

02-03-31a Ecclesiastes

In acknowledgement of the holiday that we celebrate this morning, I'd like to turn for our scripture reading to Psalm 22. Psalm 22. This is inscribed with a superscription to the chief musician set to the deer of the dawn, a Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear, and in the night season, and I'm not silent. But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you, they trusted and you delivered them.

They cried to you and were delivered. They trusted in you and were not ashamed. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people.

All those who see me ridicule me. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head saying, he trusted in the Lord.

Let him rescue him. Let him deliver him since he delights in him. But you are he who took me out of the womb.

You made me trust while on my mother's breasts. I was cast upon you from birth from my mother's womb. You have been my God.

Be not far from me for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me. Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.

They gape at me with their mouths like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax.

It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue clings to my jaws. You have brought me to the dust of death.

For dogs have surrounded me. The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet.

I can count all my bones. They look and stare at me. They divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.

But you, O Lord, do not be far from me. O my strength, hasten to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog.

Save me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen. You have answered me. I will declare your name to my brethren.

In the midst of the assembly, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you

descendants of Jacob, glorify him and fear him, all you offspring of Israel.

For he has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor has he hidden his face from him. But when he cried out to him, he heard. My praise shall be of you in the great assembly.

I will pay my vows before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him will praise the Lord.

Let your heart live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For the kingdom is the Lord's and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship. All those who go down to the dust shall bow before him, even he who cannot keep himself alive. A posterity shall serve him.

It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation. They will come and declare his righteousness to a people who will be born that he has done this." All of scripture is inspired. All of it is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction.

There are some passages that just by the force of their content strike us with awe and with wonder. And every time I read Psalm 22, I have that sense that God imparted to the heart of David a foreknowledge of what would take place at the cross. And you cannot find in the Gospels any more telling description of what Christ went through on the cross than what his forefather expressed in these words.

Not only do we have his suffering and his cry to the Father, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? But after Christ ceased speaking aloud on the cross, I think we have also here the content of his thinking that God did answer the cry and God was present and the Lord Jesus was in communion with his Father when he said, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit. And through the dark hours of bearing our sin on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ was sustained by the knowledge that he was fulfilling the Father's plan and purpose even as he was going through those hours of darkness. And he says in verse 24, he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted and he has not hidden his face from him, but when he cried to him, he heard.

And we can take great comfort, there are a lot of sufferings and trials in this life, nothing to compare with what the Lord Jesus went through on the cross, but many times it seems to us equally bleak and equally hopeless. And it sometimes seems as though when we cry out there is no response, nothing changes, there's not suddenly a light in the room, we don't suddenly find ourselves flooded with peace and joy. Sometimes we do and other times we don't.

And it is another measure of faith, it's another challenge to our faith to claim the promise as the Lord Jesus did. It was three hours of darkness on the cross and during those three hours, even

though God heard, there was that time of trial, there was that time of fulfilling the plan and purpose of God that required the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer the penalty for all of our sins, bearing them in his own body on the tree as the scripture says. What sustained him during that time? I think it was these thoughts in verse 21 and following.

Even as he was in the lion's mouth and on the horns of the wild oxen, he knew that his father would not despise his affliction, he knew that his father would not hide his face, that he would hear when he cried out, and that he would fulfill his vow. What was the vow that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled? He said, I have come to do the will of my father. That's what he dedicated himself to, that is how he measured the tasks of the day and the decisions that had to be made each day, when he decided when to stay in a village and when to leave, when to heal, when to pass by.

Every day that the Lord Jesus spent was fulfilling his vow to do the will of the father. And he knew that this was necessary to accomplish our salvation. I heard again that great song, Jake Hess sings it, somebody else sang it this morning on the radio.

When he was on the cross, I was on his mind, and the Lord Jesus thought of us. And you see that in verse 27 and following, all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord. All the families of the nations shall worship before you.

That's us. We are brought into relationship with God through Christ, and he knew that. And it was for love of us individually that he sustained his faith and his obedience on the cross so that, as it says in verse 29, all the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship.

All those who go down to the dust shall bow before him. Isn't it interesting because there are so many scholars and supposedly knowledgeable people who say that the Old Testament doesn't have much to say about resurrection. All those who go down to the dust shall bow before him, even he who cannot keep himself alive.

