

02-03-04b Ecclesiastes

Let's resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 9. The subject under discussion, which I'm not going to belabor, is the discouraging effect of looking around and seeing the wicked prosper and the righteous not get what we would consider to be just desserts. Solomon observed this, it is nothing new, as he has already told us, there is no new thing under the sun. I was talking to my father the other day, and he's been studying the book of Deuteronomy in his Sunday school class, which they recently finished, but he had asked if I had any good commentaries on that, and so I sent him a little commentary called Notes on Deuteronomy by a man named C. H. McIntosh.

His books are typically just with his initials. He was, I think, like me, he didn't really believe in stamping your name all over things related to Scripture, and so many times there were people who never did know who he was because his books just say C. H. M. where it has the author place. But he was, in the 1800s, I think he died in about 1891 or 1894, somewhere along in there.

You can find a biography of him on the web. But he was a great student of the Word of God and is most famous for. He was out of the Brethren movement and was influenced by J. Nelson Darby.

In fact, one of Darby's books helped him come to faith in Christ. And, of course, Darby was a major influence on Lewis Barry Chafer and C. I. Scofield, and those men in concert more or less revived the dispensational understanding of Scripture that had lain fallow for quite a long time. The Reformed people will tell you that they invented it in the 1800s and it didn't exist before then, but it all depends on what you want to believe.

There are none so blind as those who will not see, and there's a lot of people who refuse to recognize any dispensational understanding in the Church Fathers when it's all over the place. Sort of like Solomon. People say, well, Solomon was just all out of fellowship and busy whining and dining his concubines when he wrote Ecclesiastes, and we know that's not the case either.

Anyway, C. H. Macintosh was writing, and my dad was looking at those commentaries, and when he was talking about the Church in his present day, the description that he gives... In fact, my dad, I think, read a little bit of what he said to his Sunday school class because it sounded like it was written today about conditions that prevail, and we think, oh, we've got this whole strange new world going in the Church, and it has ever been thus. We've always had the problems that we have, and the things that Solomon points out here have been in existence since the human civilization first began to grow. So Solomon says there is a conflict between what people see when they look around in the world and the reality that exists in the plan and purpose of God.

If you are not looking at the plan and purpose of God, you will look around in the world and draw faulty conclusions, and your heart will fill up to do evil. He says this is exactly what has happened. But he says in verse 16 of chapter 8, but in the light of this, literally it's according as, or for this,

for this reason, I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the answer that is worked upon the earth, the inyon, the response that is worked out upon the earth.

Because the short-sighted man, the man living for the moment, the carpe diem man, the mundane man, whether he looks around in the day or in his night's sleep, he's not going to see it with his eyes. I saw, Solomon says in 17, all the work of God which He worked under the sun. And I was struck by the fact that this is not a participle.

In a lot of places in this section, Solomon uses a participle to talk about things that are ongoing in present time. This is the current condition. But he doesn't say, I saw all of the work that God is working under the sun.

He says, he uses the perfect here, the work of God which He worked. Because God set this up back at the beginning. It's a part of creation as it now stands, under the curse and under the fall, separated from God.

God doesn't come and walk among us in the breeze of the day anymore, in the cool of the day. So this is the way God designed the world that we see. And on account of the working of God, man will labor, in verse 17, to seek and will not find.

And if the wise speak so as to know, or speak as though they know, that he will still not be able to find. He's not going to be found by the labor or by the wisdom of men. It reminds us of what Paul in talking about the aspects of God's plan related to Jacob and Esau.

And he uses them as an illustration. Before the twins were born and had done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose in calling, in election I think it says in English there, might stand, he said the elder will serve the younger. And in that general context he says, so it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy.

If I remember my old King James correctly. And what is it? It is the outcome. He's not necessarily describing salvation at that point.

He's talking about the relationship between Jacob and Esau. He doesn't say the younger will be saved and the elder will be damned, does he? He says that God's purpose in choosing, God's purpose in election might stand, the elder, he said before they were born and had done anything, the elder will serve the younger. So that his purpose would stand.

What is God's purpose? Well, God is revealing himself in certain ways and revealing his plan and purpose in certain ways. So that God's purpose would be accomplished. Irregardless of anything that they might do or be observed to do in this life, God said before they were born.

