

02-04-28b Ecclesiastes

Let's resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 10 and we're trying to step back just a bit and review the flow of thought in the book. There's been so much said about Ecclesiastes. You pick up any commentary, any set of notes, and people say, oh, it's kind of like the Proverbs in places where it's disconnected and it seems to jump from subject to subject and not make a lot of sense.

This book seems that way if you can't follow the thread of his thought, which is often missed. Part of it is translational difficulties. Part of it is because if you don't have a background, I think we're very fortunate and very blessed to know from other places in the Word of God why God has us here.

If you really don't understand God's calling, which is to be holy in our daily life, to be holy in the little things, if you think that spiritual life is a certain set of activities that take place in certain contexts at certain times and the rest of life is just sort of preparatory or following after or just trying to maintain a good witness so that you can do those few things, then there isn't any way to understand Ecclesiastes because he is in the Old Testament hitting essentially New Testament truths about the importance of laying up for yourself treasure in heaven. That wasn't an easy thing to come to in the Old Testament age because the purpose of the law was to present the problem. It's like when you go to the doctor nowadays or the dentist, either one, if you go to somebody who is going to do some work on your body, the first thing they have to do is diagnose.

They have to look and expose the problem and figure out what is causing the problem. Then you can say, let me explain to you what the problem is and then you'll be ready to accept my treatment. If somebody just walks up to you and says, hey, I need to cut your abdomen open and remove some organs, most people are not just going to jump on that and say, oh, you want to do major surgery, knock me out and take out some of my innards, fine, let me just lay down here, give me a shot and go for it.

We want to know why is this radical thing necessary? What is the problem that this is required? That's what the law did. The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, Paul says. What does that mean? What did we find out in Romans? Through the law, sin revived and I died, Paul says.

That's what exposed the problem. It showed me that I was dead. It showed me how sinful I was.

It revealed how inadequate and impossible it is for human energy to live in a way that pleases God. That's what the law did. Christ is the answer.

The age in which we live is the culminating age, the culmination of all of the progress of God's unfolding revelation of His grace and His purpose in Christ. It is a demonstration to us and to the angels of the manifold wisdom and the manifold grace of God. The entire sentient creation of God learns from what's going on in the church.

We are going to be the Old Testament for Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. Did you ever think about that? All of these reversals that happen in scripture, we look back at the Israelites of the Old Testament and they are our examples. Their stuff is written for our instruction.

Well guess what? When they get resurrected and they're living in the Millennial Kingdom, the church age is going to be their Old Testament. They're going to have the New Covenant and they're going to have the Old Old Testament and then they're going to have the Old Testament because they are going to be looking back and learning about the life of ministry from God the Holy Spirit and having the heart of flesh and having the law of God written in their hearts that we enjoy now, that's going to be how they are made complete. We're in the not too distant future going to be doing quite a detailed study of the Millennial Kingdom and we'll be seeing all of the scriptures that teach that.

But suffice it to say, if you could imagine going back and being an Old Testament saint and as you live your life and make your decisions, the Old Testament writers are recording it. It's going into the book of 2 Samuel. It's going into the book of Numbers.

It's going into the book of Kings. It's going into the record of Ezekiel and Isaiah. You think all these kings, regardless of what actually befell them in their life, if they had any knowledge that it was going to be recorded and that millions upon millions of the people of God would be looking at that and being instructed by it, would they have lived any differently? Would they have chosen any differently? If they could have the perspective that we have now as we look back at them.

We have the opportunity to have that perspective now because most of our life, 99.999 ad infinitum of our life is ahead of us. It's beyond our departure from this life. But we don't remember it.

We think it's mostly about what happens here and there's pie in the sky by and by, but mainly the grist and the big important things are happening right now. Solomon is calling us to remember something different. We've already seen chapter one.

The broad context is laid out. Here's the earth with its relatively unchangeable cycles and seasons and so on. If you look at it, there's nothing man can do.

He can't level the mountains. He can't fill in the valleys. Although you look at road construction in this country, I think they sure have made progress in that area.

But what is crooked cannot be made straight. We saw this movie as a part of the girls' history education cast a giant shadow with Kirk Douglas and John Wayne and Yul Brynner and cast of many luminaries from 30, 40 years ago which was about the establishment of the Jewish state, the nation of Israel in 1947-1948. It purports to be a fairly accurate record of events and people that were involved in that process.

