

02-05-19b Ecclesiastes

Let's resume our study now at the beginning of Ecclesiastes chapter 12. I missed the musical portion of our worship this morning with Dan being off doing his military duty, but we have the mention of music being silenced here in the passage, so we have a little bit of an illustration of it here in our own service this morning. But take a look, if you will, at the printout I have handed you of Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

He goes on from what we reviewed in the first session this morning to say, And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, while yet the evil days do not come, and the years strike that you will say, There is not to me or for me in them a desirable goal. And you'll see the Hebrew word there, which we have seen before. That was at the beginning of Ecclesiastes chapter 3, the most famous part of Ecclesiastes.

It made a song out of it to everything. There is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven, and that word purpose is And is the word that we, you remember the last words of David? We went over and we saw that he said, Not all of my desirable goals were caused to sprout. They were there, they were incipient, they were desires and goals, but they didn't flourish.

They didn't put out branches and buds and bear their fruit. But he says, I know God will bring them to pass in the future. Here's David on his deathbed about to check out, and he says, You know, I had a lot of things that I hoped to see.

I wanted to see the branches and the leaves and the fruit, and I didn't see them. They were chepets, they were desirable goals. And they were not caused to sprout, but I know that God is going to bring them to pass in the future.

Well, how can he say the future when he's on his deathbed? Because he knows about the resurrection. He knows that after the setting of the sun, of his life, that there is going to be a time of return. There's going to be a time of growth and plenty.

Well, this is the word we have here. The years may come in the future when we say, You know, there just aren't any desirable goals left to sprout. And he says, While yet are not darkened.

And I'm giving you a really literal translation here. This is how the Hebrew comes out. Some of your English translations turn this, they say, before something does happen, where the Hebrew says, While yet it has not happened.

And there's a subtle emphasis there. He's saying, These things have not yet happened. You know they're coming, but before they happen, they have not yet happened, you have the opportunity to exercise these things that will one day be gone.

He says, and we just had a discussion about this during the break, about the symbolic value of

something having a near reference in the literal world and then a higher or spiritual reference as well. So take a look at this passage. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

While yet the evil days do not come and the years strike that you will say, There is not to me in them, in these days, a desirable goal. While yet are not darkened the sun and the light and the moon and the stars and the clouds return after the rain. In the day that the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men are caused to be crooked and the grinders cease because they are greatly diminished and the ones looking in the openings are darkened.

And the doors are shut in the street and the sound of grinding is made low and one will arise for the sound of a bird and all the daughters of song are muffled. Also they fear a height and terrors in the way and the almond tree blossoms and the locust burdens himself and the caperberry crumbles. For men walks to the house of his ages and mourners go about in the street.

While yet the silver cord is not loosed and the golden bowl is crushed and the pitcher at the fountain is shattered and the wheel at the well is broken. And the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Well, it doesn't take a great leap of imagination to see that this is talking about the onset of old age.

And you've seen I've put some annotations in there as to what some of these things represent. While yet are not darkened, in verse 2, the sun and the light and the moon and the stars and the clouds return after the rain. Well, what does it mean for the sun and the light and the moon and the stars to be darkened? At first we might think, well, this is talking about the clouding up of eyesight.

It would be like cataracts where you can't see as well. But in reality, we have that mentioned here, but what is it that you can no longer see? It doesn't say the face of your beloved is no longer seen or the face of your children becomes blurry or you can't see the horizon. It says specifically that what's darkened is the sun and the light and the moon and the stars.

What does that put us in mind of? Where are these things all mentioned together in the easy part of our memory? It's back in the creation account, isn't it? In the first few days of creation where God said, let there be light, God separated the light from the darkness. And here we have the words for light and darkness. And in the second half of the creation week where He said, the greater light will rule by day and the lesser light by night, and He created the moon and the stars.

And He says they are for signs and for seasons and for days and for years. What do these sun and moon and stars do? They provide guidance. They are the measure of time.

In the ancient world they didn't have a Seiko they could look at on their wrist. They didn't have a little cuckoo clock like we've got in the kitchen. They didn't have pendulums and clock mechanisms.

They measured time by the light, sundial at best. And this is the sun. And at night they kept track of the seasons by the phase of the moon and that sort of thing.

So when those are darkened, you lose track of time. You don't have those signposts and those guiding stars. Navigating at night by the stars when there's not light to see where you're going, people would say, well, I'm heading south because I can see the stars that guide me.

I've got the Polaris at my back and so on. So what does it mean? It's confusing. You lose your way.

You don't have the measures and the signposts, the signs and the seasons and the days and the years that you had so clear vision of when you're young. It's a little confusing. Where am I going? What's my destination? I don't really see my guiding star like I used to.

