

02-02-11a Ecclesiastes

Let's begin our worship through study this morning by taking a moment to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the country in which we live and the environment of freedom and opportunity that we enjoy.

We see through the media around the world so many less conducive circumstances, nations where there is oppression, where there is frivolity and governments who operate on a whim or who operate on principles that are nowhere near what we have through the godly men who founded our country and those truths embodied in our Constitution and in our form of government have survived down to the present day even in the midst of corruption and the increasing lack of respect for those truths and for your Word. But we thank you that even in this day we have the opportunities, we have the freedom and the privacy and the lack of resistance or oppression. We can gather, we can fellowship in your Word, we can study without any harassment or fear of retribution.

We pray that we will always be mindful of the opportunity you have given us and take advantage of it. We thank you for our Bibles. We thank you for the men who have been faithful down through the centuries to preserve it and put it into our hands.

There's not a single copy chained to a pulpit. We have a proliferation of translations and tools and you have given us every opportunity and every advantage to learn and to grow. And we recognize that it is because the time is short that we have these great benefits.

We ask your blessing on us as we study and fellowship together this morning. We pray for those who are not with us, those who follow along with us by recordings. We pray for all believers who are seeking to walk the narrow road to go through the straight gate that leads to life.

We pray that all of us will be more fruitful and more productive in this life so that both now and in the age to come we will reflect your glory and the glory of our Savior. We pray these things in His name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4. In our study of Ecclesiastes chapter 8, one of the things we saw last time in verse 5 is that the one keeping the covenant command does not know an evil matter. And the time and the judgment the wise heart knows. Well, think about that for a moment.

The one who is paying attention to the covenant command, this is the command that was referenced in verse 2, the oath of God. The one keeping the covenant, the one who has in mind what God has said, does not know in the sense of associate with, remain in, contribute to an evil literally dabar, which is word or matter depending on the context. So he does not know an evil matter.

What does he know? He knows the time. This is the word time that we saw in chapter 3 verse 1. There is a time for every purpose under heaven, et. So the wise heart knows the time, knows when different purposes are going to be fulfilled.

And he knows the judgment, the mishpat. Mishpat is one of the synonyms for the word of God. It's found very frequently, for example, in Psalm 119, where you see it talking about God's judgments.

There are so many different synonyms for the word of God in Psalm 119. As you know, all but two verses in that very lengthy psalm make reference to the word of God through one synonym or another. And the mishpat or judgment is one of those.

But mishpat is from the same word group that shafat is at the center of. Shafat is the verb that means to judge. And we have a noun that comes from that that's used of judges, the judges in Israel that you find in the book of Judges, for example.

And so this means to evaluate something and render a decision or to execute leadership by deciding what needs to be done in a given situation. You have the judges in Israel primarily leading in battle and rising up to call Israel back to following God or fulfilling God's command in the midst of opposition. In the days before there was a king in Israel and men were all doing what was right in their own eyes, God raised up judges.

So mishpat has a rich history and a rich range of meanings. But the one who is keeping the covenant command does not dwell in, does not spend his time in, does not know, literally here, yadah, which means to know, to experience, to dwell on in the mind, an evil matter or an evil word. Dabar has that sort of double entendre there where it literally means word but it comes to mean a matter or a thing.

And the time and the judgment the wise heart knows. Well, the same verb is used. He does not know an evil matter.

He knows the time and the judgment. Well, in Philippians chapter 4 we have a very famous, I say famous, very well-known passage. It's on the wall here in our sanctuary, our auditorium, actually our living room here.

You can look up on the wall there and we have a portion of what we're going to see in our scripture reading this morning. But let's begin at the beginning of this chapter, Philippians chapter 4. Therefore, and any time you see the word therefore, it is required, if you're going to do justice to the passage, to look and see why he's saying therefore. Therefore means go up and look at what it's there for.