Well, once you die, from the standpoint of earth, you don't do any more bowing, you don't do any more praising. David says in another place, do not let my soul go down to Sheol. The dust cannot praise you.

There is no remembrance of you in the grave. And yet he says here that those who go down to the dust shall bow before him. And we know from the New Testament scriptures that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess in the resurrection that Christ is Lord and that the Father is supreme and righteous.

Verse 31, they will come and declare his righteousness to a people who will be born. These who go down to the dust in death are going to be raised and are going to declare the faithfulness and the righteousness of God to people that are not even born when they die. How can they do that? It's in the resurrection.

So there's a wonderful foreshadowing of that work of Christ on the cross and also of the result, which is resurrection, not only for him but also for us. It's a wonderful reminder and a great insight into both the suffering and the thinking and the faith that the Lord Jesus Christ expressed on the cross. Well, we're going to, even as we keep in mind the wonderful, I can't think of anything that is more worth celebrating than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is Resurrection Sunday, Easter Sunday. I am not a purist on this point, but the word Easter coming as it does from Ashtar or Esther, which means star and has to do with, goes all the way back to Ishtar and Ashtareth and a lot of the pagan spring celebrations that occurred around this time. And like many other things, the church wanted to take those and appropriate them for the church.

And so Easter has not entirely rid itself of all of the pagan symbolism of fertility and that with the eggs and the bunnies and all. I mentioned earlier, I saw a guy in a bunny suit down here at the shopping center as I was driving over this morning and handing out Easter eggs right across the street from Methodist church. And it just is a juxtaposition that sticks in my mind.

But interestingly, our study in Ecclesiastes is a great place to be on this resurrection morning. As we look at our passage in Ecclesiastes chapter nine, let's review the translation that I gave you last week. You may notice a couple of changes.

One of the reasons I hesitate to print it out is that in some ways it is a work in progress. And some of the harder spots in Hebrew, I have to take extra time to work on. There are corruptions in the text.

It's a known fact. The Masoretic scribes have several places in this chapter where they have marked a Ketheve Kerei situation. Ketheve Kerei is something well known even to a first year Hebrew student.

Ketheve means what is written. Kerei means what is read. Ketheve is K-E-T-H-I-B.

Kerei is Q-E-R-E. And even down at Dallas Seminary, the little student newspaper, I don't know if they still have it or not, but during my time there they had a little two or four page newsletter and that's the title of it. It's KQ, which is Ketheve Kerei, what is written and what is read.

And there are places where they couldn't make any sense of the text and so they actually changed it, but they wanted to preserve what they found before them. And so they leave what they found in the text, but they write out in the margin what should be read so that when they get out the great scrolls and turn the handles and read these aloud in the synagogues, the guy would come to this place and see the mark of the Ketheve Kerei and he would go out to the margin and read that instead of what is actually written in the text. But they wouldn't just amend the text because of their reverence for every letter.

However, some of the damage had been done before the Masoretes ever came along, so we have to contend with that. And I have done some work and actually figured out something in verse 4 that I'll share with you this morning that smooths it out and without doing any violence to the consonantal text, actually makes the flow of thought a little clearer, at least in my opinion it does. But we began in verse 1 of chapter 9, for I have given all this to my heart.

All of what? Well, everything that we talked about in chapter 8, talking about the work that is worked under the sun and the evil that men do to each other and those who sin a hundred times and don't seem to suffer any consequences, to those who are just going along for the pleasures of the moment and it doesn't seem that they get any comeuppance. Lightning doesn't strike. Boy, I have seen many things where I just thought if there was ever a time that God would intervene and just strike somebody dead, this would be it.

I'm sure you've seen the same thing. You just begin to wonder how God can even tolerate some of the works of man on the earth. But God doesn't communicate his righteous judgment in the circumstances of this life.

There are people that go through their entire life doing great evil and living totally for themselves and we don't see the balancing of the scale, we don't see the comeuppance that we would expect. And we should draw a conclusion from this. God has done this on purpose.

Why would God not express himself in justice so that those who do wickedness receive the fruits of their labor in this life? Well, Solomon asks himself about this. He meditated on it back in chapter 8. So he says in chapter 9, I have pondered all this in my heart. I gave it to my heart.