It was, I think, very instructive for the girls to realize and to get at least a glimpse, a Hollywood-type glimpse of what that tiny nation faced at its inception when the British pulled out. But at one point, Jerusalem is under siege and they are being starved out and they've got to find a way to get supplies in and they have to make a road in a place where there is no road and all of the engineers say it's impossible to build a road. But they do the impossible and they build this road and it's a seemingly insurmountable obstacle.

Well, our lives are filled with obstacles like that, but with God all things are possible. And Jesus in our Luke study on Friday nights has been teaching the disciples about the fact that if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, it doesn't depend on how much faith you can generate. If you've got any faith at all and you aim it at the Word of God, if you're looking at life from God's perspective, you can claim things that are a part of God's plan and all of God's divine power is available and will make those things come to pass.

The key is knowing the plan and purpose of God and this is where it is so sad it just makes you want to cry sometimes to listen to the radio. Christianity has gotten itself all over the media. We've got TV, we've got networks, we've got satellite broadcasts, we've got radio stations up and down the dial on AM and FM and sadly the people who manage to get themselves heard in the public forum largely don't know what they're talking about because they don't have an understanding of God's plan and God's purpose.

How can you yourself live and have a Yitron in your hand at the end of the day, much less tell anybody else? We have become the blind leading the blind and everyone is falling into the pit. Solomon in his day is trying to wake Israel up and say, you have got to look beyond now. This is the great pull in our culture.

If you want to talk about our culture, it's instant gratification, instant satisfaction. Why does everybody go buy a new computer every few years? Because the megahertz have gone up. I'm still amazed, the first computer when Patty and I got married we had a compact computer that thing ran at 8 megahertz.

People talk about having a Pentium 666 or a Pentium 1100 megahertz, that computer ran at 8 megahertz. It actually ran at 6 and in the turbo mode it ran at 8 and that was fast. Most IBM PCs only ran at 6 megahertz with an 8086 processor or an 8088, but the compact was one of the first to have a turbo mode and they clocked it up to where it would run at 8 megahertz.

It had a monochrome screen and you could word process, you could do spreadsheets, you could do financials. People ran businesses off of that machine, but Intel and AMD and the others come out with processors that are faster and faster and every time something faster comes along everybody upgrades, why? They keep writing software that will run on the faster machines and then you've got to get a faster machine and then the software goes slow and you've got to get a faster machine and then they write more burdensome software and it's just endless, but it's

because we want it to happen now. I don't want to see the hourglass on my screen, I want to click something and there it is.

I want to get the answers, I want to move on, I want to do something else. With all of our labor saving, again this 1883 thing, you look at how long it took to prepare a meal, how long it took to get food because you had to grow it or shoot it or trap it or catch it. We can go down to the store and get stuff that it took them all day to get.

We can wash our clothes in a fraction of the time, we can prepare our meals in a fraction of the time and yet we are so busy that we just drop at the end of the day in exhaustion. Why is that? Because we're never satisfied. It's like my dad says about flat surfaces in your house, you can get furniture and get flat surfaces, get all kinds of tables and things and your stuff will expand to fill the available flat surfaces.

If you have a small desk, then you'll have a small cluttered desk. If you have an enormous desk, they used to call it the BMD at Fort Sill and we were teaching people to say, well there's a BMD out there as a target for artillery, well BMD is Big Mahogany Desk. You can have this giant desk and guess what? It will be just as cluttered as the small desk.

Stuff expands to fill any horizontal surface you have, it's just a law of the universe. Our lives, when we get more time and we save time in one place, then we cram stuff into it and we're still so busy we can hardly turn around. We have to be delivered out of this present evil age.

That evil in Galatians chapter 1 is the same kind of evil that Solomon is talking about. It's the evil answer that God has built into life. God has designed our circumstances to make us look up.

That's what he did for Israel. Every time they quit looking up and started looking around, getting in with the pagans and getting in with distractions and not being obedient, God hammered them with divine discipline, national discipline, plague, famine, disease, pestilence, captivities, sent prophets to warn them and call them and convict them, rebuke them, live out the poor prophets. You've got to feel sorry for the path.