Why is it here? Why does he say therefore? Because up above he has said, summarizing in verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord

Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body, that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself. Therefore, because our citizenship is in heaven, because the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return, because he's going to transform our lowly body and conform it to his own by the same power that he uses to subdue everything to himself, therefore, Paul says, my beloved and longed for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore you, Odiah, and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

What kind of mind? The mind that he has just described, the mind that looks forward in hope. And when he implores each of them individually, the verb is repeated here, I implore you, Odiah, I implore Syntyche. These are two women we know from verse 3, these women who labored with me in the gospel.

He says, be of the same mind. That means right now they're not of the same mind. They are divided in some way.

He says, be of the same mind in the Lord. I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I will say rejoice. Why does this exhortation crop up in the middle of this? Rejoice. Well, you'll notice that people who are divided and who are meditating on that division or are looking over at someone else and saying, you know, I don't agree with you, you can't be rejoicing and be thinking about your difference with someone at the same time.

You know, if you're looking at a fellow believer and saying, I just don't agree with that, that's not an occasion for rejoicing, is it? He says, rejoice in the Lord. Now, these are not heretics. These are not apostates.

These are not clouds without rain and spots in your love feast that he's talking about. These are believers who are laboring together in the Lord. They've labored with Paul for the gospel.

They have been companions of Paul and have been fellow workers with him. Their names are in the book of life. And again, one of these days we're going to do a more thorough study on the book of life.

But this is not talking about they are saved. This means they are fruitful. The book of life means experiential life.

This is productive life. Life in the sense that they are not a dead branch like you find over in Romans where it's snapped out of the tree because it's not bearing fruit. He says, rejoice in the Lord always.

And again, I will say rejoice. He says, look, I know you're not rejoicing because look at how you're

pointing fingers at one another and you shouldn't be. You're productive believers.

You're fruitful. You're in the book of life. Don't risk that by dividing over non-essential issues.

He says, let your gentleness be known to all men. And it's hard to be divisive and it's hard to create a split if you're gentle. One of the things I have noticed in the many church splits that I have witnessed over the years is one of the first things to go is the spirit of gentleness and the spirit of rejoicing.

When you see a body of believers who ought to be united because they have studied, because they know the Word of God, because they have spent a lot of time in the Word of God, if there starts to be a crack and a split developing in that fellowship, the first two things that will leave is joy and gentleness. Rejoicing goes out the window because people are cross. They're frowning at somebody elsewhere in the fellowship.

And this is true in any of our relations between believers. If we know, and I'm talking about on the healthy side, with healthy believers, there is a time to separate. There is a time to put a distance.

There is a time, you know, let him who does not work not eat. Don't even eat with him. Try to shame them into recognizing their error.

When they get to a certain degree of disobedience or apathy or apostasy, there is a time to separate. Paul is not talking about that here. He says these are fellow workers.

So let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Same thing he said at the end of chapter 3. We are eagerly waiting for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's going to come. He's about to come and transform us. Don't sacrifice your hope by getting your eyes on people, by getting your eyes on situations and circumstances, by getting your eyes on yourself and feel like you've been dealt an injustice by someone.

If you are in a fellowship of healthy believers, keep your joy, keep your gentleness. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. If you've got an area where you feel like there's a lack, if there's something that needs to be resolved or needs to be fixed, why would you be making a request to God? Because there's something that's not there, something that's not quite as it needs to be.

So he says don't sacrifice your gentleness, don't sacrifice your joy. Don't get anxious and worried. Remember we saw in Ecclesiastes where it is the restless heart, where anger finds a home, back at the beginning of chapter 7. When our heart is restless and discontent, malcontent, we lose our joy, we lose our gentleness.

He says don't be anxious about any of these things. In everything by prayer and supplication. What is the answer? It's not to create a division.

It's not to sit there and dwell on, I just don't understand why that person said that thing or did that thing or failed to say that thing or failed to do that thing. If you think that there's something that is raising its ugly head, if there's some kind of a root of bitterness trying to spring up, take it to the Lord. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Now, why does he say thanksgiving? If you're going to pray to the Lord, if you're going to make supplication and you're also going to give thanks, it forces you to think about something good, doesn't it? You're not going to say, Lord, thank you for this root of bitterness. Thank you that I'm tempted to be upset here. Thank you that this person did this wrong thing or I'm getting out of sorts like Euodia and Syntyche.

