is a fallen outlook. It's a loss of hope. It's a loss of motivation.

We've talked many times about the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love with which Paul begins so many of his epistles. Faith is the means by which we live a life that pleases God. Hope is the reason for which we live a life that pleases God, that we establish our principles and priorities and values.

Our value is driven by hope. What is the point of living to please God if you're just going to drop like a withered stalk of grass and that's it? If there's no hope, then there's no motivation. Why bother to establish the value of living to please God if it does nothing, if it has no lasting value? We can understand that clearly enough, but we don't often apply the same logic to pursuing temporary and earthly goals.

Like Peter says, if accomplishments in this life are going to be rolled up like a blanket and done away, if the earth is going to burn and the elements are going to melt with a fervent heat, then why spend your time on all these temporary things? Solomon is saying the same thing. So, verse 1 of chapter 8 summarizes that. Who is like the wise? Who knows the interpretation of a matter? Who knows the way that an issue should be decided? The wisdom of a man lights his face and the strength of his face is changed.

Your face is your outlook. God came to Cain actually before the murder, after the rejection of his sacrifice. He says, why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? All you have to do is establish the right values.

Why did Cain bring the sacrifice? Was Cain an unbeliever? I take a lot of grief for Cain and Balaam and a few others, but I am telling you, unbelievers do not bring a sacrifice to God and get disappointed when it's rejected. If you don't believe in God, what's the point of making a sacrifice? You would be doing it for yourself, right? Well, I'm going to bring a sacrifice and then I'll feel better. I'll take it to Dagon or I'll take it to Baal or Ashtaroth or I'll do something so that I can justify myself or get good crops or whatever it might be.

But Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God and Cain's was not and Cain was wroth. Cain was angry and his countenance fell because God did not accept his sacrifice. Cain was mad at God.

Why? Do you get mad at Santa Claus? I don't believe in Santa Claus. There is no fat jolly man at the North Pole, so I can't really get mad at Santa Claus. I can get mad at Santa Claus impersonators.

I can get mad at Santa Claus in the church. Have you ever been in a church where Santa Claus comes in and gives out gifts to the children in the front of the auditorium? I have. You can get mad at the use of the Santa Claus concept.

I think it's pretty... Well, I won't go down that road. I think it is deceptive to tell little children that there is a Santa Claus. I mean, are you really trying to establish trust and rapport with your child by telling them a lie from the time they're tiny and then having to... But that's a personal choice.

People can deal with that in their own way. But here's my point. You cannot be angry with someone that you don't believe in.

You have to believe they're there to get angry at them. Cain was angry because his sacrifice was not accepted. He believed in God.

He knew God taught him. He had a conversation with God. Was this just a... He woke up the next morning and said, Yeah, it was just a figment of my imagination.

There's no God. I don't believe in God. Of course he believed in God.

And he had a relationship with God that went sour because his values changed. He wanted God's approval and he wanted God's blessing, but he didn't want it on God's terms. He wanted it on his own terms.

Why can't I do it my way is the argument. I want to do it my way. Why can't God see things my way? That's Cain's argument.

So there's Cain. And his countenance fell because he didn't want to do things God's way. Well, guess what? Many of us as believers have a fallen countenance.

Our face does not shine. And we have trouble interpreting a matter. We have trouble... Why is there all of the sweat and groaning about divine guidance and trying to figure out how to determine God's will? Because people are going to God like the genie of the lamp.

They're going to God like the oracle at Delphi. They want to go and get the secret mystical right answer that will accomplish their purpose. I want the answers from God so that I can get my plan done.

I want God to show me the way to go so that I can get my stuff to line up and go the way I want it to go. That's what we do. We all do this.

We say, I have a dream. And if God will just tell me how to get it done, I can make it happen. And that's why people... You write a book on divine guidance, it will sell like hotcakes.

If I ever wanted to make merchandise of the Word of God, I would write a book on divine guidance. And as soon as you put that in the title, it will sell like hotcakes. Well, what is it that causes your face to shine? Who is it that knows the interpretation of a matter? It is the one who has gained a heart of wisdom.

And wisdom says, God... Psalm 90, God exists from eternity to eternity. From eternity to eternity, you are God. Human life and human time is set in that context.

And you're not going to get anywhere, you're not going to have anything in your hand at the end

of life until you recognize that and establish the value that will drive your priorities, that will enable you to sort out and apply your principles so that your life has meaning and purpose and definition. That last phrase, by the way, is Bob Thames. And that's one of the things that he taught very well.

If you want a life of meaning and purpose and definition, it has to be lived in accordance with God's plan. There is no other way. No other life has meaning.