He's been going through teaching the kids on the Thursday afternoon class about the different prophets having to go bury their underwear and dig it up and wear it and lay on their side and shave off half their beard and do all of these strange things for months on end, marry prostitutes and put them away and find them in the slave market and bring them back and marry them again and all kinds of strange things. Anything God could do to try to wake Israel up to the fact that they had to live for him. Well hopefully God is not going to have to go to those extremes for us.

We should try to catch this message. So Solomon calls his generation to this and God today calls us through this inspired scripture to do the same thing. There is wisdom and knowledge and it is the key.

Without it we cannot lay hold of that Yitron prophet that God is calling us to, but wisdom and knowledge are not in and of themselves the answer. Solomon is great about balancing his statements. He talks about the wise man's eyes are in his head, the fool knows not at what he stumbles, he is constantly bumping into things and tripping and stumbling in the dark, but when you look at life it happens to the wise man just like it happens to the fool.

So why was I then more wise? Well the answer is, are you looking just at this life where the same outcome happens to everyone? Why was I then more wise? The answer is because if I am truly wise, if it is wisdom from God, I have laid up treasure for myself in heaven. It is not measured by what happens in this soon to be forgotten, vaporous, stuff myself with wind life and culture and time. It all depends on if we redeem the time.

Another phrase from the apostle Paul, redeeming the time, why? Because the days are evil. It's an evil answer God has given the sons of men to be answered with. If you spend your life gratifying the flesh and declaring yourself good in your labor, you are going to wind up disappointed at the end because there is a difference.

This is something that came up in our Luke study and I didn't really point it out this past Friday night. You remember when Jesus told the parable in Luke 17 of the servants who are out in the field and they are taking care of the flock and bringing in the grain and he says when the master of the house, when his servants come in from doing that, does he say to them, sit down and eat and drink? And he says no, you gird yourself and serve me and prepare my food and my drink and after I have eaten and am satisfied, then you can eat and drink. Does he thank that servant? I think not.

In the same way, you, when you have done all that is commanded, you say we are unprofitable servants, we have done only what it was our obligation to do. Well, this is in the context of not taking credit for obedience and not taking credit for faith and that faith, as a mustard seed, lets God use his power and it is all the power of God. But yet, if we say we can't take credit for obedience, we can't take credit for our faith, what about the people that Jesus said, I have not seen such great faith, not in Israel, your faith has delivered you, oh what great faith you have, and well done thou good and faithful servant.

So it seems to be something of a contradiction because in Luke 17 he seems to be saying, you should say I am an unprofitable servant, I have only done what I was obliged to do, I haven't done anything that makes me worthy of thanks or worthy of merit or worthy of reward, I have only done, no matter how much I do, no matter how I kill myself in the master's service, I am an unprofitable servant, I have only done what I was obliged to do. And yet elsewhere Jesus commends people for their faith. So which is it? Well we have the very same thing here in Ecclesiastes chapter 2 as we have in Luke 17.

Who is doing the saying? Who is doing the pronouncing? If I myself pronounce my soul good in

my labor, I have nothing to show at the end of the day. It's when God pronounces me good. If I have accumulated my own wisdom and knowledge and I'm using it in my own agenda, I'm going to have nothing to show at the end of the day.

But if God has given me wisdom and knowledge and joy, I'm going to have an inheritance. Who is doing the declaring? Who is doing the saying? In Luke, Jesus said you as a servant should say, I am unprofitable, I have only done what I was obliged to do. If there is going to be any praise, if there is going to be any reward, let God say it.

Let God commend your faith. You don't commend your own faith and say, you know, like little Jack Horner who sat in the corner eating his Christmas pie, stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum and said what a good boy am I. We should not spend our time trying to commend ourselves. People used to, I remember when Bob Thieme was teaching on, he came out with the whole idea of super grace and talking about super grace believers and that you're a mature believer and you've reached super grace or you've hit the high ground or whatever it was.

And then people started saying, well, they tried to figure out if they were in super grace and if somebody else was in super grace, if they had reached maturity or not and how long would it take and how do I know if I'm in maturity. And to me, that whole mindset is the opposite of what is taught in passages like Luke 17 and Ecclesiastes chapter 2. We should not be sitting there trying to, we should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Are we being faithful? Are we being obedient? But to pronounce ourselves good and say, well, I've really arrived here, I've mastered this and I'm, you know, there's another idea that was floating around about spiritual self-esteem.