We don't give thanks. Thanksgiving, you think about, well, at least it's not this bad or at least it isn't that or at least we're in a fellowship where we have recourse. We have a Heavenly Father.

He has the Holy Spirit. We have His Word. There is a remedy.

The Lord is coming soon. He's going to transform our lowly bodies. We won't always be wrestling with our corrupt nature.

With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Thanksgiving forces us into objectivity. It forces us to think about the truth.

It forces us to think about our hope. You can't be thankful if you're not hopeful. Thanksgiving and hope go hand in hand.

When you thank God for what He has done, it's a recognition because God is the same, yesterday, today and forever. He is every good and perfect gift for which you are thankful comes down from above, from the Father of lights in whom is no shadow of turning. He's going to always be the same.

He's always the Father of light. He's always the giver of good things. It forces us into objectivity to be thankful, maintain our gentleness, to rejoice in the Lord.

And Paul emphasizes that. He says, I'm going to say it again, rejoice. If you're not rejoicing in some area, we grieve, we have losses, we have pressures, we sometimes are in the endurance mode, but there is always some area in which we can rejoice.

And Paul says, look, I'm going to say it once, and I'm going to say it again. Especially in the area of interpersonal relations with fellow growing believers, fellow workers in the harvest. Rejoice, be thankful, maintain gentleness.

Let your gentleness be made known to all men. Remember the Lord is at hand. How do you maintain that? It's one thing to say be gentle, but I keep having this rancorous bone surfacing.

I remember when I got my wisdom teeth out, it was a lot later than when it normally happens. A lot of times they pull them shortly after they come in. But they didn't pull my wisdom teeth until I was in my 20s.

I had a lot of traumatic things. They yanked my tonsils out when I was 27. They pulled my wisdom teeth out I think even after that, shortly before that.

And it was very traumatic as an adult. The longer you wait, the worse it is. But after they pulled my wisdom teeth out, that was traumatic enough.

But a couple of months later, everything had healed up and the swelling was down and I was kind of back to normal. Then all of a sudden, I started having a lot of discomfort on one side. And it got worse and worse.

And I thought, man, I'm going to have to go in. This is really getting uncomfortable. I stuck my tongue back there one day and it felt like I was cutting a tooth.

Like when I was a child and you lose a baby tooth and one of your permanent teeth comes in. I was feeling that. I thought, I've got a tooth coming in back there.

But I thought, well, it can't be. They pulled out my wisdom tooth. Surely I didn't grow another one.

And over the course of a couple of days, this got worse and worse. Just like when a tooth is breaking up. Well, I reached back there one day and grabbed a hold of that thing and pulled it out and it was a bone chip.

And with all the... I don't want to go through all the gruesome details, but maybe I will. They drill a hole. For me at least, they drill a hole in the center of my wisdom tooth and then they basically screwed a screw in there that got wider the further in you get.

It was kind of cone shaped. And it was threaded. So they screw that in and it basically cracks the tooth apart and they pull all the pieces out.

Well, some piece had not come out. I don't know if it was a piece of my tooth or a piece of my jaw. Because they were tugging around for a couple of hours trying to get everything out of my mouth.

Because they were what they call impacted wisdom teeth. But my point is, long after the teeth were gone, I had this discomfort and this thing surfaced. And my gums knew it wasn't supposed to be there and so they got irritated.

And when I pulled it out, then everything was fine and it healed up. And when Paul talks about the root of bitterness or he says don't let something surface, that's what I think of. I think of that piece of bone surfacing up through my gum and creating all this havoc in the back of my mouth.

Paul says rejoice. Don't be anxious. Don't let that thing start to fester and create an infection.

What is the antidote? You can't just tell somebody, well look, don't worry about that. Just be gentle and rejoice. You can tell somebody that all day and you can't do it.

How do you do it? Well, Paul gives us a clue here. He says, remember the Lord is at hand. If you want something to restore your objectivity and help you maintain your peace and your joy and your gentleness, remember that the Lord is at hand.

That's why he said therefore in verse 1. He talks about joy and crown. He says stand fast in the Lord. The Lord is about to come back.