You've got twins in you, they're warring. Rebecca couldn't figure out why she was having all of this kicking and slapping and carrying on, wrestling going on in her womb. And she said, I just want to die.

I don't think I'm going to make it to term with these babies because they're just fighting with each other in the womb. And God said there are two nations in your womb. And he said the elder will serve the younger.

And that statement was not, although it's reflected in the individuals, it was even more so in the nations that followed. But we haven't really seen that work out, have we? Have we seen Edom subservient to Israel? Do we see Esau subservient to Jacob in time? We haven't really seen that, have we? Did Esau come and dwell in the tents of Jacob and bring him his lentil stew or his mess of pottage or anything in later years? Esau, God blessed him and gave him his own land, his offspring. They were princes of Edom.

They became a mighty nation off there to the south and east of Israel. So, what's Paul talking about when he says, so that God's purpose in choosing, in election, might stand. He said before they were born and had done anything good or bad, the elder will serve the younger.

Can I tell you how many people are so out in the weeds on Romans because they don't read what Paul says and they don't think about what he's talking about. He's not talking about salvation. He doesn't say so that God's purpose in election might stand.

He said the younger will be saved and the elder will go to the lake of fire. He said, I'm going to establish who's going to serve whom. The elder will serve the younger.

This was God's purpose. Solomon says, I saw the work of God, verse 17, which he worked under the sun, on account of which man will labor to seek and will not find. Paul says, it's not of him that wills.

It's not of him that runs. It's of God who shows mercy. What is it that is of God? What is it that doesn't come by man's effort and that doesn't come by man's will? There are a lot of things that don't come by will.

We've talked about this before, but another huge area of mistaken thinking in Christianity is seeing a desirable goal, even a biblical goal, in one's spiritual life and then pursuing it in the wrong way. We want to be holy. We want to be steadfast.

We want to be blameless. We want to be a good testimony and a good witness. We want to be stable and have self-control.

We want to be firm and enduring and forbearing and patient and have all of the fruit of the Spirit. So what do people do? They say, I am bound and determined that I am going to be joyful. I am going to be the most joyful person anybody has ever seen.

I am going to wreak joy. I am going to ooze joy. Joy is going to just follow me around and overshadow me and spread from me like you can't believe.

Joy doesn't come that way, does it? You can't decide to have joy. Have you ever been down and you thought, boy, I don't want to spend this whole day being down and miserable and depressed. You know, why can't I do like the guy says in the song, don't worry, be happy.

Why can't I do that? Why can't I just stop worrying and be happy? I want to be happy. I am dying to be happy. Please let me be happy.

Happiness does not come by an act of will. Joy does not come by an act of will. Nor does peace.

Nor does patience. You can grit your teeth and say, I am going to be patient. Even if you manage to button your lip and avoid verbal sins, you can't just decide to be patient.

Well, people decide that they are going to do all kinds of things, but it doesn't come by an act of will. And it doesn't come by human effort. And that's what Paul is talking about.

You are assigned a place in God's plan, whatever it may be. If you are the least or if you are the greatest, if you are the master or you are the servant, you are the bond or you are the free, you are the man or you are the woman, you are the Jew or you are the Greek, you don't get to choose a lot of these things. It is not of him that wills or of him that runs.

It is God who shows mercy. And whatever state we find ourselves in, if we are male or female, if we are bond or free, if we are Jew or Greek, if we are high or low, if we are the elder brother or the younger brother, it does not depend. It is the grace of God that is available to us.

That grace, the availability of God, doesn't depend on our will or our running. It depends on God's mercy. There would be no grace if it was not God's mercy.

There is nothing we can claim as our just deserts. What is the classic claim? I am the elder brother. I deserve the inheritance.

No, you don't. It's grace that God set it up that way. There is no inherent superior quality in the firstborn child.

I am a firstborn child, and I promise you, there is no inherent superior quality in the firstborn child. And I apologize to all the rest of you who are firstborn, but none of us firstborn children have any inherent quality that is greater than any of our siblings. It's just not true.

If there is anything that is promised, especially in the days of Israel, to a firstborn, it's because of God's grace. I didn't get to choose to be the firstborn. It had nothing to do with it.

I didn't run and strive to become the firstborn. I just was born the firstborn. And whatever attaches to that is just anything positive that comes from it is the grace of God.