He says, remember your Creator in the days of your youth. The word here for youth, it does mean youth, but it comes from a root that means to choose or to be chosen. Bachar, B-A-C-H-A-R, means to choose in its root form.

And this noun that comes from the verb, why is it used for youth? Because sometimes you see this in the Old Testament. It talks about in Exodus or something where they're going forth to battle and it says the chosen men of Israel went forth to battle and so on. Well, these are the vigorous ones.

You choose them because they are the most capable. They're the ones that have all of the skills and have the vigor and the strength and they're capable and so they are chosen. And so the choice time of life is when you're young and you have all of your faculties and your mind hasn't gone yet and your knees aren't creaky and your back's not out.

Do you want to send a guy with a bad back out to fight your battles? Oh, wait a minute. Can you stay there for just a second? I just got to get... I mean, you know, you don't send your old creaky people out. You don't say, well, we're going to build the walls and stuff and get your old guys with, oh, you know, if I lift that, I'll be bad for a week.

You know, you get the young people, strong back and weak mind type of thing. Well, he's saying, remember your creator. Now this word for creator, by the way, is very unusual because Solomon has referred to God in Ecclesiastes.

He's going to refer to him a total of 40 times. Forty times in Ecclesiastes, Solomon refers to God and he uses the term Elohim. Now, even in the little few facts that we know about Hebrew, we know that anything that ends in I-M is plural, right? Elohim, mayim is waters.

Elohim literally means gods. It's God in the plural and we call that the plural of majesty or the plural that talks about how ultimate God is. And it also has some resonance of the Trinity.

Remember back when God said, let us make man in our image and after our likeness. He wasn't looking around talking to the angels. We're not made in the likeness of angels.

We're made in the likeness of God. But the plural is used there and it talks about the magnitude of God. God is so big you can't fit him into a singular noun in some of these contexts.

We have some other passages where God is referred to in the plural. And I'll give you those here in a minute. But the point is that God is pictured here as your creator and it's bara.

But this is the plural and it literally says your creators. Remember your creators, but it's bara. And bara almost always in the Old Testament has God as the subject.

So when you find bara in the plural, it's a plural participle with a suffix on it that means your. It's boreka literally and ka means your. Wow, got a little tune going there.

God is the creator and it's in the plural. So he says remember your creator and it forces you back to Genesis because that's where we had let us make bara, man, in our image and after our likeness. And it is a reminder that we had an inception as a race and our birth is kind of like Adam being created out of the dust of the ground.

And he's going to conclude this section. You remember that the dust is going to return to the earth from which it came. And so this is taking us back.

It's pointing our attention back in the direction of Genesis. And that's why when you get to the sun and the light and the moon and the stars where we have Genesis as our referent and we say this is not just the ability to see the light, but it's what were those things created for? It is to measure off time and seasons. And the day is going to come where we're not going to have the facility with time management and with a sense of time and with knowing where we're going and what we have as our goal.

It is an easy thing. I've known many elderly people. I used to pastor a church in the town where most of the congregation and most of the people that I knew in that community were at a retirement facility.

And sometimes people say, you know, I was a missionary. I was a pastor. I was active in the ministry.

And now I'm old and I can't do those things anymore. I can't get around. I can't do anything.

And I don't know why God leaves me here. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say, elderly people say, I just don't know why God leaves me here. What is the problem with that viewpoint? It's just what we talked about in the first session this morning.

Measuring your effectiveness by what you can see. When you're young, you can engage in a

ministry. People have had ministries where people come down the aisle.

Or you have converts. You can number. You can size.

You can gauge. You can see the results of things that you do. You train or you exert force on something and you see the result.

And when you're old, a lot of times that's no longer the case. And so if you accustom yourself in your early days to measuring by what you can see, when you get old, then you absolutely can't see any effect. You say, why am I here? We have the same opportunity when we are incapacitated as we do when we're young.

If we understand that the measure of faith is going to return like those ships that come back after many days in the next life. An elderly person has more opportunities to trust because you don't have as much temptation to rely on your own strength and your own flesh because it's not there anymore. And if there's ever a time to learn to rely on God so that you're prepared for the time when you're incapacitated and your faculties and your abilities are limited, it's when you're young.

Remember your Creator when you're young. Learn to evaluate by the eternal standard now so that you don't get depressed and discouraged. And that's the end of the race.

I will never forget when I was at Fort Sill. The Marine Corps has the PFT, Physical Fitness Test. You have three things you have to do.

You do sit-ups, pull-ups, and a three-mile run. I don't know what they do now. That's what they did when I was in.

And you do them all one right after the other. So you start out doing sit-ups. And in order to max the thing at the time, you had to do 80 sit-ups in two minutes.