No other life has purpose. No other life has definition. That's one of the things I think he really hit the nail on the head with.

So, that's verse 1. Then in verse 2, which really begins this next section, we have this problem verse. It starts with the first person pronoun, ani, I. And then, in the text as it stands, there is no verb. It just says I. And then it says, in the Masoretic text, keep the King's commandment upon the matter of, literally, the oath of God.

Keep the King's commandment upon the matter of the oath of God. Well, it's gibberish. It makes no sense.

Who is the King? Which King? What oath? Is it an oath God made? Is it an oath that man made? Some people think it's an oath that they took to obey the King. Let me just give you an indication. I want to read you some of the different translations of this verse, just to tell you.

For example, the ASV, the American Standard Version. I counsel thee, so they've added in counsel. I counsel thee, keep the King's commandment, and in that regard, and that in regard of the oath of God.

I counsel thee, keep the King's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God. The CEV, Contemporary English Version, says if you promised God that you would be loyal to the King, I advise you to keep that promise. The English Standard Version says, I say, keep the King's command because of God's oath to him.

King James, of course, says I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment and that in regard of the oath of God. Very similar to the ASV. The Living Bible says obey the King as you have vowed to do.

Don't always be trying to get out of doing your duty, even when it's unpleasant. For the King punishes those who disobey. The NIV says obey the King's command, I say, because you took an oath before God.

The NRSV says keep the King's command because of your sacred oath. The RSV says keep the King's command and because of your sacred oath, be not dismayed. Are you getting the idea here that we're all over the map? We've got the King, we've got the oath, we've got God, and we've got keep, and we've got I. Well, this all begins with the Hebrew text.

All of these are derived from the Hebrew text, even going back to the Septuagint, which says stoma basileos phyloxon kai peri lagu orku theu me spoudases which means guard the mouth of the King and concerning the word of the oath of God, do not be hasty. So, Good News Bible just says do what the King says and don't make any rash promises to God. I will tell you what I think.

And I'm giving you all these other translations because the entire weight of history from the Septuagint, which was a couple of hundred years before Christ all the way down to the present through the Latin and everything else, everyone adds a verb to the pronoun I or they leave it out altogether. Some of them just throw it out and don't even translate it and just say keep the King's command because of the oath of God. But that ani is there for a reason.

And unless and until I find evidence that will improve the understanding of what's in the text, I think there's a possibility that perhaps by re-dividing these consonants you may come up with something else. But as it stands, this is how I translate it. Solomon says I and any time you put ani in a text it's emphatic because normally the person whether it's I, you or them is incorporated into the verb and you don't have to use a pronoun.

So when you use a pronoun it's almost always for emphasis. So you would say I myself. That's how the verse begins.

Whatever else you want to say I myself is at the beginning. We have the word for guarding. We have the word mouth of the King.

Now mouth of the King is often translated the word of the King or the commandment of the King because it comes from his mouth and it is occasionally used that way elsewhere in the Old Testament. So we have a choice here. This is either the King's literal mouth or it is the commandment of the King.

His word, his law. By using the word mouth of the King rather than entole, commandment of the King or the deber, the word of the King by saying the mouth this emphasizes the origin if that's what it means. If it's not his literal mouth then it emphasizes that he is the one who is putting out this policy.

You remember that in the book of Esther when Xerxes or Ahasuerus grants the edict that Haman writes up that the Jews are going to be expunged from the land he can't go back on that. That is non-retractable. What the King speaks is sort of graven in stone.

So when Esther makes the appeal all that her husband the King can do is say I will also issue an edict that the Jews are free to defend themselves when these roving bands of assassins come out to exterminate them. I cannot revoke the authority by which they are going to go assassinate Jews but I can authorize resistance. I can authorize and make it legal to defend your life rather than being a crime to resist the troops that are on that mission.

So that's what he did. Of course they resisted, they overcame, they survived and that's where you get Hanukkah and the Feast of Lights. Well, that was the word of the King.

So I myself, we have the verb for guarding the mouth of the King or guarding the commandment of the King and then we have Al Debrat which means upon the matter of or upon the word of the oath of God. It does not have the possessive. It doesn't say your oath to God or my oath to God.

It says the oath of God. Normally, this construction when you have oath of God in this order, it means God's oath. So this would be a promise that God has made and the word here means a contractual promise.

It has been agreed upon. It has been settled ahead of time that there are conditions upon which this promise will be fulfilled. It is a contractual promise.

