

02-03-24b Ecclesiastes

We're ready now to resume our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 9. And although occasionally the wording is a little difficult to follow, and we have a combination of factors at work here, there are signs of deterioration at certain points in this text. It's not unusual in the Old Testament books. You think about the fact that these have been preserved and copied and handed down for, in Solomon's case, about 3,000 years.

To find that a word has been displaced here or there, or wrongly divided or duplicated in the course of these literally dozens and even hundreds of generations of copies should not shock us. The great thing is that God has, where he has not preserved the actual text intact, he has preserved the evidence that lets us reconstruct it. And the great thing about a book such as Ecclesiastes is that the flow of thought is fairly clear.

And even if we are not totally certain of the meaning of a particular phrase, there are no major doctrines that are turning on a single word or even a single phrase here. The issue that he is addressing and that we want to take to heart is the contrast between the seen and the unseen, between that that seems to be substantial and is not, and that which seems to be insubstantial but is, in fact, the eternal reality. This life and the things of this life is in the category of temporary, although it seems material and substantial.

Spiritual things we can't see, and yet those are the ultimate realities. Those are the things that last. And when you think about the example of the nation of Israel, given the content of the law and the rituals, the rituals were physical actions.

You took a living calf down to the altar, laid your hand on its head, and then the priest lifted up its chin and slid its throat as it was bound to the horns of the altar, and its blood gushed out until it died. And that is a material, literal thing happening. The insubstantial or invisible thing that took place was that in the act of performing this obedience and in the genuine act of acknowledging sin, there was a retroactive application, or a proactive application, perhaps you could say, of the blood of Christ that had not yet been shed.

But God applied the forgiveness and cleansing that would be accomplished in reality on the cross to people who lived before the time of the cross, and it was pictured in this sacrifice. But you can see how easy it would be for people who lived in a time of foreshadowing and in a time of symbols to begin to take the symbols as substantial and as the reality. Well, I'm offering the sacrifices so I am cleansed.

No, you're not. Well, I'm being obedient so I am righteous. No, you're not.

This was the dilemma of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and said, I've kept all the commandments from my youth. But Jesus said, well, do something that will demonstrate the righteousness and the transformation of your heart. Sell all you have and give it to the poor and

come follow me.

Well, the reality, the invisible reality, was not present, even though he had abided by the externals all of his life. This is what Solomon is driving at. From chapter 1 all the way through chapter 9, he has been bouncing back and forth between what is seen in the world, what is seen under the sun, and hinting at and becoming more and more explicit about the fact that what you see under the sun does not compute.

And this is an answer that God has given. In mathematics, everything has to equate. If you did anything in math, if you took calculus or trig or even algebra, you know that what's on one side of the equal sign has to be equal to what's on the other side of the equal sign.

That's what equals means. This expression on the left must equal this which is on the right. That's how you can solve for unknowns.

That's where we get x . 2 times x equals 8. 8 is on one side. 2 times x has to be the equivalent of 8 on the other side. What does x have to be? It has to be 4. Well, if you have an equation and something is missing on one side or the other of the equal sign, the equation is not going to work out, and it's going to defy the laws of mathematics because it does not compute.

Solomon began telling us in chapter 1 that the answer that God has given the sons of men is an evil answer. When you look around, if you really look and if you really try to solve the puzzle, solve the equation, you find that there's something missing. Yes, I've done these accomplishments.

Yes, I have pursued these goals. Yes, I have acquired and I have gained and I have found satisfaction in my work, but my equation isn't balancing. There is something missing here.

Solomon says, when I solved the equation, I was distressed. The same work that had caused me pleasure now caused me distress, and I said this is vapor. This is stuffing myself with wind because I don't have this missing piece, and the missing piece is eternal gain, gain that goes beyond the setting of the sun.

So ever since then, ever since chapter 1 through chapter 2 and everything else we've seen, he looks around at the world and says, how many different ways do you have to see it that if the equation is going to balance, then the righteous need to be favored and the unjust and the wicked need to be punished, and yet when you look around in the world, it seems like everything happens to everybody. The equation doesn't balance. The scales don't balance.