Self-esteem is a dangerous, dangerous thing. The transforming power of God is designed to deflate our over-inflated ego and our excessive pride. You know, pride was the original sin.

Pride undergirds almost all of the sin you find in humanity. And the whole idea of spiritual self-esteem kind of gives me the willies because we're not here to esteem ourselves and the word of God says, as it says here in Ecclesiastes chapter 2, verse 24, it is not good to be going through life, eating and drinking and seeing your soul as good in your labor. Whatever your labor is for, even if you're doing ministry, even if you're teaching the word of God or you're functioning in some capacity, exercising your spiritual gift, you don't sit there and reach around and pat your spiritual self on the back and say, well done now good and faithful servant.

It's not for us to say. Don't waste your time. We are to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith.

Am I being obedient? Am I using, availing myself of the grace and power of God that comes into my life through the word of God and the spirit of God? But not to look and say, well, let's see, yesterday, it seems like I did some pretty good things yesterday. Boy, you know, I think I really ministered. I think I was really a blessing to that person.

You know, I think God's really using me in a great way. And look at the impact I had on these people. Look how impacted they are now as a result of me being there.

And so on. Well, there is a lot of this dressed up in the emperor's new clothes going on in the church today, where in some form or fashion, it becomes known to you just how effectual and how wonderfully God is at work. I'm not talking about anybody here.

I'm talking about things I hear on the radio, things I hear when I'm circulating in denominational Christianity. It just, I think, you just wonder what is holding back the lightning of God that we fall into this trap. There is a big difference.

Let God do the evaluating. What should our attitude be? I have done no more than what I am obliged to do. I am a sinner saved by grace.

Anything good that happens in my life, it only happened. What do I have that I did not receive? It's the Spirit of God. It's the Word of God.

I've just got to try to keep from sinning and screwing everything up. I've got to try to stay on the narrow path. I've got to back myself up with confession of sin and with trying to walk in the light and examining myself and meditating on the law of the Lord day and night.

I've got my hands full. It's kind of like, a lot of times in traffic, there are just, it's really kind of exciting. We were talking on the break about people who live on the edge in combat and in wartime.

When I was in Beirut, there was this kind of living on adrenaline from day to day. It's kind of that way in Dallas traffic. Because people are just, and it's in a way, I kind of enjoy it.

I've been places where everybody drives slowly and it's just so frustrating because you've got these Iowa drivers who just think they've got all day long to just plow through. I was surprised because many foreign countries, you know, you just have these devil-may-care. In Puerto Rico, everybody drives about 15 miles an hour.

It's like the day-long siesta. Nobody is in a hurry to get anywhere. If you drive, you know, coming from Texas, these people are just like pylons.

It's just like, well, you know, turn left, turn right, turn left, turn right, and I'm doing the limit. I'm doing the speed limit in kilometers or wherever I am. You know, in Mexico, things are in kilometers per hour.

You look at the speedometer, the rent cars there are calibrated the same way. You say, I just don't know, what's the matter with these people? They've got their parking brake on? But in Texas, see, people are just, everybody is in this immediate mode. You know, it's like, why waste time getting there? Let's get there and then do something, and I'm right there with them.

But you never know what people are going to do, and so you've constantly got to be alert and concentrate on just staying on the road and not having a wreck. Well, I think it's that way. It's an analogy in our Christian life.

I think of it that way anyway, that you have to devote all your... I can't think, boy, you know, that was a tricky piece of driving I did a minute ago when that guy pulled out in front of me and I, you know, dodged out of the way and I did this, that, and the other. I've done some pretty gymnastic driving. I've done some very impressive, you know, I did everything short of putting my car up on two wheels because people just do stupid things in traffic, and I have, you know, people who get superstitious say, well, now that you've said that this coming week, you're going to have a disaster.

But I've only been hit twice in my Texas driving career, and both times it wasn't my fault, and it would have been a lot worse if I wasn't the amazing driver that I am. But I can't think about what an amazing driver I am in traffic because you've got to constantly be concentrating on the current situation and trying to not mess up. You can't say, boy, you know, back there at Skillman and Abrams where all that traffic was, or down in the Mixmaster there south of downtown, boy, that was a tricky piece of driving.