With a slight change, the Masoretes and the scholars before the Masoretes when they looked at this text they interpreted the consonants that constitute the word guard as an imperative. You guard. If they made a mistake and it's not an imperative then it could easily be the first person form of this word which would mean and then the pronoun would go with it.

I myself guard the mouth of the king for the sake of God's contractual promise. Now, my authority for thinking that this may be the case is over in 1 Kings. Remember at the beginning of 1 Kings David gives Solomon instructions about what to do after he is gone.

Look at 1 Kings 2. The days of David drew near that he should die and he charged Solomon his son saying, I go the way of all the earth. Be strong therefore and prove yourself a man and keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies as it is written in the law of Moses so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. That the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me saying, if your sons take heed to their way to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, He said, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.

That sounds like a contractual promise from God, doesn't it? That concerns the king. I myself guard the mouth of the king. Whether it's the literal mouth or the commandments of the king, Solomon is the king.

He says, I guard what the king puts out by way of policy, what the king says for the sake of the contractual promise of God. Because God said, if you guard your ways, if you adhere to the law of Moses, I will do these following things. That's my understanding of verse 2. But I tell you all of these others because everybody else that has ever lived and ever translated this just makes the best they can out of that hash and says, you need to obey the king because of the oath of God, but we don't know whose oath it is.

Did you make a promise to God? Did God make a promise to you? Did God make a promise to

the king? Did the king make a promise to God? It's been taken all of those ways. But we have biblical support for the oath of God concerning the king and about the importance of the king guarding his steps and guarding his mouth because of that, on that basis. David, his last words to Solomon were, I charge you, keep the commandments of God.

Keep the charge of the Lord your God. Walk in his ways. Keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and his testimonies.

You remember that after the death of David, Solomon prays, doesn't he? To the Lord. Solomon in verse 6 of chapter 3 of 1 Kings said, Lord, you have shown great mercy to your servant David, my father, because he walked before you in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart with you. You have continued this great kindness for him and you have given him a son to sit on his throne as it is this day.

Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people too numerous to be numbered or counted.

Therefore, give to your servant an understanding heart to judge your people that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours? That speech pleased the Lord. And he says in verse 12, God says to Solomon, Behold, I have done according to your words.

See, I have given you a wise and understanding heart so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among all the kings all your days. So, verse 14, contractual promise to the king, If you walk in my ways to keep my statutes and my commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.

You can also gain a great deal of insight into that situation with the dedication prayer that Solomon offers in 1 Kings chapter 8, beginning in verse 22, where he reiterates many of these principles and expands on them. So, that's why our translation of chapter 8, verse 2 is, I myself guard the mouth of the king for the sake of the contractual promise of God. Do not hurry to go from his presence.

Do not stand in an evil manner. For everything which he purposes, he will do. And I think Solomon is still talking about God, not the king.

Do not hasten to go from his presence. He says, look, I myself, I watch what I do. I'm the king.

I'm the greatest that's ever lived. I'm wiser than anyone. I'm richer than anyone.

You can look around and see my accomplishments. I've written you these first seven chapters of wise counsel here. I've told you how to avoid subjectivity with eyes on people and eyes on self

and eyes on things.

And I'm saying now, look at me. I myself, I guard the mouth of the king for the sake of the contractual promise of God. And he says, follow my example.

Do not hasten to go from his presence. Do not hasten to walk, halak, from his presence. Do not stand, do not remain in an evil manner.

Think about our New Testament concept of fellowship with God, of walking the narrow road, of walking in the light, 1 John 1.7. If we were putting this in New Testament terms, what would we say? Do not get in a hurry and walk out of the light. In the light is where fellowship with God is. That's where his presence is.

Do not get in a hurry. And this is what usually happens. We act on impulse, we react on impulse, and we find ourselves off the path and out of the light.

Do not hasten and walk out of his presence. And if you find yourself in an evil manner, don't stay there. If we do find ourselves out of the light, there's no reason to remain.

Because everything God has purposed, he will do. There is a contractual promise of God that applies to us, just as it applied to the king. God has promised to love those who love him, to honor those who honor him, to extend mercy and grace to thousands, to those who are of a pliable heart and a willing mind, who respond to God's rebuke.

So, in the light of what Solomon has said in chapter 7, and where he's going in chapter 8, I think this understanding of these verses makes the most sense. I myself guard the mouth of the king for the sake of the contractual promise of God. Psalm 90.

God is God from everlasting to everlasting. Everything we do has to be set in that context. Everything.

Everything we do. Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Father, for the glory of the Father. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men.

For everything which he purposes, he will do. Well, let's stop here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up again in verse 4, where the word of the king is supreme, and nobody questions him.