He's going to come and transform. If you're worried about this person and you think they're not quite playing according to oil, just remember that the Lord is about to come back and He's going to transform all of us. But here's where we're getting down to the nub of it here.

He says, if you can do this, if you're not anxious in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests, if there is something that's not quite meeting the need, if something's not quite as it should be, let your requests be made known to God. If you do this, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. You know there's something wrong if you lose your peace.

That's where worry, that's where loss of joy, loss of gentleness has its roots. Then in verse 8, he says, finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Well, I was thinking about this passage in connection with what we saw in Ecclesiastes chapter 8. Because Solomon here has been talking about the wise heart that does not stand in an evil matter and does not know an evil matter. It discerns the time and the judgment. And you have to fix the New King James translation there in verse 5 because it says, he who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful.

That's not what it says. They're taking yada, which means to know, and say it means experience. And nothing harmful is the evil matter.

It's the very same phrase we had up above. Do not stand in an evil matter. This is a deber-ra.

Ra with the evil eye. And remember we've seen that over and over again. Calamitous, disastrous, something that's unhealthy.

And deber, which is word or matter. And you can use it either way here. Sometimes we need to

separate ourselves from a downward trending conversation.

You get around certain people, especially people who don't seem to have an interest in the things of God. They start talking. They call you up on the phone or you meet for lunch or you see them in some social context.

You see them at work even. And they start to engage you in a conversation that's evil. Evil in the sense of it's not healthy.

It's not productive. It's not doing anybody any good. It's just dragging you into mental attitude sins.

It's dragging you into gossip. It's dragging you into some form of judging. And he says don't stand in that.

Don't remain in it. Don't know it. Get out of it.

We're going to see. I'm going to correct a little bit of the translation that I gave you last week because I'm still improving my understanding of this as I hack through the difficulties in the Hebrew here. But the one keeping the covenant command in verse 5 does not know an evil matter.

The time and the judgment is what the wise heart knows. Well, this is one of the parallel passages in the Bible. This is another passage that talks about what the wise heart dwells on.

But what's fascinating to me because, again, we've got this on the wall. We've quoted it over and over again. Think on these things.

But as I was reviewing this for inclusion in our lesson, I have not taught verse by verse through Philippians yet. We will one day. But it struck me because as we have seen so often, it is critically important to keep the context in mind and to pay careful attention to vocabulary.

There's not a wasted word in the Word of God. And the sense of what Paul says in verse 8 and 9 is not quite yielded by this English translation. When he says, this doesn't mean here I am at the end of the book or here I am at the end of the letter.

He says, let me sum up what I've been talking about. Loipos or loipoi here is translated finally. And it basically means to sum up.

In summary. Finally is not really the best way to say it. He says, in summary, brethren.

Then it says whatever things are true. But things ought to be in italics there because there is no word for things. This hosoi here, H-O-S-O-I, means all that is.

And in some cases, it means all who are. It can mean all which or all who. And then it says, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble.

And you'll notice that ever after you have *R* in italics because there is no verb anymore. Well, here's what I'm talking about in summary. Just like Paul says.

Ta loipon adelphoi. In summary, these things, we tend to think, well, things that are true and noble and lovely. Let me just think about, think happy thoughts or think about some abstract concept that's true and noble and lovely.

Let me start by giving you the verb for meditate at the end of verse 8. Because the word translated meditate is not *phoneo* or any of the other Greek verbs that talk about thinking. This is *logizomai*. *Logizomai*.

Logizomai is a fascinating word and you are familiar with it because it is used in Romans, for example, talking about Abraham when he believed God and it was credited to him. It was accounted to him as righteousness. *Logizomai* means to reckon, to account or take into account, to calculate, to look upon something as.

It's used in Romans 4.4 where Paul is talking about the difference between faith and works. He says to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor but as what is due. His wage is looked upon.

You look upon the wage of a worker as, well, he's earned this. This is what is due him because of his work. That's the way we look at it.

Look at it as. Abraham's faith was looked at as righteousness by God. So this doesn't mean meditate on in the sense of, well, just fill your mind with happy thoughts and think about a babbling brook and a twittering bird on a branch of a honeysuckle bush or something.