I said, look heart, I've got some data for you to process here. I'm going to put in what I have seen. I have seen the righteous man perishing.

I've seen the rich man lasting long in his wickedness and the evil man. So what's going on? My heart saw this, that the righteous and the wise and their works of service are in the hand of God. Well now, where is the hand of God? It's with God.

It's in the unseen eternal realms of heaven, right? So you're not going to see the award statue, the prize, the ribbon, whatever you want to think of it as, the laurel wreath of glory given to the righteous and given to the wise because they and their works of service are in the hand of God. In this life, under the sun, God's love and God's hate are not apparent. There are people who God has a great attitude of disapproval and dislike and hatred for the works that they have done.

There are others who have been faithful, who have been obedient, who have walked the narrow road, who have been knocking on the door, who have been asking God for wisdom, who have been seeking, and God sees that. But in this life, a single fate, the same outcome seems to happen to both the righteous and the evil. Well, what is the conclusion that should be drawn from this? If God is God and if his promises are true, there has to be more to life than what we see

under the sun.

There has to be something beyond death, which necessitates resurrection. You have to be around after death for God's promises to be fulfilled, for the scales of justice to balance, for God's righteousness and justice to be expressed in the eyes of all his creation. There has to be a resurrection.

Now, how much resurrection is taught in the law of Moses? If you go and look at the slaughter of the animals for the sin offering and the guilt offering, the trespass offering, you see the grain that is cut down and brought and waved in the sheaves. Where is the picture of resurrection? Those are all pictures of death and of consequences and of the price that must be paid, right? There are pictures in the law. We've seen them, for example, in Leviticus 14 with the two doves and the cleansing of the leper.

But you have to have an eye to see. How many Israelites do you think saw the picture of resurrection and the one bird that was slain and his blood spilled into the bowl of water and then the living bird dipped in that blood and set free? Two identical birds. One is killed and the other is set free.

But because the second one is identified with the first through blood and water, certainly in hindsight, we can see this wonderful picture of resurrection. Even going over to the words of John, you must be born of water and of blood. Christ was born of water and of blood.

We are born of water and of the spirit. How are we born of the spirit? Through the blood of Christ. So it's certainly easier for us to see than it probably was for the Israelites.

But God has built in this answer to man. When you look around and see the seeming injustice in this life, if you believe in God, you have to believe in the resurrection because the promises of God can only be fulfilled to a resurrected saint. It tells us that over in Hebrews where he talks about the heroes of the faith and he says, all these died in faith, not having received the promise.

This was an observation that could be made. So what should we think about? The idea of getting our blessing and getting our good reward is strong within us, isn't it? Many of us as believers are motivated to faithfulness in the study of God's word and you look at people who go out and light candles in the Catholic church and so on, what are they doing? We want things to turn out well in this life and we constantly have to guard our souls from a selfish interest in our faith that we're doing what we do because we want to be blessed. We want to have a prosperous and happy life.

That's a natural instinct but if that's where our motivation stops, we're in trouble. Turn with me over to 2 Corinthians 15. Actually, there is no 2 Corinthians 15, so it must be 1 Corinthians.

And it is 1 Corinthians 15. We've reviewed this in our study but I want to review it again because if there is no resurrection, look at verse 16 of 1 Corinthians 15. If the dead do not rise, then Christ

is not risen and if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Now, isn't this interesting? Where were our sins paid for? On the cross or in the tomb? It was on the cross, right? So even if there's no resurrection, wouldn't we think that the death of Christ has atoned? What if there was no resurrection? Let's say that Christ was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world and just like the sacrificial animals of the Levitical offerings, He died and those animals didn't come back. How many Israelites saw how many animals get their throats slit and bleed their life away and die? And those animals didn't come back. Could not Christ have been the sacrifice who died and paid the price for our sins? And yet Paul says here that if He's not raised, we're still in our sins.

How can that be? Why is it that the resurrection is a necessary part of the removal of our sin? Well, what does he say? Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. We have not been delivered from sin if we have not been delivered from death. Death is inextricably linked to sin.

Sin and death coexist. The wages of sin is what? Death. The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law.

