

02-04-07a Ecclesiastes

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning for our scripture reading to Psalm 62. Psalm 62. I like the subtitle in my New King James for Psalm 62.

It says, a calm resolve to wait for the salvation of God. And if you're like me, it's one thing to see that phrase and to recognize that somebody can have a calm resolve to wait for the salvation of God, but it is something altogether different to actually develop and maintain a calm resolve to wait for the salvation of God. I also like this subtitle because it uses the word salvation in its biblical sense, which is in the daily exigencies of life.

We often hear salvation used almost exclusively to refer to deliverance from the lake of fire, but there are many kinds of deliverance. And David, as a believer with the word of God in his soul, is speaking of the deliverance that God gives in circumstances in the various trials of life. This psalm or song is dedicated to the chief musician to Jeduthun, whose name appears several times in the psalms and in the dedications.

It is a psalm of David. Truly, my soul silently waits for God. From him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.

How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from his high position. They delight in lies.

They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. My soul waits silently for God alone, for my expectation is from him.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be moved.

In God is my salvation and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times, you people.

Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Surely men of low degree are a vapor. Men of high degree are a lie. If they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor.

Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery. If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. God has spoken once, twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God.

Also to you, O Lord, belongs mercy. For you render to each one according to his work. That last verse, of course, should ring a faint bell from our study on Friday night of the judgment seat of Christ and many passages that we looked at Friday night that refer to the fact that God will render to each one according to his work, this being one of them.

But you can see the movement of thought and, again, as is so often the case, it's one thing to know how things should be. We should have the fruit of the Spirit. We should be waiting patiently for God's deliverance.

We should be resting under his wings. We should be abiding in the shadow of the Almighty because we dwell in the secret place of the Most High. All of these things should be the case.

They say the devil is in the details, but really the devil is in the doing. It is having that exist as a reality in our souls and in our thinking that is the challenge. And one of the great things about the Psalms, and I encourage you to read the Psalms at every opportunity because one of the reasons they are there, these are the lyrics of the hymnal of Israel.

The music is lost to us. It's not lost entirely. And I fully expect that we're going to get to hear these songs set to their original tunes in the Millennial Kingdom.

David's going to be there and I'm going to see if I can't get a seat close enough to hear him play and sing these songs. I think we'll be able to understand. Again, people think I'm probably out in the weeds, and I may be, but it is my hypothesis, and this is just Sam's wild speculations.

I think that the original language before the Tower of Babel was Hebrew, or certainly Proto-Hebrew, and I think that in the Millennial Kingdom we'll go back to speaking the language. It's just all part of that great chiasm that has its center at the cross, and the cleanup that takes place at the inception of the Millennial Kingdom sort of corresponds to the cleanup that took place at the Flood, and further back at the expulsion from the Garden. I think Stephen Stills back in the 70s tried to sing about, we've got to get back to the Garden.

Well, he doesn't know how to get there, but the Lord Jesus Christ is going to recreate on this earth a perfect environment, a perfect justice. So I think now when you look at your A's and A primes and your B's and B primes and your chiastic structure of human history centered on the cross, I think you're back to one language because everybody's resurrected. Why have a multiplicity of languages? Let's all speak the language that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks, and I think it's going to be Hebrew.

I think that David will be able to sing his songs, this is my point, and we will be able to understand them. He can play and accompany himself and sing, and the choirs of the Levites can join him and provide the background accompaniment. I think we're going to have concerts that will lift our souls beyond anything we can imagine right out of the inspired Scriptures.

And this is one of those songs, and it will be a memorial to the grace and the faithfulness of God in delivering us from trial. So again, we know that this is an ideal, we know that we should be resting, we should be trusting, we should be waiting patiently and having peace in our souls even in the midst of trial. And yet the doing of it is the challenge.

Well, the great thing about the Psalms is that David lays out for us the process in his soul. You look at so many of the Psalms where he talks about the nature of his trial. There are people who are afflicting him, there are situations, his own sin, he has tripped himself up and has fallen, he's headed down to the pit of Sheol in terms of production, he recognizes himself to be a withered branch that's not producing the fruit that it should, he cries out to God for forgiveness.