Anybody else that gets anything in this life or in the next, it's all the grace of God. It does not

mean that what you will and how you run does not matter. How many passages do we have? What the same author says, run with patience the race that is set before you.

You can't say, well, it's not of him that runs and reconcile that passage. Paul says, run with patience the race that is set before you. He says, I have run my race.

I have finished my course. And he says, follow my example. So what is he saying when he says it is not of him that wills or of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy? He says, keep in mind that just because you respond to the grace of God and because you choose the right things, don't assign to yourself merit.

This is the accusation that is always made to anyone who doesn't believe in the total sovereignty and predestination of God. We are commonly all tarred with the Arminian brush. Very few of us are actual Arminians because Arminianism has its own problems.

It actually assigns merit where there is none. But it's easy to caricature and to push people to an extreme when the truth is in the center. And the truth is that God is sovereign.

God does call. God does choose. There is a basis for it, which he reveals in Scripture.

And if Scripture says that your choosing does not have merit, it doesn't make you a better person. If I'm in the military and Reveille is at 5 a.m., and I get up and put on my uniform and show up for formation at 5 a.m., do I have merit? Are they going to say, well, you know, we've got a special reverend for showing up for the 5 a.m. Reveille muster? Nonsense! I had to do something. I had to choose.

I had to plan. I had to have my uniform ready. I had to get down there and show up on time.

There is no merit. There is no pat on the back. That's expected.

Anybody can do that. There is a problem if you don't, but there's no merit for doing what you're expected to do. Jesus tells the disciples this at one point.

He says when you're slaves out in the field and you come in, are you going to serve yourselves and eat? No, you're going to serve the master first. And don't expect him to pat you on the back and say, gee, thanks for putting my meal on the table. That's the way it should be.

You should say, we are unworthy servants. You shouldn't say, I'm a worthy servant because look how I got the master's food. It's expected.

That's what you're supposed to do. Well, responding to God's grace is what people are supposed to do. And the Bible states that faith is not a work.

The Bible states that faith has no merit. If you take the Bible at its word, then you don't have to be a Calvinist and say, well, to express faith must have to come from God. A human being can't do it

because you're totally depraved and you can only do evil all the day.

Well, I'm sorry, but the Bible says that I can express faith and I have not done a good work in and of itself. I have not done anything meritorious by expressing faith. I have done something worthy of condemnation and worthy of judgment if I fail to exercise faith.

But exercising faith is not a work, no merit, no rewards, no blessings for the simple act of expressing faith. I can be declared righteous by faith. I can be approved by God and not need to be ashamed.

I can experience blessing and reward, but it is not because I exercised faith. It is because of God's grace, because God chose to bless and chose to reward when He sees faith. But I didn't earn it and I don't deserve it.

I deserve the lake of fire. All of us do. And that much the Reformed crowd has right.

All of us deserve what Christ received on the cross and more. So, back to Solomon. Man will labor to seek and will not find.

If the wise will speak so as to know, he will not be able to find. God has worked it this way. God has constructed this universe so that when you look around, it doesn't make sense.

The wicked prosper and the righteous sometimes suffer. You might get to be one of the righteous that suffers. And you say, why on earth is this happening to me? I thought the Bible said I would be happy, I would be blessed, I would be this, that, and the other.

Now, I wouldn't say that you can't be happy, but people can look at your physical circumstances and say, well, here's someone that did everything right and they got fired for it. Here's someone that did everything right and it cost them money. They're financially bad off because they did the right thing.

I don't see the payoff. I don't see where that's a good decision. God has done this on purpose.

Why? What is it that ought to characterize our lives? Be ready always to give an answer to any man who asks you what? The reason for the hope that is in you. It doesn't say be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you how you got so rich. It doesn't say be ready to give an answer to every man who asks you how you managed to be so prosperous.

It doesn't even say be ready to give an answer to every man who asks you why you are so doggone happy all the time. What does it say? Give an answer to those who ask you about your hope. Because you live in a way that betrays the fact you know about something that they can't see.

The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. When we exercise faith, we

betray our hope. We give off the light of hope.

And people say, how can you continue to do this when you seem to be paying a penalty for it? How can you continue to do this when I see no payoff? It makes no sense to me that you live the way you do and you get no gain. You get no benefit. You get no yitrone in this life.