The law was like that fluoroscope. When you walked in front of the law, you could see right through to the innermost being and it exposed sin. That's what the law did.

The law was holy, righteous and good and it showed us everything that we were not. But it is not enough that the penalty for sin be paid on the cross. If there is no resurrection, it is a half-finished salvation.

Because if we're not also delivered from death, then what's the point of being forgiven of sin? What's the point of removing the penalty? The penalty of sin is death. And so the guilt of sin was paid for on the cross. You have redemption, you have propitiation and you have reconciliation.

But if it only lasts a brief time and then ends in death, it's not really a salvation because death is a function of sin. So without resurrection, salvation is not complete. Without resurrection, you're really still in your sin because the sting of death is sin.

The sting of death has got to go away or sin has not really been resolved. That's why Paul says, if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins. And look at verse 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. When you look around the modern world today, you look at the Christian world and you look at the bookshelves and you look at the Christian publications and Christian radio and television, how much of our public faith, how much communication is spent on the results of faith in this life, the benefits of Christianity in this life, the hope of the Christian in this life, marriage improvement, circumstance improvement, the prosperity gospel, the relief from guilt, the relief from despair, the relief. Many of

these things are true, but if that's the only motivation, if that's the only hope that we have, what does Paul say? We are of all men the most pitiable.

And this word in Greek actually means the most miserable. We are wretched if we're only looking for benefit from faith in Christ in this life. He goes on to affirm the resurrection of Christ that we celebrate this morning.

He is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

How many human beings are in Adam? All of us. That's the definition of a human being. You're a descendant of Adam.

How many of us are in Christ? Well, positionally, everyone who has expressed faith in Christ is in Christ and will be made alive, will be resurrected. But there's sort of a double entendre here, isn't there? Because even so in Christ all shall be made alive, there is a positional statement in Christ and there is an experiential statement in Christ. If we live each day in Christ, if we do what we do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, if we respond to the knock at the door of Revelation 3.20 and open the door and Christ comes in and we share the fellowship meal with him, we are truly alive and we begin to partake of eternal life.

Even in this life we begin to store up for ourselves treasure in heaven. And at the end, verse 24, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father and puts an end to all rule and authority and power, verse 26, the last enemy that will be destroyed is death. So he says in verse 34, after talking about this at length, awake to righteousness and do not sin, for some do not have the knowledge of God.

What is the upshot of this thinking? We should awake to righteousness. Righteousness is eternal. Righteousness is the condition and the conditioner of our life after death.

Solomon in the Old Testament pressing his nose against the glass of what could be known and understood in the Old Testament age has essentially come to the same conclusion. Look again at Ecclesiastes chapter 9. I gave this to my heart. The righteous and the wise and their works of service are in the hand of God.

In this life, even as God's love, so also is God's hate, man is not aware. Man, as he looks around, all before their faces is everything happening to everyone. There's no distinction.

You can be a wonderful righteous person and calamity can befall you. You can be a terrible evil person and it seems that no calamity befalls you or vice versa. Sometimes the righteous seem to prosper and the wicked seem to be punished.

You just can't establish cause and effect of righteousness and evil in this life. It just doesn't seem

to pan out. I saw in a commentary, I was reading a commentary this past week, he got to verses 2 and 3 and he said, well, verses 2 and 3 really add nothing new to what Solomon has already said.

This just is like chalk on the chalkboard squealing or like sandpaper to the skin. It just grates on me when somebody says, well, these verses don't really add anything new. These are sort of a waste of time.

They're just repetitious. There's no new thing in these verses. We could just as well do without them, is the implication.

So anytime somebody says, well, these verses just seem to repeat what came before, I think there has to be a reason why these are here. Because he has said up above, hasn't he, that the same thing befalls the righteous and the wicked. Here he says the same outcome happens to the righteous and to the evil.

But he says things he didn't say up above. He says the same outcome occurs 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 comes to the good for the one sinning, for the one swearing an oath or pledging himself. It happens the same as to the one who is afraid to pledge or commit or swear himself. Why would Solomon repeat the thought that the same thing happens? But here he details things.

Why does he give us these details? Well, this does add something to what he has said before, because these are ways that we justify ourselves in this life. These are ways that we vindicate ourselves. These are ways that we assuage our guilt.