But instead of just presenting us with the ideal, we see the process, we see the thinking that goes on in the soul of a believer to reach the place of peace and to reach the place of waiting and having that calm resolve. And so in this Psalm he says, Truly my soul silently waits for God. From him comes my salvation.

And you'll notice in that first verse there that the verbs are in italics because they're not there in the Hebrew. And when you're under stress, when you're under pressure, you know that a lot of times you don't have a nice, smoothly connected, grammatical, logical train of thought. Your thought comes in bursts and in impressions and we have a lot of emotion wrapped up in our minds.

And if you leave out the verbs here, David says, Truly my soul silently for God. Looking for, waiting for, hoping for. Your soul is so afflicted that it's just silent and you need God.

That's what needs to come in. From him, my salvation. And it reminds you of somebody that doesn't even have the breath to speak and they just can only say the essential words.

He only, my rock and my salvation. You'll notice that there is no actual verb until you get to the end of verse 2. He only, my rock and my salvation. My defense.

I shall not be greatly moved. The first verbal concept here is I shall not be greatly moved. And there's a little bit of a caveat there.

He says, well, I might be moved, but I'm not going to be greatly moved. I may be shaken, but I'm not going to be removed. Then as he kind of gets his wheels going here, he can start completing his sentences more thoroughly.

How long will you attack a man? So he's obviously being beset by circumstances. The temptation for him is eyes on people, one of the categories of subjectivity. He is under attack and he says, You shall be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall or a tottering fence.

You only consult to cast him down from his high position. They delight in lies. They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.

So these are false friends. They look like a wall, but it's leaning and about to fall. They look like a fence that will keep enemies out and keep good things in, but it's tottering.

It's about to fall. And it is falsehood. It's deception.

It is betrayal that is in view. And when he says sila, that of course is the marker. We don't know musically if this was a repeat, that meant let's go back and review that whole thought again, or if it is a rest where the instruments play and the singers are silent.

But the idea is meditate on stop, pause, and think about what you have just seen. So David says, he puts that pause in at that point. Everybody has this because all of us are fallen human beings, how good our intentions are, we always fail each other.

We always wind up falling short. We disappoint each other. And it can range anywhere from well-intentioned blunders to actual malicious deceit.

And there is nothing like looking around in the world of business to see people saying whatever needs to be said to accomplish the needs of the moment, promising whatever, mailing checks that may or may not have any backing, and leaving people in the lurch. There is a situation where I work, where people who are in the middle levels of getting things done are dealing with vendors and dealing with suppliers, and they are told that money will be sent and that things will be done, and they in good faith are negotiating to get parts and so on. And then maybe the company cuts the rug out from under them and doesn't actually fulfill that promise.

And it puts you in a terrible spot because your integrity is on the line. You told someone that you are going to deliver something, and now the people who in turn are supposed to supply it to you so you can supply it to them have welched, and they just told you that to get through the day and get things done that needed to be done. And so there is falsehood, there is deceit.

It looks like a wall, but it's leaning. It looks like a fence, but it's tottering. And there is loss of integrity.

There is a lack of faithfulness. And this wears on your soul. People promise to pay and they don't.

People promise to show up and they don't. People promise to come through for you and they don't, because they've got some other agenda and you're not high on their list. They delight in lies.

They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. They speak things that tend toward blessing, but it's really not there. And David says, just think about that for a while.

Then he goes on to say, where you cannot put your trust in man. Everybody has the memory verse, cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength. It says in the Old King James, makes flesh his arm.

What can you do without your arm? Arm is a symbol of strength. My soul, wait silently for God alone. There is only one place you can place your trust and know for sure that it will always be honored.

That a promise made is a promise kept. Sometimes people want very sincerely to keep their word and to fulfill their promise and they can't. They're just prevented.

My great fear as I've done a lot of traveling in the last few weeks, you can't make any mistakes. If you're on a schedule where you're flying from one city to another city to another city to another city, you have to get there with everything. You can't lose your picture ID.