The love of God doesn't look any different than the hate of God under the sun. This should be evidence. This should be a compelling argument to tell us, you know, I've really got to look past the setting of the sun.

I've got to view my life and view my goals and my priorities and my values in a larger context than just what happens in this life. I cannot decide that I made the right decision because look how well it turned out. I decided to go ahead and buy that house, and you know what? It turned out to be great because even though I didn't know it, it was in a good school district and it had low taxes and it turned out to have solid plumbing and a fresh roof, and I didn't even know it when I bought it.

So boy, was that ever the right decision to move to that town and buy that house. That is not the criteria. We tend to measure and do our balancing and our equation solving all under the sun, and Solomon says if you step back and look, there is a missing piece.

What is it that really counts? What is it that's going to give you your throne? It's what's good in God's sight. God has constructed the universe, so it's from the hand of God, Solomon says, that you'll enjoy your work, that you'll enjoy your spouse, that you'll get pleasure. The rankest unbelievers in the world, even crime bosses and things, I don't watch syndicate movies and Goodfellas and Godfather and that kind of thing, but the little bits and pieces of it that I've seen, even these people that are wholesaling crime and murder and everything else, prostitution and numbers running and everything else, love their families, get weepy over their children and over their mother and that kind of thing.

These great crime bosses are out there spraying blood all over the walls, well then go see mama and she's a devout Catholic praying for them and all. They derive pleasure and joy from family, no matter how evil they are. Well, that's something that God built into family.

It's something that He built into healthy marriage. It's something that He built into working hard in life. Everybody who works hard and accomplishes something, it seems like the harder you work and the more sacrifices you put in, once you attain the goal and finish the thing, there's a deep sense of satisfaction.

I persevered, I prevailed, I overcame all odds and all obstacles and the thing is done. And I'm proud of it. I'm proud of myself for sticking with it.

There's inherent, God built it that way. But there is a danger and Solomon says this is an evil under the sun because people will latch on to this as justification. They will latch on to it as thinking this is what it's all about.

This is what life is about. How many different places in the media, you can just supply your own illustration for this, where all different kinds of endeavors, whether they are military, whether they are social, whether they are political, economic, in a company, people push hard and achieve a goal. How many different types of organizations have a thermometer and say we want to get to this goal? Churches do this.

We want to get to this goal. We want to run a little red mark all the way up and give this to the

missionaries. There is a satisfaction.

People say, now see, wasn't that wonderful? We all came together, we worked hard, we were in a common cause. Listen, that is not the measure. That is vapor.

The measure is what is good in God's sight. I'll give you an example. This is a really easy example to see through.

I used to be involved with Child Evangelism Fellowship when I was in my teenage years. I went to camp every summer, had good news clubs. My mother taught good news clubs for years and I was involved with that.

The summer camps, when I was too old to be a camper, then I became a counselor. Every summer until I left home I was a counselor. I had the little kids in the cabin.

Every summer camp lasted a week and they would have a missionary. They would talk about... I remember we had Stephen Rutuna who was from Uganda. He had been imprisoned in Uganda and he had had some hair-raising experiences there.

He had an experience like Peter where he was imprisoned because he was preaching the gospel. There was an earthquake and his jail cell came open and he walked free. It was an amazing story.

I think God does some things in the dark countries that you don't see where there is more civilization and more proliferation of the gospel. But you've got the missionary. We had some people from Belgium, the Pocairs.

I'll never forget it because that's the first time I knew that a lot of women in European countries don't shave their legs. Mrs. Pocair, bless her heart, wonderful lady. But she had hairy legs and a hairy-legged woman wearing pantyhose.

You just have to see that and it will never leave your mind. I just had never seen anything like it. I'd never seen somebody pull pantyhose over really, really hairy legs.