I picked the right lane. I was in the fast lane and dodged over into the new fast lane and got back into the fast lane. I was by that green truck and he's a mile and a half back now.

You can't rest on your laurels. You have to be concentrating on what you're doing now. That is the point of Scripture.

That's what Jesus is saying, and that's what Solomon is saying about as we live our daily lives. Let's say we do achieve a spiritual victory. We actually hang on to our patience and we don't sin with our lips.

We actually avoid judging someone. We pull it off. We have a spiritual victory.

Having actually reached a place where the power of God gets implemented in our life and something good happens, we can immediately, you know, pride goeth before a fall, haughty spirit before destruction. Now we're going to look at that and say, you know, we kind of want to clasp it to our breasts and hold it near and say, wow, things actually worked. It just went well.

Jesus says, even when you do everything that's commanded to you, your attitude needs to be, I am an unprofitable servant. On my best day, I have only done what I'm obliged to do. It ought to be that way all the time.

I ought to have a minute-by-minute victory like that. Every single moment of every single day, I'm obliged to be holy the way God is holy. And so the fact that I get it right once in a while shouldn't give me a fat head and shouldn't start me looking over my shoulder at that great success so that I

run into a brick wall.

Well, the same thing is true. Yes, God commends faith. Yes, God rewards faith.

Jesus commended the Roman centurion. He commended the Syrophenician woman. He commended those who exercised faith, and there will be commendation for faith at the judgment seat of Christ.

But it is for God to commend. We don't do something well in the military and then go down to the PX and buy ourselves a ribbon and pin it on. Boy, you know, I don't know if anybody saw that or not, but I think that was worth an Army Commendation Medal right there.

You should have seen it. Man, nobody saw the late hours. I got that inspection.

We got a hundred percent thumbs up on everything. I'm going down and giving myself a Meritorious Service Medal. It's not our place.

It's not our call. That's what this scripture is saying. Yes, there is reward and there is recognition from God.

God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and your labor of love. But let God do the recognizing. Let God do the remembering.

We have got to concentrate our full attention on the traffic at hand or we will stumble and fall. And put the dead flies in that ointment. You've kind of built up a little pot of ointment there.

It's a pleasing aroma in God's nostrils. And then you turn right around and here come the dead flies. Flies of death dive bombing into your ointment.

And a little foolishness can spoil a great amount of wisdom. So don't sit there and treasure your newfound wisdom. We're unprofitable servants.

We've done no more than what we're obligated to do. That should be our attitude. Let me see if I can get this next one right.

Well that is the message of Ecclesiastes Chapter 2. It's really sort of a New Testament truth. But remember Solomon is just pushing his face against the glass of the Old Testament age. And he's saying, you know, I can see this coming.

I can see God's... I can just get a glimpse through the mist on the glass of what God is really doing in history. And it is so important for us to see past this earthly life. It's not just sorting and folding the laundry.

It's not just keeping the car maintained and getting to work and drawing the check and paying the bills and raising the kids and all of that. We've got to look through the glass and see those things

that are to come. So when you get to Chapter 3, he returns and he sort of repeats the theme of Chapter 1, the first part of Chapter 1 in New Clothing.

Chapter 1, it says all of these things are cyclical, doesn't it? It says, you know, the wind and the waters and all these things, the sun rises and sets. In Chapter 3, he brings that down to our earthly life, doesn't he? He says, to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose. And this is a right time.

And these are actions. Now we're not talking about the irresistible forces and the immovable objects on planet Earth. Now we're talking about things that have to happen in life.

People are born and die. That has to happen. Planting and reaping has to happen.

Killing and healing has to happen. Breaking down and building up has to happen. We've just seen it in Ecclesiastes Chapter 10.

You've got to break down the wall before you can build up a new one. You've got to dig the foundation before you can quarry the stones and lay them as a foundation. The wise man is going to build his house on the rock.

Well, you don't just lay those rocks on the ground. Did you ever see somebody just lay a layer of bricks on the surface of the dirt and then start building a house on top of it? You've got to dig a foundation and lay your foundation on bedrock. Well, there's a time for that.

There's a time for breaking down the wall and there's a time for building up the wall. There's a time for weeping. There's a time for laughing, mourning, all these.

These are the grist of our daily meal, aren't they? Solomon says this is what God has put in front of us. He doesn't say sit in Bible class eight, ten hours a day. Well, then he returns to the initial question in verse nine.