You can't lose your birth certificate if you're crossing borders. You can't miss a deadline any place or the whole house of cards comes crashing down. And I might very sincerely want to get to my next appointment and a plane might be late.

I got stuck at one airport for an extra hour and a half because weather forced a diversion of the plane that I had to catch and so it did not arrive for an hour and a half. And I could see the whole master plan unraveling. And people want their planes to run on time but it just doesn't.

So there are circumstances as well as people. The only thing that you can count on always without fail is the Lord God. My soul waits silently for God alone for my expectation is from Him.

And you can see that David is reminding himself. He's telling his soul, Hey soul, don't be looking at these people and being disappointed because they didn't come through. He says, soul, you've got to wait silently for God alone.

That's where genuine expectations should be. And notice the word only that keeps occurring here. Echad is the word that means one or alone.

It's a single thing. He only is my rock and my salvation, my defense. I shall not be moved.

And you can see the progress of David's thought. At first he said, I won't be greatly moved. And now he says, you know what? I will not be moved at all.

In God, and again the verb isn't even there. This is very heartfelt and emphatic language. In God, my salvation and my glory.

The rock of my strength, my refuge in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before Him.

God, a refuge for us. And you can see him arguing from his personal experience to corporate experience. David is the king.

David is a leader. He's a leader in the cave of Adullam. And he says, you know, it's not just me.

It's all of us that need to think this way. And he says, remember, these men of low degree, these tottering fences, these leaning walls, are what? Hevel. They are a vapor.

They are temporary. They seem to be there, but they will soon be gone. If they were weighed on

the scale, they are altogether lighter than vapor.

Do not trust in oppression. Do not vainly hope in robbery. If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

The idea is all of this is motivated by profit. Why do people welsh on their obligations? It's selfishness. It's they have become their own God and they're going to make their own provision.

They're going to look out for number one. They're going to make their little line of dominoes fall the way that they want them to and it's at your expense. That is why people fail each other because they suddenly shift their priorities back to themselves.

And he says, it's a vain hope. Don't trust in oppression. Don't vainly hope in robbery.

Even if riches increase, don't set your heart on them. If you do happen to accumulate things, don't let it... We've seen so many places in Scripture the dangers of getting your eyes on things in this life. God has spoken once, twice I have heard this.

Power belongs to God. There's only one source of strength. There's only one source of refuge.

If we want to develop a calm resolve to wait for the salvation of God, we have to remind ourselves of these truths. We have to put things in perspective. People have to be put in perspective.

Things have to be put in perspective. And you see all three areas of subjectivity being put in their place in this psalm. David starts with himself and he says, My soul, I can't get my eyes on myself and my misery.

He says, soul, you've got to wait silently for God alone. He's getting his eyes off of himself onto God. When he looks around at people, he says, these people are temporary.

They're a vapor. You weigh them in the scale, they don't even make the thing move. He says, things, eyes on things, eyes on possessions and circumstances, don't set your heart on them.

Even if riches increase, even if you have good circumstances or wealth, don't set your heart on it. And he returns his eyes to the Lord God. God has spoken once.

Twice I have heard this. Power belongs to God. Also to you, O Lord, belongs mercy.

And that combination, that God not only has mercy, you know, people have good intentions, but a lot of times they can't come through, either because they fail in and of themselves or circumstances overcome them. God has mercy, but God also has power. And God has the power to fulfill the promises he makes in mercy.

You render to each one according to his work. Leave people in the hands of God and remember

that God is also going to render to us according to our work. What do we trust? What is the work that we're supposed to accomplish in this life? It is righteousness by faith.

Anything that distracts us from trusting God as our rock, as our salvation, as our defense is stunting our growth and reducing our fruitfulness because the work that we are judged for, the positive side, is righteousness by faith. So it's a great psalm, it's a great reminder and something that conditions all of the scriptures that we look at, all of the circumstances that we look at. And as we return now to our study in Ecclesiastes, we find ourselves at the threshold of chapter 10.