Joe Namath maybe. Anyway, they would have these missionaries every summer and there would be a drive. We want to give money and get to a certain goal so that we can get these missionaries to contribute toward a station wagon or a box of books or something that they can use when they go back to Belgium or they go back to Uganda or wherever it is.

So every kid comes to camp with their canteen money, their pop and candy money. And you would think, well now, how can this possibly be wrong? Here's somebody doing the Lord's work, spreading the gospel in a foreign land, and to contribute money to them and enable that work and support it would be a wonderful good thing and to teach children that through giving it all would be a wonderful thing. So this has got to be good.

I will tell you that it was an evil because there was coercion, there was pressure, there was the implanting of all kinds of motive. Let's have a contest between the boys and the girls and see who can give the most. Now, if you are giving because you are bound to determine that the boys are going to beat the girls, is this a cheerful giver who recognizes the issue and says, you know, I have a choice between drinking a can of pop or giving 50 cents toward this missionary's work and because I can see that God can be glorified here and I want to participate and enable and support that, I'm going to give this 50 cents for that.

That would be a wonderful thing to teach. But let's get a chart and make thermometers and pit the boys against the girls or they have teens at camp and you are the oaks and you are the elms and you are the maples and you are the sycamores. They didn't use sycamore because there were too many jokes about being sick.

But the different tree types or they had the squirrels and the different forest animals. And so then we have team competitions. Well, which team is going to give the most? Which gender is going to give the most? Which age group is going to give the most? And being a horrible example, just fly in the face of everything the Bible teaches about the thoughts and intents of the heart being the most important.

How is it justified? Look, we raised, in that summer they were trying to get a station wagon for the Pokeres. I think that little camp raised something like \$1,500, which considering the number of campers, it was an amazing amount of money for that station wagon. And everybody but me thought that was just the most wonderful thing.

And I was devastated because I saw how that money was raised and I thought that was one of my last years at that camp because I just got to where I couldn't. I thought we are not sending good messages. We're not giving a good example.

We are doing everything wrong in the name of Christ and saying that it's good. Well, we can look at our own lives. We can look at our own set of choices, our own goals and opportunities and judge them to be good and judge them to be right because we are satisfied and even others may be satisfied.

Others may look at it and say, now see, isn't that worthy, isn't that good, wasn't that a wonderful thing? And it may be. That whole thing could have been done. We could have raised the same \$1,500 for the Pokeres by explaining to children what it means to share the gospel in a land of darkness and what an opportunity it is and that even though you can't go and do, you can participate and you can be a, however you want to say it, a soldier in God's army.

You're in the supporting arms instead of the combat arms but it's just as valuable and just as important. You can pray and even if you don't have any money to give, you already spent your Coke money, you don't have to feel bad and guilty, you can pray. Prayer is just as wonderful a

contribution as monetary.

There are all kinds of ways you can contribute. How about talking to the missionaries and seeing if there's someone you can be a pen pal with or someone that you can encourage and say, well, I'm an American and I believe in Jesus too. Correspond with a child or this, all kinds of things.

Didn't do any of that. It's all boys against it. Let's have a contest.

Let's do whatever we can to put pressure on these little souls and squirt that canteen money out of their hands and into the missionaries' can. But, of course, nobody thought about it that way because it's ra-ra-sus-bum-ba-yay-teen and we don't stop and think. Is there an area or are there areas in our life where we are basically doing the same thing? It's kind of like Romans 1 and 2. It's easy.

I can point the finger at CEF camp and say, shame on them for extorting money from little children. But I can look at my own life and see where I judge myself as having spent a good day because I got a lot done. And yet when I look at how I got it done and that I was short with my family or I was boiling with mental attitude sins at work or I was not thinking about who I am and why I'm here, what's the point of doing things if God does not judge it to be good? And when you can draw yourself up short and ask that question, you can avoid a multitude of sins.

This is what Solomon is calling out, Kohelet, to the Old Testament believers in Jerusalem and in Israel as king. He's saying, there's nobody better than me. There's nobody more qualified to talk about this issue.