What is it that you are holding in your hand because you live this way? Aha! There is a hope that transcends this life. And God has constructed life to lead all of us to the knowledge that there is something beyond what we see. And if you look around for... If you try to sew it all up and have a nice, neat, self-consistent equation in time alone, it will not compute.

It won't add up. It will mathematically never reconcile. And God has worked it this way on purpose.

That is what verse 17 tells us. So Solomon says in chapter 9, verse 1, I have given all this to my heart even to make all of this clear. Solomon says, I have put this in my heart.

I have worked on it. I have digested it. I have tried to figure out a way to make this clear.

He is Kohelet. He is the one calling us to this understanding. That the righteous ones and the wise ones and their works of service are in the hand of God.

That is what chapter 9, verse 1 literally says. It says, I considered all this in my heart. This is the verb natan.

It means, I gave this to my heart. I said, Heart, I want to hand you something here and I want you to work on it. And it literally says, I placed this upon my heart or I gave this unto my heart.

I took these observations and I put it into the heart and I said, I have got to come out with something clear. And what is it? This is it. The righteous and the wise.

And these end in im. These are plurals. The righteous ones and the wise ones.

And their avadechem. Avadechem. Avad is the verb that means to serve, to be a servant.

It corresponds to duleo in Greek. To be a dulos. A bond slave.

And eved is also used for service of worship. Service in the tabernacle or in the temple. There are lots of different kinds of work that you can do.

I think your English there says that their works are in the hands of God. But this is not from asah, to make or to do. This is not amad.

This is not the word to labor. This is eved or avad depending on if you're talking about the noun or the verb. This is the word servant.

Anytime you see the word servant in the Old Testament, chances are it's this word in its noun form. So these are works of service. It does mean, it can mean your labor, the things that you do.

But it has that connotation of a work of service. A work for your master. The righteous ones and the wise ones.

Why is this important? Because Solomon did a lot of works, didn't he? And he looks around and he sees the people who are eating and drinking and taking joy in their labor, taking pleasure in their labor. But that word for labor is not this word for labor. Because that's work on their own agenda.

That's their own goal, their own commitment, their own plan. He says the righteous and the wise and their service, and it's in the plural, their services, their works of service. They've got their eye on someone else when they do their labor.

They're not doing it for themselves. They're doing it for their master. It's what this word connotes.

The righteous ones and the wise ones and their works of service are in the hand of God. You can look around from pole to pole and circle the equator, circle the globe, visit every continent, visit every island, cover every acre of land on this planet and you cannot see a visible hand of God. There's not some mountain in Tibet that you can climb and see the hand of God sticking down from heaven like the old Allstate commercials.

It's invisible. It is not to be seen with the eyes. You can't wake up in the middle of the night and say, I just saw the hand of God.

It doesn't happen. The last person I know of that saw the hand of God was Belshazzar. Minimini tikil ufarsin.

That's the last time I know of that the hand of God was visible. So, what does he say? The righteous, the wise, their works of service are in the hand of God. This is a truth that transcends the rising and setting of the sun.

This is a hope that if you are righteous by faith, if you are wise by placing your faith in the Word of God and you do what you do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, you have to have the confidence that you and everything you've done are in the hand of God. It's in God's hand. I don't measure it by what happens in time, in circumstance, in situations, in the opinions of people, in the eyes of those who watch.

They are going to look around and they're not going to see. God has designed it that they're not going to see in their own life. We have to have the confidence that we are in the hand of God.

Now, the last part of this verse, it says, people know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. This is an indefensible statement. I don't care if you say Solomon was in fellowship,

out of fellowship.

How can you make any sense out of this statement? I can't. This is what it says in Hebrew. Even as love, so also is hate.

Now, the word *is* is in italics. I'm supplying it because there's no verb here. It says, even as love, so also hate.

And I'm supplying the word *is*. Even as love, so also is hate. Man is not knowing.

And this is one of those participles which talks about action in ongoing present time. It doesn't say man has not known or man will not know. It says right now, when you look at him, he's not knowing.

It's the old O-E infix in Hebrew on the verb. Even as love, so also is hate. Man is not knowing.

Now, unfortunately, our sentence is split between the end of verse 1 and the beginning of verse 2. As I translate and as I work through the Hebrew here, you had the last phrase in verse 1 there. They say, before them. And you've got some italics ahead of that.