We've seen chapter 9, I've given you a translation. I'm not ready to give you the translation of chapter 10 yet, unfortunately, so you're going to have to follow along with me. But we're not going to need too much by way of translation because there's a very powerful thought here and I'm not sure that the chapter division is very well placed.

Once again, this is arbitrary based on the people who first rendered the scriptures and tried to give a way to refer to them in the Latin and the Greek and then from there on into English. But the last few verses of chapter 9 are talking about the incongruity of what is really valuable and what is treated as valuable, what is genuinely helpful and yet what gets substituted for it in this life. He says in verse 14, there was a small city with few men in it.

A great king came to it, surrounded it, constructed siege works against it. But there was found in it a poor wise man and he delivered the city by his wisdom, yet no one remembered that poor man. His wisdom delivered the city but it wasn't acknowledged.

People didn't say, that wisdom is something I really ought to have for myself. That's a valuable thing. Even though it delivered them.

It reminds one of the story of Abraham when the coalition of kings came down from the north and captured the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and carried them and their possessions off including Lot and his family. And Abraham with a small band of friends went and attacked those kings and rescued the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. They saw the power of the God of Abraham.

They saw the deliverance that came from the wisdom that God gave Abraham who with an inferior force was able to defeat and put to flight this entire coalition of armies and rescue the people. And yet those same people did not value the wisdom and didn't seek out the God of Abraham and what happens to them a short time later? Fire and brimstone and destruction. And even Lot himself is sort of saved yet so as by fire.

You notice there wasn't a little caravan with all of Lot's possessions and all of the wealth that he accumulated in the green valleys of Sodom and Gomorrah. He's being dragged out by the hand by a couple of angels and he just escapes with the clothes on his back. So no one remembered that poor man.

So I said wisdom is better than strength but the wisdom of the poor man is despised and his words are not even. They're not valued. People don't seek out that wisdom for themselves.

And the words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. We talked about this last time. The still small voice of the Holy Spirit speaking the word of truth.

You have to be bending your ear. You have to be inclining your heart to hear that. Otherwise all you're going to hear is the shout of the ruler among fools.

And then the final verse of that chapter wisdom is better than weapons of war but one sinner destroys much good. In our translation of this better wisdom than weapons of war. That's the most powerful thing.

What's the most powerful thing? When people get at odds with each other and they say I'm going to enforce my will on you. I'm going to make you do what I want done. The most powerful thing on earth are the weapons of war.

The chariots and the swords. Now it's nuclear weapons. And to paraphrase for the modern day wisdom is better than nuclear power.

Think of the strongest thing you can think of on the planet. Wisdom is better than that. But a single sinner will wipe out an abundance of good.

And this actually introduces the thought. This is the transition to the thought that's continued in chapter 10. Verse one of chapter 10 in the New King James says dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment and cause it to give off a foul odor.

So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. Well this may not be real perspicacious when we first read it certainly out of the New King James. But let's take this word by word from the Hebrew.

The first word is Zebubay. Z-apostrophe-B-U-B-A-Y Now this may seem completely opaque but think of one of the titles for Satan. Baal Zebub.

Baal means Lord. And Zebub means fly. Zebubay here is the plural and it's the construct form which means there's going to be a word following it that is linked to it in a genitive type of relationship.

So Zebub is a fly and it's actually in the plural construct form here. So we have flies and because it's in the construct this is flies of. Genitive.

You know you have a word of God. You have logos to theu for example in Greek. To theu is going to be in the genitive and it goes back and modifies the noun logos or rhema or whatever the noun might be.

Well here when we have Zebubay in the construct it means the next word is going to modify this and we will link them with the word of. And the next word is Mawet. M-A-W-E-T And this is from Mut.

M-U-T which is the Hebrew word for death. So flies of death is what this literally says. Flies of death.

The next word is Yabish. And this is from Baash which is a Hebrew word that means to stink. There isn't any graceful way to say it.