What profit does a man have? What profit does the worker have from that in which he labors? I have seen the answer God gives the sons of men to be answered with. Very same thing he said in chapter one, but he's bringing it closer to home. We were talking about the planet and the wind and the waters and the sun.

Now we're talking about my daily tasks. Where's the profit? Where am I going to make my permanent mark in this environment? God has made everything beautiful. Remember we studied this in detail.

God has put eternity in our hearts. We know that that mark has to be made in some eternal realm. I know that there's nothing good for them rejoicing and seeing their soul as good.

It's not our pronouncing of things as good that counts, it's God's. That is from the hand of God.

Whatever God does is forever.

If God pronounces it good, it's going to last beyond. It's going to last forever. So we've got to adjust our thinking.

We've got to evaluate even the mundane things. I mowed the yard yesterday. Well, how do I look at that action? It's something I did last week, may have to do next week, maybe even twice a week, depending on how much rainfall we have and how shaggy it gets.

What's my evaluation of that? Did I do it to please myself? Did I do it to please somebody else? Did I do it because I don't want people thinking badly of my lawn? Or did I do that mundane activity, heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, and turn a completely mundane repetitive task into something that actually has eternal weight? Let me ask you a question. How many churches in the United States of America today do you think are going to find that point from the Word of God being made? How many believers do you think are going to think about the fact that you can glorify God and store up an eternal weight of glory by washing the clothes faithfully, doing the dishes faithfully, setting the table and preparing the food faithfully, doing the mundane ordinary tasks and yet the Word of God is shot through with it? How do we miss that as a modern church? How do we miss that as believers individually? We miss it because we are too much in this life. Because we do not look at what God says is good.

We look at what we say is good. I am satisfied. I have to rip that page right out of the hymnal.

There is a hymn called I am Satisfied. What we are satisfied with totally doesn't matter. We can say it.

This truth has come up repeatedly in Ecclesiastes. It is the doing of it that we are obliged to. We are obligated as servants of God to do this.

We have to find a way to make it happen. How can we remind ourselves of this? We can't actually remind ourselves because we don't have the strength to pull this off. We cannot raise our eyes.

We are like the Samaritan in the ditch. We don't even have the power to lift our eyes. How do we accomplish the plan of God? How do we get that well done, good and faithful servant? It is the power of God that does this, the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

We are engaged in the activity of implanting the Word of God in the soil of our souls right now, but we have to come back and water it. We have to nurture it. We have to revisit it and pick the weeds out from around it and let it grow.

This is the importance of meditation. Think about this past week. We have had Bible class.

We didn't miss any, so we have had four forty-minute lessons once we finish here today in this

past week, Sunday through Saturday or Monday through Sunday, whichever way you want to measure it. We had four forty-minute sessions. Outside of that, how much time did we spend meditating on Luke chapter 17 or Ecclesiastes chapter 10 or any other portion of the Word of God that is stored away in our souls? How many different verses and chapters of the Word of God have we studied in the last years of our lives? How much of it did we bring forward and make a part of our conscious thinking? Hopefully we have done some of that.

We are not totally destitute and barren, but did we do it enough? Did we do it every day? Did we start the day by maybe getting up ten or fifteen minutes early, spending some time in prayer and trying to warm up the pump of the promises, principles and doctrines of the Word of God that ought to be cycling through our soul? We cannot redeem the time. We cannot convert mundane tasks into eternal weight of glory without the divine engine hammering away in our souls. You've got to turn the thing on.

You've got to fire it up. That is a volitional decision that we make. The power comes from God, but faith is a volitional choice.

We choose to believe. Patti brought up a wonderful passage in this regard when we were talking about faith in Luke. We were driving home and she said, well, you remember the guy that had the son that was ailing and he brought him to Jesus and Jesus said, if you have faith, all things are possible.

And the guy said, Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief. He made the decision.

He wanted to believe. He said, Lord, I believe as much as I can and to the extent that I'm not yet believing, help me out here. That's a volitional choice and the power of God kicks in.

Did it happen? Was that request answered? Well, look at the man's son. Was he healed or not? Jesus said, if you have faith, this is possible. The man said, Lord, I've got faith.

Help me where I don't have the faith. Power of God. That request, that issue was resolved and it's a volitional choice.