Just think about noble and pure and lovely things. This is saying reckon, account, look at as. These virtues that are mentioned here, true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report, this is talking about people.

This is talking about individuals. Isn't that the context that we've seen in the first seven verses? You've got to stand fast in the Lord. Be of one mind.

Don't be divided. Paul is giving us the means by which we are not divided and neutralized as a body, as a fellowship, as fruitful and growing believers. Euodia, Syntyche, you've got to be of one mind.

Don't be divided. Your names are in the book of life. Don't lose that.

Rejoice in the Lord. Be gentle. Don't be anxious.

Pray with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God. Keep your peace, which surpasses all understanding.

Let it guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. In summary, brethren, and you can almost translate this, whoever is true, whoever is noble, whoever is just, whoever is pure, whoever is lovely, whoever is of good repute. This same word that's translated good report is enfame, enfamos.

Euphema is actually the word. Eu means good. Famous, or like where we get the word fame.

Notoriety. Good reputation. Good repute.

If there is virtue, if there is any praiseworthiness, credit that. When you look at someone, don't think of their false. Credit them for what is good, what is noble, what is lovely, what is honorable.

We've talked so often about the fact that we're not 100% white, 100% black. We're not 100% banging away on all eight cylinders spiritually, or we're 100% apostate and reversionistic, or whatever you want to say. We have areas in our life where we're doing well, and we have other areas where we're not doing so well.

Sometimes we do very well with trusting God for provision in that, but we're really bad in our interpersonal relations. We're constantly sinning against one another. But when it comes to trusting God for our provision, we're unshakable.

We're immovable. We can relax and not worry. But we have another area where we have a difficulty.

We have strengths and weaknesses. We have besetting sins. We have encumbrances that weigh us down and keep us from running the race well.

Paul says, look, when you're looking at one another, your fellow workers, your fellow laborers, your odia and syntyche, credit the things that are good. This is the means of fulfilling these commands, to not lose your peace and to rejoice and to pray with thanksgiving and so on. Let peace guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

How do you do that? Well, don't dwell on what divides you. Don't dwell on the things that tend to rankle or cause you to have a root of bitterness to spring up. Credit, reckon, look upon someone as true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report.

We tend to think about shortcomings. We tend to think about what is lacking. Paul says, when you look at one another, reckon what is good.

Give credit for the things that are good. This applies, some people call it the doctrinal movement or the ice camp, I don't know how you want to say it, but there's been a tradition, there's been a strand within the Christian church in our day of those who have really hammered away on verse by verse, book by book, isagogic, categorical, exegetical teaching, so on, Baraka-derived ministries, whatever you want to say, but it's not restricted to that group, but it has cropped up a

lot in that group, and that is the tendency to think, we are the informed, we've studied under a pastor who digs into the original languages and has given us great insight, and there tends to be kind of an us and them mentality that springs up when people look at Charismatics or look at denominational churches or look at the legalists or look at the fundies or whatever you want to say. There's kind of an us and them mentality.

We tend to say, well, there can't be anything good going on in that denomination or in that church or in that group or in that ministry because they don't know what we know. They don't study the way we study. Their pastor doesn't talk about the Greek and the Hebrew.

They misunderstand this passage or this verse or this concept or they're messed up in this area of theology. Paul says, if there is anything that is praiseworthy, if there is any virtue, credit them with that. Look at them with favor.

Remember that you're part of the same family. And sometimes we have to learn this even in our own household. We're on the same team.

We're supposed to be looking at the positive and looking at those things that unite us. If there is anything that is praiseworthy, if there is anything that is virtuous, now sometimes there's not. Sometimes they are so apostate that you can't find noble, pure, lovely, of good repute.

Well, that's a good time to separate. But even then, don't lose your peace. Don't lose your joy.

Don't slip into sin because of that. Just separate. But we are looking at the mind of the wise in Ecclesiastes chapter 8. How do you maintain the mind of the wise, the heart of the wise, that does not remain in an evil matter? Well, we can end up, oddly enough, getting into an evil matter even in our own fellowship with fellow believers.