This is the word that means to stink. This is the word that was used in Exodus for the conditions in Egypt when the Nile turned to blood and the fish died. Exodus 7.18 The fish that are in the Nile will die and the Nile will become foul.

That become foul means the Nile will stink. If you've ever seen a place where there are dead fish, dead bloated fish floating in the water at the side of a stagnant pool or something you just can't... I mean it makes your eyes water. Well that's what Baash means.

This was fulfilled down in verse 21 of that same chapter. Exodus 7.21 The fish that were in the Nile died and the Nile stank so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile and the blood was through all the land of Egypt. Later on, the frogs that were sent, the plague of frogs, well when they died the people had to gather them up and in Exodus 8.14 they piled them in heaps and the land stank.

And again, it doesn't take too much imagination to conjure up what those conditions must have been like. Over in 1 Samuel 13 when Saul smoked the garrison of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 13.4 Israel had become odious to the Philistines. Saul attacked the garrison, actually I think Jonathan attacked the garrison and it got the Philistines all riled up and so now Israel is a stench in their nose.

They've become odious and the Philistines say we're going to get rid of this. They are just, we can't stand having them there. And the same thing with David when Achish decided that David had made himself a stench in the nose of the Israelites because Saul was trying to chase him down because he was the heir to the throne from the anointing of Samuel.

And so Achish said well he'll never go back to the Israelites because he has become a stench in their nose. Well that's what this verb means. So far in Ecclesiastes 10.1 we have flies of death and this is a hyphial which is the causative stem in Hebrew cause to stink.

So flies of death cause something to stink. What is it that they cause to stink? Well we have an extra word here and almost everybody is agreed that there is some dittography or some duplication of letters in the Hebrew text. And if you compare your New King James with a New American Standard you'll see that there is an extra phrase in the New King James and it's the

one that says cause it to give off a foul odor.

Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment and cause it to give off a foul odor so also a little folly. Well in New American Standard it says dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink so a little foolishness is weightier. And that second phrase is all based on a single word here which is yaviyah and I agree with those commentators that think that this is a corruption and an extra word.

There's a lot of problems here. Flies is plural and the verb is singular and there are all kinds of problems so I think these letters actually these three or four consonants shouldn't be here. So we're going to go with what's generally accepted to be the text here and the idea, even if that verb is there is not added to in a great way.

What's the idea? You've got perfume. Let's say you've got a most of our perfume comes in bottles now. My mom used to have Chanel No.

5 when I was little and I've seen these little bottles with the plastic swan on top and I don't know what the name of that is. It's a nice perfume that people have used and you think about perfume well in the olden days they didn't have atomizers they didn't have spritzers and sprayers so your perfume was in ointment form and it would come in a small jar with a lid and you would take the lid off and you would get this not exactly greasy stuff but it would be an ointment and now when I think of ointment I think of Carmax or Noxzema or Vicks or something I mean it's a cream type of stuff but this would have the perfume in it and you would rub that into your skin and you would smell good for a while. We tried to overcome all of the other they didn't have Dial and they didn't have Arid Extra Dry and that so people tried to use this to sort of compete with the natural smells that I can't even imagine.

But you can imagine someone here they've been bathed they've gone in and they've sat down at their little vanity and here's a lady and she's going to reach in and put some of this ointment on so she'll smell good and as she takes off the lid of the jar and reaches in to get a little finger full of this and rub it into her skin there's a dead fly legs to the sky in the ointment. Now dead flies don't have a smell that I know of I've seen lots and lots of dead flies and I've never smelled them. So why does it say dead flies make this stink? Well, it's the idea of it.

You look and you see the dead fly in your ointment do you really want to get a finger full of that and rub it on your skin? The perception is ruined. We have in our modern day many similar metaphors one concerning a punchbowl comes to mind. It wouldn't take much of a let's say there have been mice in the kitchen and they've left behind their little remnants and one of those little cylindrical remnants rolls off of a countertop and gets in the punchbowl.

Well, you take your punch out there it doesn't matter how big the punchbowl is and how much good ingredients you put in one little floaty in your bowl of punch and how many people are going to want to partake? This is the idea. This is an ancient corollary to the floaty in the punchbowl

idea. Why is he giving us this very graphic picture here? Flies of death.