We have to choose. We have to stop and think. We have to wake up and smell the eternal coffee that's brewing here because there are larger issues than just did I get my stuff done.

So that's what chapter 3, God has put good and beauty into this life. Good of eternal value. Beauty that transcends.

Good that is beautiful. Remember that tov that is yaffe? The good of intrinsic eternal value is possible to bring out of this mundane, cursed, crooked, unfulfilled life. God has done that.

God uses circumstances time and again to force us to this conclusion. He turns us, just like he turned the nation of Israel, to consider our obligation. We are obligated to do this.

But many times, the more we are afflicted in circumstances, the more we start worrying about those circumstances. Israel, under pressure, a lot of times just got to feeling sorry for themselves and became even more dissolute, even more disinterested and apathetic, and instead of being turned toward God, they just started railing at God. God, how could you let this happen to me? I've been bringing the sacrifices.

We gilded your temple. What do you want from me, type of thing. Well it comes forward in chapter 4 to talk about what people do to people.

Man's humanity to man is what I like to call it. People always say, oh man's inhumanity. It's man's humanity.

When we oppress each other and afflict each other, that's humanity. That's what humans do. It talks about jealousy in 4.4, it talks about ambition in 4.7, it talks about the value of having a friend, and these things are good in the short term.

You fall down, a guy can pick you up, you've got a partner there to help you through. But again, it's all going to vanish at the end of life if you haven't invested in eternal things. Because in verse 13 of chapter 4, he says, you know, this loyalty, this friend that picks you up when you fall down, that loyalty is fickle.

It doesn't always last. So even if you cultivate these things that seem wise in the world, here you've got a guy that started out poor and he becomes king, but the subjects quickly forget him and their loyalty will vanish before his reign is even over with. I think he was probably thinking about his father David.

He was a youth who came from poverty to become king, but how quickly they defected to Absalom and got disaffected with David. So then in chapter 5, he says, concentrate on cultivating God's approval. When you come before God, let your words be few.

Don't come in there spewing and dreaming your dreams and manifesting your foolishness in many words. Let your words be few. Keep your commitments to God.

Put that above everything else. Fear God, in verse 7, because if you get caught up in wealth, you're going to find that wealth is not secure. There's no security in wealth.

There are hazards in possessions, 13-17 of chapter 5. He comes down to verse 19, again in chapter 5, it is God's approval that counts. He's going to return to that like a ringing bell time and time again through the remainder of the book. Fear God.

It's God who gives wealth with capacity. The man to whom God gives these things and the ability to appreciate them, he's the one that has really lived a successful life. Chapter 6 talks about wealth without capacity.

You worry over it, you don't have the ability to appreciate it, what's going to happen after you're gone, you leave it to somebody and they don't do the right thing with it. We've got to disentangle ourselves from the tar baby of this life and remember who we are and why we're here. It is a constant challenge, but we have the complete power of God available to us in His Word and in His Spirit.

So when we come back to finish chapter 10 next time, we're going to see that Solomon is knocking at the door of New Testament truth, looking ahead, where will the full-orbed ministry of the Spirit come in? Where will the power of the Word of God come in to lift man out of mundane circumstances, to lift him out of his short-term view? That's what the career of the nation of Israel, that's what the law in the Old Testament does, is show us the problem and we should be instructed and educated by that and say, you know, that's not just those Israelites thousands of years ago, that's me yesterday and today and I don't want it to be me tomorrow. How do we measure the fruit of each day? We want God to declare it good. God looks at His own work like He did in creation and says, I see it, it's Tov.

Tov, that is, Yahweh. It's beautiful. That's what God can do in our lives if we decide to live the life of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You for the admonition and the correction and instruction and righteousness that Your Word gives us. We know that we are easily diverted and easily distracted and easily caught up in the affairs of this life.

We know that You have left us in this world to face the daily tasks and challenges and situations in order to learn to live by faith, to exercise faith in these different situations. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of our heavenly citizenship, of our heavenly calling and obligation. We pray that Your Word, resident in our souls, will surface and incorporate itself in our judgments, our priorities, our values, our goals, so that we do live each day heartily as unto You.

And in so doing, we know that we reflect the glory of our Savior and we vindicate His work on the cross on our behalf. We pray that He will be glorified both now and in the age to come. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.