There are ways that we believe that we have achieved approval. And it shakes our faith when we have done these things, and then it doesn't seem that benefit and prosperity and blessing follow. Some of us as believers think that if we are righteous, if we don't transgress the commands, we don't commit adultery, we don't commit fornication, we don't steal, we don't lie, we don't bear false witness, we don't do the obvious immoral and illicit things, we expect that we are going to have a life of material blessing, of improved circumstances, of improved relationships, of sort of a golden touch on everything that we encounter, to the good and to the clean.

Now, clean and unclean, this has to do with ritual defilement, doesn't it? There are people who were so careful that even if it didn't involve sin, you could become unclean in Israel just by having a bodily issue over which you had no control. You could become unclean if somebody died, maybe they died in your arms, you were trying to aid them, you were trying to bind up their wounds and they died, well now you have touched a dead body and you are unclean until evening. Childbirth rendered a woman unclean for a number of days.

Intercourse rendered people unclean. There were myriads of things that could render someone ritually unclean. And people would say, you know, if I can just very parsimoniously and carefully avoid any condition that makes me unclean, minimize my days of being unclean, well, I'm going to have greater blessing.

There are people who try to live within a germ-free bubble and avoid all contact with unbelievers, avoid all contact with anything that smacks of anything other than squeaky clean fellowship, and they think, you know, I'm bound to be blessed because I'm wending my way carefully through anything that might defile. Solomon says, you know what, that's no guarantee that you're not going to have heartache, that you're not going to have challenge, that you're not going to have disappointments and calamities come into your life. The one sacrificing and the one who is not sacrificing, what does this have to do with? Well, how many people in Israel brought sacrifices religiously in the same way that Catholics go down and light candles and make donations to the church? You've got dyed-in-the-wool mafia types who are very careful about making their donations and supporting the church and supporting charities because there's a mystical part of their soul that thinks, well, God will sort of overlook my evil lifestyle if I balance it with sacrifices, sacrifices of money, sacrifices of time, sacrifices of taking care of loved ones, and so on, showing up on the Easter Sundays and the Christmas holidays and so forth in church.

So these are the outward trappings of religion, doing the prescribed motions for the good, for the one sinning, for the one who pledges himself, the one taking a vow. There are people who will say, you know, I'm swearing off cigarettes. You have this every year with the, what do they have? They have fat, yeah, the Mardi Gras, and people try to party ahead of time because then they've got Lent and they give something up for Lent.

This is pledging yourself. You promise God, I will give this up or give that up or stay away from this or I will go to church every Sunday for a month or a year. Yet it doesn't seem to make any difference.

Good things happen to bad people and good people. Bad things happen to good people and to bad people in any of these different categories. But these are specifically areas where we think that we've sort of pulled a special heavenly string that unleashes blessing.

Solomon says in verse 3, this is the evil in all that has worked under the sun because the same outcome happens to all. And the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil because they look around and say, well, there's no benefit to sacrificing or promising or pledging. It doesn't seem to mean anything.

And many a believer has had their faith shaken because they say, God, I've been faithful. I've showed up at Bible class every time the doors were open or I've given, I've tithed. Boy, tithing is a big key to prosperity that gets bandied about.

I've gone down and worked with the poor. I've engaged myself in the programs of the church. I've done this and done that and done the other.

I've done the sacrifices. I've kept myself clean. I've been righteous.

I've pledged myself and I don't see any benefit. I'm having the same rough road in life that everybody else is. Here's somebody sitting right next to me in the pew or in church or in my life that hasn't done any of these things and they seem to be happier than I am.

They seem to have more prosperity. And so the hearts of the sons of man are full of evil. And there are people who draw the conclusion, well, there's no benefit to being a believer.

There's no benefit to the worship of God because look, these people that worship God, they're not any better off than I am. Solomon says, this seems to be a great evil all the way to death. Now, verse four, and in verse four, this is the one I told you that I've worked on and have actually smoothed out a little bit.

The translation I gave you last week, which is literally out of the continental text of the Hebrew here says, for who that is chosen unto all the living, there is confidence, which is basically gobbledygook. And this is where the Masoretes decided that the word chosen must not be there. And by switching places with two consonants, instead of Bachar, which is B-A-C-H-A-R, it should be C-H-A-B-A-R, Chabar, which is the word that can mean to be joined.