And what this means is it's not just a dead fly. It doesn't say a dead fly. It says flies of death.

So this means that these flies have come from something dead. It's not just a nice little you might say well that housefly he's been in here and the whole house is clean so maybe he's just been landing on breadcrumbs and sucking up little nectar from fruit and things. This is a fly of death.

This is a Beelzebub fly. This has recently come off a stinking rotting carcass and now he's landed in your perfume. So do you want your perfume anymore? It doesn't matter how big the jar of perfume is the fly of death the flies of death and apparently there's more than one are stuck in it and it just ruins the whole thing.

Well, what is the application of this? Because this is sort of like a proverb where it says like flies of death in a perfumer's ornament so is the last half of this verse. What does the last half say? Well, there is some confusion because again let me just compare the New King James that says so does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. In the New American Standard it says so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor.

Well, what happened to the one respected for? Well, again there has been some textual difficulty transmitted down through the years in this. What it literally says is right after we have the oil of the perfumer shemane is the same word we had earlier on when it was talking about a good name is better than ointment and so forth. Well, the next word is yakar Y-A-Q-A-R and this verb is very interesting.

It means to be prized or to be valued and you have to think a little bit about what is valuable or what is costly. It means to be costly. How did they determine what was valuable in the ancient world? They had their scales and if something was valuable it weighed a lot.

Gold, precious stones and things you would weigh something on a scale and to weigh out the money to pay for something valuable it would be very heavy. In the ancient world they didn't have denominations on coins. They had lumps of silver of varying sizes that would be stamped in later days and that's where we get the idea of an impressed coin.

But earlier on they would just take lumps of silver and that's why they had such a difficult time determining what a shekel is because at different times in history it was a weight of silver but they didn't have coins. There used to be an old riddle about finding a coin that's labeled 384 B.C. or something. Of course they couldn't say B.C. in ancient days and you know this coin is fake.

Somebody tries to sell you a coin that says 384 B.C. Don't buy it. It's probably not genuine. But they would value things and weigh out what would be recompensed for something valuable and that's what yakar means.

Its root meaning to be precious or to be costly actually has the idea of being weighty of being costly because it's heavy. And of course we have kavod which is the word for glory and it's also in this verse and it also has the idea of being fat or being another word for weighty. So yakar is the next word here and it means costlier and then we have the preposition maim, the letter M in Hebrew and then chakma which is the word for wisdom.

So more precious or more costly would be our initial translation more precious or costly than wisdom and then we have another maim and the word kavod which is to be heavier or to be glorious. Kavod comes to mean glory. So more costly or more prized what is assigned more weight would be the most literal way of saying this.

Something is assigned more weight than wisdom and glory and it is siklut maat and that's a little folly. Sakal is the verb that means to be foolish. Siklut is the noun that comes from that verb and it means folly or foolishness.

Maat means just a little bit. A little bit of foolishness. So in the scales of the world you can put a little foolishness on one side and you can put a lot of kavod which is heavy glory.

You can put a lot of wisdom over there and what happens? The little folly outweighs it all. It's more valued. Clearly with these three different words for weight is picturing the scales and in the eyes of the world a little foolishness can outweigh a lot of glory and a lot of wisdom.

Well, we have sort of a double-edged sword here, don't we? Because on the one hand we see the poor man who delivered the city by his wisdom and wasn't recognized. His wisdom wasn't valued even though it accomplished a great benefit to a lot of people. But we also see the last words of chapter 9 that one sinner can obliterate a great deal of good.

So we're looking, as it were, at both sides of the coin here. On the one hand we're looking at it from the human point of view. People are not going to recognize your wisdom.

They're not going to recognize the glory of God that is reflected when you achieve righteousness by faith. It's going to go unnoticed. It will not be recognized.

It will not be valued. You may do the things that are pleasing in God's sight and from the world's point of view it has no weight at all. It isn't recognized.