And that's what Paul is talking about in chapter 4 of Philippians. He's not just saying pick some abstract concept of purity or loveliness and meditate on that and kind of transport yourself out of the situation. He's saying look at the person that you're tempted to be unhappy with.

Look at the person... He's talking about Euodia and Syntyche. They were fellow laborers. They were women who were bearing fruit in the plan of God, but they got crossways with each other over something.

And he says, I'm pleading with you, Euodia. I'm pleading with you, Syntyche. Be of one mind.

How do you do that? It's one thing to say, hey, you know, let's be friends. You've ever seen these things where they say, oh, come on, you guys, make up and shake hands. Well, you haven't really resolved.

You haven't given anybody any power to do that. Where does that come from? Paul says, look, you've got to focus on what is true, what is noble, what is just. Give credit for those things.

Don't be constantly marking someone off. There's two ways to grade a paper if you're a teacher. You can either start at 100% and mark off everything that they did wrong, or you can count each correct answer and give credit for it and then give a point total.

What Paul is saying is, don't start marking off for every wrong thing that you find. Concentrate on the right answers, on the good things, on the noble and the lovely and the good report, and give credit for those things. Add up a positive point total.

This is like they talk about marking with a blue pen instead of a red pen. Mark the correct answers and give point totals for those. Don't start with your red pen and just hack away and critically mark off for every wrong thing you find.

It's a matter of perspective. It's a matter of operating in love. If there is any virtue, if there is anything praiseworthy, give credit for these things.

Reckon these things. The key to understanding verses 8 and 9 is that verb, *logizimai*. Give credit for this.

This is what God did for Abraham. Abraham made a lot of mistakes in his life, but God credited him as righteous when he was faithful. The very same word is used there in Romans 4.10, where Paul is talking about Abraham.

He says, When God credited him with righteousness, how then was it credited? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Abraham had not yet gotten Genesis 17 and the mark of circumcision when God credited his faith as righteousness. So there are a lot of other places where you can find *logizimai* used in the New Testament. If you have a strong concordance, I encourage you to look those up.

It has the idea of giving credit for. So, back to Ecclesiastes. And you see this.

I guess I should finish with verse 9 out of our Scripture reading. Paul says, The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, he's saying, look at people and give them credit for these good things. And he says, Remember what you saw in me and practice those things so that when others look at you, they're going to be able to give you credit.

And I can't help but be impressed with the four verbs that Paul uses in verse 9 there. He says, The things which you learned, *ematete*. *Ematete* is a disciple, one who learns from a master.

He says, The things which you learned from me, the things which you received, the things which you heard, and the things which you saw. Different levels of communication. Different ways in which Paul's example was beneficial to his hearers.

It reminds me of Proverbs chapter 2. If you incline your ear and then apply your heart, if you lift up your voice, if you seek and search, Paul says, Some of these things which you learned from

me, some of them you received from me, some of them you heard from me, and some of them you saw in me. He says, These are the things that you should practice, and the God of peace will be with you. Paul does not focus on, in fact, he doesn't mention the failure of Euodia and Syntyche here, does he? He doesn't say, Ah, that Euodia, she's always getting upset over this and that.

That's Syntyche. She's majoring in the minors here, and here's her particular flaw. Paul says, Look, I'm giving you an example.

I'm encouraging people to concentrate on what's good. I'm not telling you what's wrong with these, because they are praiseworthy. He says, They were laborers with me in the Gospel.

He concentrates on the good things. He says, Let that unite you. And he says, You've heard and seen this in me, and that's what you need to do so that the God of peace will be with you.

Peace is no division, no separation, no anxiety. So, now back to Ecclesiastes 8. Who is like the wise? Who knows the interpretation of a matter? Well, it is the one whose wisdom guides him. It is the one whose wisdom causes his face to shine.

The wisdom of a man lights his face. The strength of his face is transformed. It's changed.

So then we've seen this new section begin, I myself guard the mouth of the king for the sake of the contractual promise of God. Solomon is doing the same thing. He says, You know, I've got to be careful.

I'm the king. I can throw out an edict. Whatever I say goes.