Well, there ought to be a period after, well, I'm not sure there's any hope for what you've got in your English there. After the word *anything*, you could put a period because before them comes as the beginning part of verse 2 as I divide these verses. And granted, you know, other people see it different ways.

I'm telling you what I see. And it's a lot easier when you understand what Solomon is talking about here. What is he talking about? I've put this situation in my heart.

I'm here to make it clear for you. The righteous and the wise and the works of service are in the hands of God. Even as love, so also is hate.

Man is not knowing. What's he talking about here? These are given in the abstract. Ahav is a word for love like Ahab.

It's how it comes across as the man's name. Ahav is love. And let me find hate here.

Even as love, so also is hate. I think it's Shanim. Yes.

It's Shina actually or Sina in this construction. S-I-N-A-H. Even as love, Ahav, so also Sina.

S-I-N-A-H. And these have sort of the feminine ending on them, the A-H, which means they're concepts. Even as love, so also is hate.

What are they talking about? It's with reference to God. Man can't see the difference between loving God and hating God. Most commentators say that this is God's love and God's hate.

Or that people know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. It's just unfortunate. What have we been talking about all this time? People look around and don't see the consequences of evil actions.

Their hearts fill up to do evil. This is hatred of God. Even if you're a believer, you can hate God in the sense of not serving.

Remember, biblical love and hate are not emotions. They're not warm, smarmy feelings. They're not passionate, red-under-the-collar hatred.

This talks about, just like we saw in Luke on Friday night, no man can serve two masters. Even if he will love the one and hate the other, it doesn't mean he's got this despicable attitude. It means he does him despot.

He doesn't get his business done. He treats him with carelessness and apathy and indifference. That's what this means here.

Even as love, so also is hate. The righteous may love God and may act in love their whole life, and when men look at it, they don't see any difference. They just don't see it.

They think, well, you're one of these piety types. You're holier than thou or something. But they don't see that you're any richer or any happier or any wealthier or any more prosperous.

Where's the payoff? Where's the profit? They don't see it. Even as love, so also is hate. In the view of people, I don't see Christians all in the Fortune 100 or the Fortune 50 or anything.

I don't see where this faith in God business is giving them any big advantage. You can love God. You can hate God.

I just don't see the difference. I have given all this to my heart to make all of this clear. The righteous ones and the wise ones and their works of service are in the hands of God.

In the hand of God. Even as love, so also is hate. Man is not knowing.

Man doesn't see it. Man doesn't catch it. Then the next sentence, all before their faces, and this is your last phrase there, before them.

This is literally before their faces. And it's all that is before their faces. And then you have the word all repeated three times here.

You have all before their faces. I'll give you a woodenly literal translation. All before their faces is all according as to all.

All they see is all happening to all. Everything happens to everybody. There's no distinction.

This is all they see. When they look around, everything happens to everybody. Some people it make out, some people it don't.

There's no distinction based on love or hate for God. Attitude toward God is not an issue. Everything happens to everybody.

He goes on to say in verse 2, a single fate, you have it here in the New King James, one event happens to the righteous and the wicked. This is the word for what befalls or what happens, which you can say fate, but it's not really fate in the sense of oh, it's out of our hands. It just means what happens, what befalls you.

The outcome is the same. You have the word echad, which is the number one, and it means a single thing or the same thing. I and my Father are one, Jesus says.

I and my Father are the same. They are two separate persons of the Trinity. He's not saying there's just one person in the Trinity.

He's saying I and my Father are the same. The Lord our God is one Lord. The Lord our God is the same Lord.

He's the same yesterday and today and forever. The Shema. That's what you have here.

All before their faces, this is man who's looking around and not knowing, everything happens to everyone. Everything corresponds to everyone. A single fate or the same outcome happens to the righteous and to the evil.

The same outcome happens to the good and to the clean and to the unclean. The same outcome happens to the one sacrificing and to the one who is not sacrificing. The same outcome happens to the good, to the one sinning, to the one swearing an oath or pledging himself.

It's corresponding to or the same as the one who fears to pledge himself, the one who fears to commit, the one who fears to swear himself in allegiance to God. We've come full circle. We're back to love and hate.

You can either pledge yourself to God or you can fear to pledge yourself to God. You can either love him or hate him. It doesn't matter.