Well, if you think about it, you use a lot of your abdominal muscles when you're doing pull-ups. And so they make you do these 80 sit-ups. And so your abdominal muscles are all flushed out.

The strength and the snap is all gone out of those. And when you're not really supposed to use them anyway, it's supposed to be a dead hang pull-up. But a lot of people would kind of get the kip action going.

You know, you can kind of tense your abdominal muscles and help get your chin up over the bar. And so you do those. And by the time you finished, you had to get, what was it, 20 pull-ups, I think, without dropping from the bar to maximize your score.

So you've wasted your abdominal muscles with 80 sit-ups. And then you've wasted your arms and your upper body with these 20 pull-ups, dead hang pull-ups. And then you've got to go right over to the line and run three miles.

Well, at Fort Sill, where I spent a lot of my time, they had a course that was a mile and a half out and a mile and a half back. And the last quarter mile of that track, the first and last quarter mile, was this long. You came around a curve, and there's this long, flat stretch.

And you can see the guys with the little clipboard in their hand and their stopwatch and so on, keeping track of who left and who came back and what their time is. Well, you start out, and you've still got some strength in your legs. And so you run, and you're trying to go fast, and you get all the way down.

You turn around at the mile and a half mark, and you come back. And long about, for me at least, about halfway through that mile and a half back, you start realizing that, boy, you know, I'm starting to feel my arms. I'm starting to feel my abs.

I've used up that adrenaline and stuff that I had. And now it's just guts. It's guts to get to the end.

And so you turn that last corner. You can see the guy with his clipboard and the other little guy with his stopwatch. And you say, you know, now is the time when I need to kick.

I need to sprint. I've got to get a good time. I want to get in there and, you know, run a six-minute mile here and maximize the score.

Well, it's just not there. And you don't have what it takes to make that sprint. And people come gasping and dying and having all kinds of bad effects from overtaxing themselves.

But, you know, the point is you want to finish well. What does Paul say in the New Testament? I have run my race. I have finished my course.

And the implication is he finished strong. He pushed right through to the end. He didn't fade in the stretch.

What a shame to have a vibrant, fruitful Christian life all the way up until a certain point. And then you kind of lose your bearings. And you say, well, you know, I can't really do the things I was doing when I was young.

I was investing myself in my job or my kids or my ministry or whatever it is. People think they're investing themselves in. And then you get out there and that stuff's all kind of gone.

Things change a lot when you get up there in years. And if you haven't had practice in looking beyond this life, when you get there and there's not much to look at in this life, you're going to fade in the stretch. You're going to be out of gas.

You're going to lose sight of the sun and the moon and the stars that guide you and show you where the finish line is. And you're not going to have the strength to finish well. He says don't wait until you're old and then start trying to think about the Creator.

You've got to train yourself now. By extension, this is what we're doing in this life. We are young.

When you think about an eternal life, we're going to live for all eternity. So how old are we right now? We're in our youth. We're just barely getting started.

This is kindergarten for the eternal future. So when is the time to get ready for the future? When we get there or now? Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of salvation, it says, but it's talking about deliverance.

We've got to be delivered. We've got to learn to walk in faith. And the resistance and the pressures and the challenges that we face are there for a reason.

God puts them there saying you've got to build your faith muscles. You've got to push against this and grow strong. I was going through some things down at the Criswell Legacy where I am working and there was a poem that Dr. Criswell had cut out and put amongst his things.

And his daughter Ann, who I'm working with, found this poem. And she said, you know, this is my favorite poem. I want you all to read this at my funeral.

She's not going to be with us too long. And she said, I want you to be sure and read this. This is my favorite poem.

And I can't give you the actual verses of it, but I can tell you the gist. It's a relatively famous poem. You may have seen it.

It talks about somebody who was out for a walk on a summer day and they saw a branch that had two cocoons stuck to it. And so the author says, I snapped off the branch and brought it back with me and stuck it in a desk drawer. And then I forgot about it.

And weeks later, I opened that drawer and I found that one of the cocoons had opened and this moth, beautiful butterfly came out. It wasn't a moth, it was a butterfly. A beautiful butterfly of orange and raven hues or something came out and fluttered away.

And he said, I saw the other cocoon and the butterfly was still in there struggling to get out. And he says, I looked at it and I said, oh, poor butterfly, you're struggling trying to get out of this thing. And so he says, I took some little scissors and I clipped the threads so it could get out more easily.

And so the little butterfly crawls out and he staggered around for a little bit and his wings were all crumpled up and he tried flapping them and they wouldn't flap and he keeled over and died. And the guy said, I was such a fool because what I didn't realize in my effort to snip those threads and try to help that little butterfly, I took away the necessary struggle that butterflies go through that pumps blood into their wings and enables them to unfold so that they can fly. And he said, in my desire to take away that challenge and take away that struggle, I took away the butterfly's ability

to fly.