If you want to find satisfaction in accomplishments, you can't touch me. I've surpassed all of you and I'm here to tell you that if you stop and think about the long term, it is vapor. It is stuffing yourself with wind.

Don't do it. Don't settle for a counterfeit satisfaction and a counterfeit good that really doesn't last. Don't wake up in the sunrise of the resurrection that follows the sunset of this life and realize that you are empty-handed, that you have gotten there with no robe, with no wedding garments, completely unqualified to move forward, having been faithful in that which is least.

We saw the same thing in Luke 16 where Jesus was saying, if you can't be a good steward of the paltry material goods that you're given in this life, how can you expect to be given the true that are coming? But we don't analyze. Just before I came down here, I leave the classical station on on Sunday mornings and it starts out with Dr. Johnson out of the chapel for an hour. I like to listen to him and then he's followed by the Christian science hour and you suffer through that.

Then you get the Methodists and I was having to control my attitude there because they had a woman give the opening prayer, they had a woman do the scripture reading, they had a woman come back and give another prayer. I guess they just lost the epistles of Paul out of their New

Testament somehow. It's an indictment.

There's no qualitative judgment when Paul says a woman should be silent in church and that the leadership in terms of spiritual leadership, leading in prayer, leading in worship, leading in scripture reading and so forth, should be done by the men. The Levites were a better tribe than the Simeonites or the Judahites or the Issacharites or the Manassehites. God just said, look, I'm going to designate one tribe and that's your job.

Other people are not going to do this job. You guys are going to do it. In some cases, the Levites were worse, but it doesn't matter.

It's not a qualitative judgment. It's an assignment. And to just say, you know, I think I'm smarter than God.

I think he just meant that for temporary and I think I'm going to have our women speak in church because I don't want them to feel lesser. I don't want them to feel subordinate. Heaven forbid that they should submit to the authority of a man and have authority on their heads for the sake of the angels.

We'll just throw all that out and let them lead in prayer and let them read scripture and so forth in public worship, standing up on the platform, telling everybody, turn to this page and listen while I read. It's symbolic. There's nothing intrinsically wrong.

I mean, you know, Patty or Janelle or Lori or anybody could stand up and read scripture here and lightning is not going to strike. But how sensitive are you to what God declares to be good? It is not expedience. It's not my values.

It's not what I think is going to make everyone feel good. And if you read the Old Testament and look, they like to point back and say, well, you know, God has raised up women in leadership. Look at Deborah the prophetess.

Let's look at Deborah the prophetess. Go back and look at Israel in the days of the judges when there was no frequent vision because nobody was paying attention to the things of God. And the men were so weak-kneed and limp-livered that the only way God could accomplish a victory was to raise up a woman and she had to prop up Barak, the general of the armies, who was quaking in his sandals and afraid to go fight.

And even when they're given a victory on a platter by God, the general is running away and God still has to have a woman pound a tent peg through his head, giving him a glass of milk and making him sleepy because the men are so lacking in valor. It was an indictment. It was a sign from God.

Israel, wake up. I'm having to use your women to deliver you. Not that they are inferior, but they're having to do your job because you are so far off base and so ill-prepared.

It's like the janitor coming in. It's like the stewardess coming up and flying the plane. It's like the janitor coming up and heading the board meeting because the guy that's supposed to be there didn't have enough stuff together to show up.

It is an indictment. And when you look around in the church today, every time you see a woman teaching on television, every time you hear a woman on the radio reading Scripture and leading in prayer, you can just think, indictment, indictment, indictment. We are failing as a church.

We are failing as believers in this age when we set up our own standard and decide, well, I know what's good, and I know how people are going to be validated and get their self-esteem and so forth, instead of just sticking to what Scripture says. Well, again, it's easy to point the finger at everybody else, but do we have areas in our life where we do this, where we have decided that our standard of measure is what counts? And we sort of blind ourselves, and we happen to have our finger in the ear at the time when Scripture says, this is the way it needs to be. And we just don't want to hear that.