When man looks around, everything before his face, hey, it's all the same. You take your chances. It's happenstance.

Good things happen to some people. Bad things happen to other people. There's no distinction based on your attitude toward God.

This is what man sees when he looks around. Solomon details this in verse 1 and 2. Verse 3, he

draws his conclusion. This is the evil in all that is worked under the sun.

This is the bad thing about that. Once again, we're not talking about moral evil. We're saying this is not a good thing.

This is not helpful. It's not beneficial. Ra can take on any negative nuance from inconvenience to calamity.

This is the evil in all that is worked under the sun because the same outcome to all. There's no verb there. I supply the word happens in italics.

This is the evil. This is verse 3. This is the evil in all that is worked under the sun. Notice, we're still in the confines of time here.

We're not viewing the purpose and the judgment that he mentioned earlier. The evil in all that is worked under the sun is the same outcome happens to all. And also, the hearts of the sons of man are full of evil.

Isn't that what he told us earlier in chapter 8? Back in verse 10, I've seen the wicked approach and come in from the holy place they go forth. They commend themselves in the city that they've done right. He says this is temporary, but because there's not worked quickly an edict against evil work, the hearts of the sons of man filled up in them to work evil.

That was 8.11. And Solomon has come full circle. He's given us the details and telling us the same thing in verse 3. The hearts of the sons of man are full of evil and holot. Remember, we talked in the past about the verb halal, like hallelujah, which means to praise.

But when you put it in the pl and make it intensive, it is over praise. It becomes babbling. It becomes boasting.

It's translated madness a lot of places in the scripture. But I don't think madness really catches the sense of it because it is a babbling when it says that David in Gath let his spittle run down his beard and acted like a madman. He wasn't acting like a madman.

He babbled. He acted deranged. And derangement is not quite the same as madness because derangement has much more emphasis on incoherent thinking.

You think and act in an incoherent manner. The hearts of the sons of man are full of evil and derangements is how I translate holot in verse 3. This is holot. Holot, you can see the O-E infix there which tells us that this is a noun from halal.

But it doesn't mean praises here in the feminine plural. With this infix, it means derangements. The hearts of the sons of man are full of evil.

Derangements are in their hearts during their lives. Literally, it says in their hearts in their lives.

And after this, unto or among the dying ones.

Verse 3 in your English says madness is in their hearts while they live and after that they go to the dead. But once again, you pay attention to your participles here. The dead, and this is very unusual.

The participle from mut, which is death or dead, is only used a few places in Scripture. This is one of them. What is a participle? In English, it's like an I-N-G word.

And this is not the ones who have died. These are the dying. It's the ones who are in the process of dying.

You can see usage of the participle. One of the places it is used is back in Exodus when the Egyptians told the Israelites, they gave them their jewels, and they said, go forth, get out of here. And in the English, I think it says we are all dead men.

Well, they weren't dead men, but they said we're dying. You hear this in popular slang today. Hey, I'm dying here.

You're killing me. That's what the Egyptians said to the Israelites. Hey, we're dying here.

Take the jewels, just leave our country. We're dying. It's a participle, and that's what is used here.

So you've got the evil filling up their hearts and deranging their thinking. Why is it they can't see hope? Why is it they can't see the hand of God? Because the evil that has filled their hearts is making their thinking incoherent in their lives. And even after this, and the word this here is feminine.

It's a suffix on the word after. Achrei means after, and this is achreiv. And the vav on the end of that is a feminine singular suffix.

And what's peculiar about that is we don't have any feminine words, we don't have any feminine singular words anywhere in the context. There's only one feminine noun in the whole verse, and that's holelot, which is the derangements. And it's a plural.

So what is he saying here? After what? After this in the feminine, and then we have the word unto or toward or among, which is el, and then we have the participle for dying ones. We have hametim. So achreiv el hametim.

After this, well remember, a lot of times the feminine means we're talking about a concept, we're wrapping something up. It's kind of like Ephesians 2.8 and 9. And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. By grace are you saved through faith.

And that not of yourselves. In Greek, that is a neuter. And so it doesn't refer to any of the

gendered nouns by themselves, it refers to the whole concept.

What is this whole thing? The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil. Derangements are in their hearts and their lives. And after their lives, as they are dying, they still don't figure it out.