Some foolishness, somebody else may do some completely illegitimate, non-integrity, vacuous, deceptive piece of foolishness and the ticker tape parade begins. That's under the sun side. The other side of that same coin that is also in the context is one floaty can ruin a whole bowl of punch and we can work hard at gaining wisdom and honor as a believer but one area of sin, one area of failure, one place where we are not diligent can tip the scale.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Now this is not so much set in an individual application

context, is it? Because I looked very closely at the Hebrew of the last verse of chapter 9 because it would seem to make sense that one sin would destroy much good but it's not one sin, it's one sinner and this is looking in a corporate context and I think about the reputation of the church in the modern day. We are believers and there are many believers who are doing what they're supposed to do.

They're learning the Word of God. They're being faithful. They're growing.

They're fulfilling the plan of God but the shout of the fool is what gets heard. If there's a fool in the church, that's the one that the press is going to pick up on. It used to annoy me to no end when there would be some act of violence and they would say, ex-Marine rapes and kills or ex-Marine on building with rifle.

It wouldn't matter. The guy could have been in the Marine Corps for two years, 20 years ago but because he's done this act of violence, he's an ex-Marine and the whole Marine Corps suffers because of this loony bin that they probably got rid of after two years because they could tell he was a loony bin. What's one of the first things you find out about Lee Harvey Oswald? He was a Marine.

That's where he learned to use his rifle. It reflects how many great Marines who have spent 20 or 30 years sacrificing themselves on behalf of their country and on behalf of the Corps go completely unnoticed and one guy... This is the idea. So I don't think it is so much that the divine good or the fruitfulness and the production that you have in your life when you do right and you're faithful gets negated and obviated by sin.

That's not what's in view here. He's talking about in a corporate context. It's the poor man in the city.

It's the sinner, not the sin, that destroys much good. So you can have a lot of people doing right and one guy ruins it for everyone. You have a whole class full of students sitting quietly, two girls in the back start yakking to each other and everybody has to stay late.

This is my experience back in junior high. That's the idea here. He's looking at corporate life.

This, in the first instance, is life in Israel. You can speak wisdom. He's calling people to wisdom and people respond, but it's the one bad apple that's going to spoil the whole barrel.

That's what's going to stick out. It's going to be the shout of the fool that's going to be heard rather than the quiet words of wisdom. So what does this remind us of? What's the application? Think about David in Psalm 62.

He starts out squaring himself away and squaring his own soul away when he sees that people all around him are being deceptive, they're attacking, they're tottering fences, they are leaning walls, they are vapor, they're lighter than vapor. He says, I need to function with integrity. I

remember God as my rock and my defense and my salvation.

But you have to recognize at the same time that the shout of the fool is what's going to be heard. Don't expect that when you achieve a victory of faith that it's going to be shouted from the housetops, that it's going to be recognized. You can have a whole pot of perfume and a couple of flies of death falling into it.

Nobody's going to want to look at that perfume. Nobody can see past the flies. The church, the true church, those who are walking the narrow road, trying to go through the straight gate that leads to life, are going to constantly be overlooked and ignored and set aside in the eyes of the world because of the actions of a few, because of those who are foolish.

And just a little foolishness will make invisible a lot of good. And that's true in our lives as well. When you think in terms of witness, which is a valid thing to keep in mind, people are not going to remember your years of faithfulness.

They're going to remember your screw-ups. Another saying in the Marine Corps that I again will have to amend for public consumption, it only takes one oh-no to eliminate a thousand attaboys. You can have a thousand attaboys, but the first time somebody says, oh no, all your attaboys are forgotten.

So what is this telling us? It's a call to consistency. It is a call to faithfulness regardless of what people see, regardless of what people say, regardless of how your wisdom and the glory of God is obfuscated by the flies of death. Don't give up.

Remember that power rests with God. God has salvation. God has deliverance.

God is faithful. God never fails. People will fail.

People will dive-bomb into the ointment like a dead fly, but don't let it spoil your appreciation for the ointment. Don't let it cause you to swerve from a faithful path. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see what it means.