We just don't want to do that. It's not expedient. It's not comfortable.

Well, this is what Solomon is crying out. He is Kohelet. He is the one that is calling the assembly.

He's saying, look, death is coming. The same event does happen to all, to the just and the unjust. So he says, the evil in verse 3 of chapter 9 that is worked under the sun, because the same outcome happens to all, people say, you know, I can just set my own standard because I don't see God's standard inflicted on the human race.

I don't see any motivation when I look around. You have to have faith in the unseen. Faith is the substance of things that are expected in the future.

It is the evidence of things that are not seen. And if you look around in the world, you're not going to see the righteous prevailing. So he says, these people who take pleasure in their love, verse 6, who take pleasure in their hatred, who take pleasure in their passions and their devotions in life, have already perished.

These things have perished, and there's no longer a reward for them forever in the work that is worked under the sun. You have that momentary pleasure that God built in. It's given by the hand of God.

It's from God. It's great while it lasts. But don't accept that as a substitute for the real thing.

He says, look, go, eat with pleasure your bread, and drink with a good heart your wine, for already God has favored your works. The favor of God has already been expressed. You worked hard to plant the wheat and harvest it and grind it and bring in the flour and bake the bread.

You got your bread by the sweat of your brow. Well, go ahead and eat it and wash it down with a good wine, because the pleasure from those works has already been given. If that's where you're getting your satisfaction, and that's the way you're measuring, that's past tense.

The favor you're going to get from God is the general favor that comes to anyone. Don't misconstrue it as righteousness. Don't misconstrue it as your throne.

He says in verse 8, and I think the English translations say at all times, but time here is in the singular, and it literally says, in every time your robes will be white, and oil upon your head you will not lack. So you've worked hard and you're reaping the fruits of it. You have your white robes.

You have oil on your head. This is the word for olive oil, the same word that was translated ointment a couple of chapters back at the beginning where it said a good name is better than good ointment. This is oil, olive oil.

Ointment or oil, perfumed oil on your head you will not lack. Who is he talking to here? He's saying you people that cannot raise your eyes above and beyond this day, you're living in the moment. Go ahead.

Eat your bread. Drink your wine. Your robes are going to be white.

There's oil on your head. See life. And this is a figure of speech that means just grab the gusto.

See life. This is living in the moment. You're seeing it as it goes by.

You're grabbing hold. It's the brass ring. You see it.

You grab it, and there it is. See life with the wife that you love all the days of the life of what? The life of your vapor. Now, when you read your New King James, New American Standard, it says your life of vanity, but your is not attached to life.

Your life is attached to vapor. This is the life of your vapor. Your life is your impermanence.

It's your ephemerality. It's your temporary stimulation. See life with the wife that you love.

And this word wife is not one of the many other words for woman. This is isha. And it means not just woman.

Some people say, I'm just going to get the woman I love. This is wife, isha. Ish and isha are the man and the woman in the sense of marriage.

It's implied. That you love all the days of the life of your vapor, which He, God, gives to you under the sun. And then Solomon reiterates it.

He says all the days of your vapor, for it is your reward in life, your allocation. The word translated

reward here comes from a verb that means to divide. When Israel came into the land, and they sat down, Joshua divvied up the land amongst the tribes.

He said, okay Judah, you and Benjamin are going to be here. Dan, you all are going to go north. Levites, you're not going to have a division because you are the priests and you're going to live among your brethren.

Zebulun, Issachar, Naphtali, here's where you people are going to be. And he allocated the land. So it is an allocation.

This is the noun form from that verb that means to allocate, to divide out, to apportion, to distribute. This is your distribution. This is your lot.

We talk about somebody's lot in life. Think about the origin of lot. It's like a lot of land.

A parking lot. It's a portion. It's something that's given to you.

This is literally your lot in life, your allocation in life, and in your labor, which you yourself labor under the sun. I'm trying by using an awkward translation to tie the noun and the verb together. This is the verb and noun from Amal.