But I am careful with what I say because of the oath of God. What is that contractual promise? We saw it last time. It's over in 1 Kings.

It is found in a couple of different places. We had in 1 Kings 6 that Solomon is in the middle of building the temple, and the word of the Lord came to him in 1 Kings 6.11. The word of the Lord came to Solomon saying, Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, if you execute My judgments, if you keep all My commandments, if you walk in them, then I will perform My word with you which I spoke to your father David, and I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake My people Israel. A lot of what happens to Israel depends on the actions of the king.

He says, If you, Solomon, walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, I will perform My word with you, and I will dwell among the children of Israel, more or less for your sake. I will not forsake them. Well, what is the word that he spoke to his father David? Well, you go back to 2 Samuel 7. For that, you can also go forward to 1 Kings in the dedication prayer of Solomon for the temple.

Back in chapter 8 and 9. For example, take a look at 1 Kings 9. The Lord appeared to Solomon, in verse 2, the second time as He appeared to him at Gibeon. And the Lord said to him... Now, this is 1 Kings 9, verse 3. The Lord said to him... This is the solemn oath of God. This is historical at the time Solomon writes Ecclesiastes.

The Lord said to him, I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me. I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. Now, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying you shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.

That's our 2 Samuel 7. But, verse 6, if you or your sons at all turn from following Me and do not keep My commandments and My statutes, which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, what is the covenant oath of God? I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And as for this house which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss and say, Why has the Lord done thus to the land and to this house? Then they will answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and have embraced other gods, and have worshiped them and served them.

Therefore the Lord has brought all this raw, all this evil, all this calamity on them. That is the contractual promise of God. It's a contract.

Party of the first part, party of the second part. If you keep My commands and observe them, I will preserve the Davidic king on the throne of Israel, and I will be with Israel and not forsake them. If you go back, I will leave, I will destroy this house, etc.

Contractual promise of God. Solomon says, Look, I guard my mouth because I know what the contractual promise of God is. You should do the same.

If the king can do it, you can do it. He says in verse 3, Do not hurry from His God's presence. That should be capital H on His.

Do not hurry from His... Where is the presence of God, by the way? It's in this temple where this oath is made and consecrated. Do not hurry from His presence. If you hurry from His presence, where are you going? To follow other gods and worship and serve them.

The presence of God is the place of worship, isn't it? It's the place of allegiance, the place of honor. Do not hurry from His presence. And I'm going to give you a corrected translation of verse 3 when we come back from our break.

But at this point, what have we seen? From our Scripture reading and from Solomon's admonition here, he's been talking in chapter 7 about the things that distract. We saw the different areas of subjectivity that Solomon illustrated there. Eyes on self, eyes on people, eyes on things.

He characterizes it as a woman whose heart is a trap and a snare and whose hands are bonds. And he says you've got to be wise to escape from that. What is the heart of the wise like? His heart transforms His countenance.

His face shines. And remember the blessing over in Deuteronomy where it says may the Lord make His face to shine on you? The wise are not only blessed, but they are a blessing. The face of the wise shines.

Remember the ten wise rulers that help a city in chapter 7? You are blessed and you are a blessing. If you are the opposite, then not only are you cursed, but you are a curse. And the opposite holds true.

And this is true of the king of Israel. He can bless and be a blessing, or he can curse and be a curse. I myself guard the mouth of the king.

Do not hurry from His presence. The wise are going to, you know, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. When we look at one another, when we seek to operate in our daily lives before God, we've got to credit the things that are true, the things that are noble, the things that are just, the things that are lovely and of good report.

If there is any virtue, if there is any praise, these are the things to concentrate on. If we want to be wise, if we want to bless and be a blessing, that's what we're going to focus on. Keep in mind that the Lord is near.

He's coming to transform us. The things that are wrinkles and blotches are going to be fixed. This is the means by which we fulfill all these commands.

If you just take the command, rejoice, again I say rejoice. Well, that's like telling a sad person who just lost a loved one, hey, be happy. You've got to have more than that.

You've got to have some grist for the mill. You have to have some truth in your soul circulating to make that happen.