It's not the first definition of it, but it has the idea of being joined. And they thought, well, it's not chosen, it's joined. So we'll switch the consonants around.

And that's a k'thiv k'rei. What is written is Bachar, which means to choose, but what is read is Chabar, which is to be joined. But it's not actually the nifal, which would be the passive, to be joined.

It would be to join. And it doesn't make any better sense even with the k'rei. However, in looking at this and looking at other things that Solomon said elsewhere in Ecclesiastes and in Proverbs, it occurred to me that by simply re-dividing these consonants, you know, we have spaces in the text that divide the words, but in the original text, there were few, if any, spaces.

And so you have to go along and divide the words. You figure out what that word is and chop it off. And then you take your consonants, and that's the next word.

You count off some more consonants, and that's the next word. And I think the word here is to choose, but by putting a yod in front of this, which makes it an imperfect, or in many cases, it's a future tense. The word asher precedes b'char, and there's a yod that they've attached to the beginning.

So we have asher yeb'char, and it means the one who or that. Asher is translated that, and then

you have choose. But if you take the yod off of the beginning of b'char and stick it on the end of asher, you have asher, and asher is the common word in the Old Testament that means blessed.

Asher is the verb that means to bless. So by simply moving that yod to the end of the preceding word instead of the beginning of b'char, which is probably more detailed than you wanted, this is what we arrive at in verse four. For who is chosen, actually who is blessed and chosen? Who is the blessed one? Who is the chosen one? Asher means blessed.

B'char is chosen. So it's a question. This verse begins with the word for, ki, k-i or k-i-y, and then me, m-i-y.

And m-i-y, when it comes at the beginning of a sentence, introduces the question of who. For who is blessed? Who is chosen? Isn't this the issue throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, throughout the age of Israel? Who is it that's blessed? Who is it that's chosen? The Jews misconstrued this in Jesus' day, didn't they? They thought the one who was blessed and the one who was chosen was the one who was rich, the one who was prosperous. And so people look around among the living and say, well, who is it that's blessed and chosen? How can I become the blessed? How can I become the chosen? How can I be the prosperous one? There doesn't seem to be any direct link to righteousness or to sacrifices or to being clean, ritually clean.

I've just got to find my best way. I've got to find whatever works. And so some people find fulfillment and blessing and the sense of being special and chosen in their work.

Some find it in their riches and in their pursuit of material goods. But that is the central question. The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil.

Derangements are in their hearts and their lives. And after this, all the way through to death, even among the dying ones, all they do is look around and say, who is it that's blessed? Who is it that's chosen? And so we put a question mark after chosen and begin a new sentence. Among all the living, there is bitkon.

B-I-T-C-H-O-N. The B-T-C-H portion of that word, it's a noun, but the verb is batak. Batak is one of the great Hebrew verbs that means to trust.

And bitkon means an object of trust, the thing that is trusted in. So among all the living, there is an object of trust. There is something that is believed.

Anybody that's alive, Solomon says, generally speaking, this is what they believe. Then we have the word that introduces a quote, or that quote, for the living dog it is better than for a dead lion. Everybody that's alive figures it's better to be alive than dead.

Even if you're alive in ignominy, even if you're alive as an unclean, unrighteous, unsacrificing person, being alive is better than being dead. This is one thing that just about everybody agrees on. Life is better than death.

Nobody really, unless they are in extreme pain and extreme suffering, wants to die. So who is blessed and chosen? Well, you've at least got a shot at it if you're alive. And so we have today, when we look around, people say life at any price.

I will sacrifice my values. I'll sacrifice my integrity. I'll compromise anything to have some kind of life here.

Everything is about being alive and having some kind of blessing and sense of being chosen for special things in this life. That's the evil that's in the hearts of men. That's the thing that Solomon says it's a shame that we can't see beyond the grave because that's the common trust.

That's what people believe. Is that what we believe? Is that how we live in spite of what we say? That's the question we have to ask ourselves. On Resurrection Sunday, are we living in the state before death or are we living in the life that comes after death? We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back we'll see the forward progress of Solomon's thinking here and what he says from an Old Testament perspective. Then we're going to see what the New Testament has to say as well.