Work is Asah. Labor is Amal. Throughout these translations I'm giving you, you can see those two Hebrew verbs because I try to always use that translation.

Asah, which means to make or do, or to work. And Amal, which means to labor or toil. So, eat your bread, drink your wine.

This is all the satisfaction you're going to get. God built it in. Even if you're ignoring God everywhere else, you should acknowledge that that's what God has given you.

See life with the wife that you love. All the days of the life of your vapor. Now this is not talking about someone who is apprised of and latches onto the greater truth of where the Yitron really is.

This is the person who is determined to be short-sighted. Solomon says, fine. If that's what you're going to do, then you're like the Pharisees standing on the street corner praying and being admired by those who pass by.

You have your reward. God has already favored you. There is no future favor coming from what you're doing when you live this way.

Whatever enjoyment you're getting from it, that stimulation of the moment, you can put a period at the end of that sentence because that's all you're going to get. So, see life as it comes and goes with your wife. All the days of your vapor.

That is your allocation. That is your reward in life and in your labor, which you yourself labor

under the sun. Verse 10, all that your hand finds to do in your strength, work.

Work it in your strength. Verse 10, because there is no work, there is no ingenuity. Cheshbon, we saw that before.

The ones who made the really ingenious articles for the Tabernacle. They were so skillful. It goes beyond skill and into sort of inspired skill where you really got the knack.

You figured something out few people can do and you did it. But he says, you know, there is no work. There is no ingenuity.

There is no knowledge. And there is no wisdom in Sheol. And you yourself are going there.

So if you're going to enjoy your work and your ingenuity, your particular talent or knack that you have, your particular wisdom, you know, wisdom in the sense of life skills, all of that disappears in Sheol. And you yourself are going there. Verse 11, I turned to see under the sun.

Once again, Solomon is very careful. He repeats this over and over again. Why does he say under the sun? Because we operate in the realm of the visible.

Faith is the window to the invisible. And if you're not operating in faith, you're operating totally under the sun. I turned to see under the sun that not to the swift, the race.

There is no verb. And this is the Hebrew word order. I turned to see under the sun that not to the swift, the race, and not to the valorous.

This is gibbor. You know, they say not to the strong, the battle. They translate it as strong.

But the gibborim are the valorous ones. And strength is implied in that, but it's strength with courage. The gibborim are the admired ones, the heroes.

A gibbor is a hero. Not just because he's strong, but because he's courageous. He's valorous.

He goes in there and conquers all. Not to the valorous, the battle. Also, not to the wise, bread.

Now wait a minute. Didn't he just get through saying, eat with pleasure your bread? But he says, not to the wise goes the bread. Not to the discerning go the riches.

And not to the knowledgeable goes the compassion. This is the word chen in Hebrew, which means grace. Compassion, loving kindness.

For time and happenstance occur to all of them. So in verse 9 and 10, he's talking about those who... Jesus talked about this. We saw this in Luke just recently, where he says, from the time of the law and the prophets through John, the kingdom of God is preached.

And what happens? Men are forcing their way into it by brute strength. I will work. I will amale my

way into the kingdom.

And I look at my work and I'm satisfied in it. I'm sure that I have secured my place in the kingdom. Jesus said, no, you haven't.

Because you have missed the invisible truths. Same thing here. You're amal types, you're working your way into the kingdom, people, are in verse 9 and 10.

And Solomon said, you know what? The swift, the ones who are truly swift, the ones who are truly valorous, the ones who are truly wise, the ones who are truly discerning, the ones who are truly knowledgeable, it doesn't matter. The same thing happens to everyone. Time and happenstance occur to all of them.

And man does not know his time. Because we're self-satisfied, we think that everything is great, we don't realize that the jaws of the trap are about to shut. Look at verse 12.

For also man does not know his time. This is the word et, translated time here in these verses. It's the same one we saw back in Ecclesiastes 3. There's a time for every purpose under heaven.