A lot of times even on their deathbed, at the point of death, when they are dying, they still don't have a clue. They didn't see it when they were awake. They didn't see it in their sleep.

They didn't see it in the words of the wise. And even at the point of death, as they are dying, a lot of them still go out clueless. That's what this is saying.

It doesn't matter how long you live. It doesn't matter how long it takes you to die. Generally speaking, men don't figure this out.

They never figure it out on their own. So what is the conclusion? Well, in verse 4 he says, But for him who is joined to all the living, there is hope. For a living dog is better than a dead lion.

Well, that verse is going to take a little bit of work. We have some obscure and rare Hebrew words that are susceptible to more than one translation. I'm going to save that for next time.

But Solomon says this is an evil in everything that's worked under the sun because people don't see an outcome. And God set it up that way. So where is the answer? Where is the inyon that Solomon talks about? We cannot be drawn into that thinking.

We know better because we have access by Christ into the spiritual realms. We have access to the throne of grace. Hebrews 10.

Let us approach with confidence. Turn real quickly as we close to Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10.19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest... This is the holy of holies.

This is the place only the high priest could go in Israel's temple. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us through the veil. This is the veil that hung between the holy and the holy of holies.

Remember, it was rent in twain when Jesus was crucified. And that was symbolic that a new mode of access to God the Father was consecrated and made available at the death of Christ. A new and living way which He consecrated for us through the veil.

That is His flesh. In a sense, the veil, Christ's body being broken for us, being crushed for us, is like the tearing of the veil. It was necessary to take apart the veil to make a way to God.

And Christ's flesh had to be taken apart in that sense for us. So what does he say? We have this high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near, verse 22, with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure

water.

The author of Hebrews here, who I think was Paul, is using all of the pictures of Old Testament worship and he says those were just shadows. This is the reality. There is a new and living way into the presence of God.

The veil has been rent. We can be our own priest. We have a high priest who is already waiting for us on the other side in the holy of holies.

So draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having your heart sprinkled from an evil conscience. That's the sprinkling of blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission.

The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, 1 John 1.9, cleanses us from all sin. It isn't that we've never messed up. It isn't that we've never failed.

It is that we claim God's cleansing grace and then we approach. The sprinkling of the blood of Christ on our hearts purges out the evil conscience and washes our body with pure water. What's the rest of 1 John 1.9? The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

It renews a right spirit. It purges us. It washes us whiter than snow.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. Why does he have to say, don't waver on your hope? Because there's going to be all kinds of influences that try to get us to waver, that try to get us to lose sight of our hope, that get us back into the group that Solomon describes, the ones who look around in the world and say, yeah, everything happens to everybody. There's no difference.

I've had this thought. I used to wonder, especially when I was really committing myself to the study of God's Word and sacrificing what I thought was a dangerous sacrifice and cutting into study time or cutting into sleep or whatever else to try to learn God's Word. And yet, I didn't see any difference in my grease as a midshipman, in my conduct marks or my peer marks or my grades or anything else.

I was mediocre at best in the early days of my career as a midshipman, and I was knocking myself out studying the Word of God. And I had the mistaken belief that I was just going to prosper right and left. And I didn't see that outcome.

And it started to discourage me. And it's because I was in the process of learning what Solomon is teaching us here. Don't look for a big payoff in circumstances.

So many people come to God thinking that He's going to be the medical cure for their ills and that all of their problems are going to go rolling away. The old hymn, all of my burdens went rolling away down at the Savior's cross. Your burdens don't roll away at the Savior's cross.

The burden of sin will. But circumstances, trials, testing, you have need of endurance, is what the Bible says. So that after you have suffered a while, you will inherit.

So that's what it says here. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. It is looking beyond the setting of the sun and recognizing that there is a time, there is a purpose, and there is a judgment.

The righteous and the wise and their works of service are in the hand of God. The more real that is to us, the more is going to be found in the hand of God when we arrive at the judgment. If we forget that during the day, if we start doing everything we do to see cause and effect in time, we're not redeeming the time.

We're not being delivered out of this present evil age. Any unbeliever can do that. Our hope has to be real.

It has to be tangible. It has to be material in our souls. Why? Because He who promised is faithful.

You either believe God's Word, you either believe God's promises, or you don't. That's all we have time for this morning, so let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word together.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make it real to us. We pray that we can live in its light. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.