Well, man does not know his time because the time of recompense, the time of balancing the scales, has not come yet. And so we fool ourselves into thinking that because we're happy and we're satisfied that everything is well. Man does not know his time, like fish that are caught in an evil net, or birds that are caught in a snare.

This is interesting to me because the word birds can be construed in Hebrew as either masculine or feminine. And you find it about half the time either way. But Solomon construes it as a feminine noun here and uses the feminine form of the verb with it.

And because he's used the verb for caught, it's the same word in both places, to be snared or trapped. And this verb means to snare or trap something with a lure. You entice it in and then catch it.

And I think this evil net, I can't really document this, but I'm trying to figure out what is an evil net. I mean, to a fish, any net is going to be evil if it catches it. But why are they caught with an evil net? And I think that this is probably a baited net.

What is it that attracts fish? What attracts the sharks? You know, you throw fish heads, you throw chum in the water, and you attract fish. And so a baited net that lures the fish in, I think, is the evil net. Or birds caught in a snare.

And the word here for caught in both cases is one that implies not just catching, but luring and catching. It's the one that is used in Proverbs 2 and following when it talks about the seductive woman who lures in the unsuspecting young man with her charms and ensnares him with her charms. Very same word.

There is a lure idea inherent in this word for trap. Man does not know his time, like fish that are caught in an evil net or birds caught in a snare. Like them, the sons of man are, and I put here to try to make it explicit, lured and trapped unto an evil time when it falls on them suddenly.

It is unexpected. The word here for suddenly can also be translated unexpectedly. People don't see it coming.

Just like the jaws of the trap snapping shut or the net being scooped out of the water or the snare snapping over the bird. They saw the lure. They thought the lure was sustenance and wholesomeness and content.

Snap goes the trap. Man does not know his time. Well, remember what Jesus adjured His generation about? He said you can see the signs and the seasons.

Why can you not see the times? Why can you not judge the times? We should judge the times. We should recognize how to measure. Verse 13, Also this I have seen as wisdom under the sun, and it is great, Gadol.

It is high and great to me. He's going to give an illustration here. A little city and few men in it.

There's not even a verb there. You can supply it and say there was in italics if you like. A little city and few men in it, and a great king came upon it and besieged it and built upon it great snares.

Kind of an unusual word. In fact, the Septuagint and some of the early versions changed this word and made it say walls, built great siege ramps against it. The Masoretic text here is the same word we had up above for snares, the noun form.

I think Solomon used that word because what has he done? Anybody that comes out of the city he's going to ambush. He's come up against it and couldn't take it so he's got these ambushes, he's got these traps. Maybe as he's starving them out he'll put a supply of goods and act like it's unguarded and wait for them to come out and then ambush them.

But, and it literally says, he found, I think this is probably there was found, although that's not the form that's here. But there was found in it a poor wise man and he delivered the city by his wisdom. But mankind did not remember that same poor man.

And the man, the word for man here is Ish, just like we had Ishah up above. And mankind is Adam, the people, mankind at large. So here's a guy who figures out a stratagem and he delivers the city.

He doesn't say what it was, but he comes up with an idea and the besieging army departs and the city is saved. Mankind did not remember that same poor man. Time goes on and he is forgotten.

You remember this happened with Mordecai. Mordecai overheard a plot against the king and these traitors were caught and executed and it wasn't until a long time later the king couldn't sleep one night. He had somebody bring out the old chronicles.

He thought, boy, if anything it will put me to sleep. It's reading the minutes from years ago of the court trials. So read me some of that droning rubbish and maybe it will knock me out.

So he's listening and he can't go to sleep and he hears and he's reminded that Mordecai delivered him, saved his life. And so then he says to Haman, what shall be done for the man that the king delights to honor? And that's what sets the whole thing in motion. Well, it was forgotten until God caused it to be remembered.

Same thing here. So what does Solomon conclude in verse 16? I myself said, wisdom is better than valor. This is from Gabor once again.

But the wisdom of the poor one is despised and his words are not heard. Even when it results in deliverance, it's forgotten because people get caught up in the daily affairs of the city and it is soon overlooked. How many times do you hear anybody bring up the Medal of Honor winners that we've had in our history? How many times are they celebrated? How many hours of entertainment news about who divorced who and who married who and whose movie is coming out do we get every week? And how many times do we go back and revisit other than maybe Veterans Day or Memorial Day? And even then, there are men who have paid the ultimate price and scores of others who did what they did in obscurity that are long forgotten.

Nobody remembers the blood that was spilled to give us the vapid life that we live today as a nation. Wisdom is better than courage and strength. But the wisdom of the poor one is despised.

People don't acknowledge it. Wide is the way and broad is the gate that leads to destruction. And the people who try to trod the narrow way and call out and say, this is the way, go this way.

I saw, I'd never seen it before. I saw that there's got to be a morning after, what is it, the movie, guy falls through the sky, Poseidon Adventure. I finally saw the Poseidon Adventure after lo these many years.

What is that thing, 30 years old? But you remember when Gene Hackman is trying to lead everybody to the bow upside down, or no, to the stern, to the propeller shaft. These other people keep passing. All these big groups of people want to go the other way.

And he keeps saying, no, it's this way, it's this way. And Ernest Borgnine's saying, you can't listen to the little kid that's telling you that's the thinnest part. Everybody's wanting to go the other way.

And he's just pleading and crying out, and he ultimately sacrifices his life getting people to the place they need to go to be delivered. And scores of people ignore him and drown. And if there's

one thing you remember out of that movie, it's poor Gene Hackman just pleading, and Shelley Winters swimming and dying and all the rest of it.

But the words of the wise are not often heeded, because it's invisible. People don't see the payoff. They say, where's the payoff? I want to see it now, and I don't see it, so I'm not going to listen.

And so in verse 17, there's not even a verb here. The words of the wise being heard rather than the shout of one ruling among fools. Solomon just puts that out there as a phrase without a verb.

He says, this is the contrast I'm putting in front of you. You've got the shout of the ruler of fools, and you've got the words of the wise being heard. That's the choice.

That's the choice that we face every single day. And if we listen to the shout of those who are prevailing, this is mashal, but it's moshel. Remember that O-E infix in Hebrew puts an I-N-G on the word.

It doesn't mean he's a ruler. He's not a baal or a prince. He's not a shultan.

At the moment, he's prevailing. He's ruling. He's getting over.

How many people follow Tony Robbins or somebody that seems to have made it? Oprah Speaks and everybody listens. That kind of thing. Well, they're the ones that are getting over.

I'm going to do what they say. Solomon doesn't even put a verb in there. It's so powerful in Hebrew.

The words of the wise being heard and the preposition there, translated rather, is just a single letter. Mame. From is its root meaning.

Rather than the shout of one getting over, making out among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war. Verse 18.

Better wisdom than weapons of war, but a single sinner will wipe out an abundance of good. That word abundance is a verb. It's a hyphial infinitive from ravah, which means to multiply and increase and become great.

Solomon paints this word picture in Hebrew of good that flowers. It's like the cornucopia. It's like the hundredfold field blossoming and busheling forth production.

But one sinner can wipe all of that out. The word for wipe out means to annihilate, to utterly destroy. We in our lives have the potential to be one hundredfold fields.

There is an abundance of good that God can see in us. We can be good in God's sight in an abundant way. But if we live this short-sighted life, we can wipe it all out.

The wise man is speaking and delivering the city. Who is listening? Are the quiet words of the wise going to be heard or are we going to continue to heed the shouting of the momentary captain of the ship of fools? It's basically the contrast that Solomon paints for us. Well, it is a very telling observation.

It's a challenge for us to not just see illustrations of these principles around us, but to look for them in our lives and to try to avoid the belly full of wind syndrome. Are we declaring ourselves good and satisfying ourselves that we're doing the right thing rather than looking for that standard by which God judges? One of them will not last and will have to be constantly renewed and replenished. The other is something that will not necessarily show up in this life but will be an eternal position.