It's a beautiful poem. And by analogy, it is the struggles in this life and the silken bonds that hem us in in this life that we struggle against that is pumping life into our spiritual wings. So when should we remember our creator? It's now.

It's when we're in the struggle, when we are learning to focus on eternal things, look past the setting of the sun. That's what he's saying. Remember your creator.

And he's saying, remember Genesis? God cranked up this universe and put it into existence for a reason. Remember your creator in the days of your chosenness, in the days when you have been chosen to fight this fight and struggle in this struggle, before the onset of conditions that if you haven't learned those things, they're going to cause you to lose your way. If you don't learn it now, you will lose your way later.

He says, while yet the evil days have not come. What does evil mean in Ecclesiastes? Ra'ah. We've seen it so many times.

It means dismal. It doesn't mean evil in the moral sense. It means evil in the sense of there may be calamities.

There may be difficulties. There may be pressures. While you are young and vigorous, while you can see clearly, get your stuff in order.

Get your perspective and your viewpoint lined up while you can. Because difficult days are coming. And the years will strike.

This word says the years will come or whatever. But this is a word that in the Kal stem, the normal stem, means to touch. But it means to touch in the sense of harm.

And it comes to mean to strike so that it leaves a bruise. And it has the idea of arriving. When something touches, it means it comes and makes contact.

But this is bruising contact. And so a good translation here, in fact, some places in the Bible, it is translated strike. So these years, they don't just come.

These years strike. These years hit with impact. Where you will say, there is not to me in these years any capets.

There is no desirable goal. Ecclesiastes 3 said there is a time for this and a time for that. Time to be born and a time to die.

There is a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together. So on and so forth. Time to sow and a time to reap.

Well, if you don't figure this out now, the days will come when you say, there is no reaping or planting. There is no gathering or casting away. There is nothing I can do in this time that has any meaning or any value.

Well, there are areas and there are places in our lives, even when we are relatively young, where we say, you know, this is just hopeless. There is no desirable goal. Why is that? It is our perspective.

It is our viewpoint. What have we forgotten? We have forgotten that God put signs in the sky that we can still see. He put the sun and the moon and the stars as signs for days, for times and days and seasons and years.

And to focus on Him and to remember why we are here. So these symbolic allusions to the diminishment and the loss of physical functions. Look at what he says in verse 2. He says, While yet are not darkened the sun and the light and the moon and the stars, and the clouds return after the rain.

Normally, clouds come, you have a big storm. We had one Friday morning. It rained out the garage sale.

But after those clouds came and we had all this storm and lightning, what comes after the clouds and the rain? Sunshine. Cleared off, had a beautiful day, Friday afternoon. What happens if the clouds come and it rains and then the rain stops, but the clouds stay? Well, you don't get that refreshment.

You don't get the birds tweeting and the rainbow and the happy sunshine. You know, it just stays gloomy. The rain rained and it never did clear off.

It is like England. Have you ever looked at the climate in England? It is just always foggy and murky and overcast. It is no wonder those people are so sober.

The clouds return after the rain. This is talking about the idea of hope, of optimism, that there is sunshine that is going to cause things to grow and dry up the mud and all that. It just stays muddy and dank.

If you ever saw that Mel Gibson movie where he had blue paint on his face, what was that? Braveheart. You know, the whole first part of that movie is just always muddy and every place you look is just kind of dismal. Well, the clouds return after the rain.

Elderly people, you can see a lot of them, and they just kind of get into a state of depression from which they never rise. They don't wake up. Now, some are.

There are wonderful, cheerful little old ladies and things, but there are other people that are just kind of slogging through. I don't know why God is leaving me here. I can't do anything, can't see,

can't hear, can't walk.

I don't know why. Why doesn't God just take me home? I'm sick of this. And they get up in there in pain every morning, and you can sort of understand it if they're just looking around at physical things.

In the days that the keepers of the house tremble. Keepers, this is shamar, which means to keep or to guard, and these are your hands, the keepers of the house. That's what you clutch and grab things with, your keepers.

They tremble. How many old people have you seen? Their hand just shakes. And the strong men, this is anashim, men of nobility, men that are strong and virile.

And the word there for strength is there, kaseel. And then it says that they are caused to be crooked. They are twisted.

Your legs, you can't straighten them up anymore. You can't run. You can't hardly stand anymore.

People end up being in wheelchairs. The grinders, this is a feminine word that literally alludes to the women who take the grain and grind it up into flour so that bread can be made, so that you can put your bread on the ship and send it off. Well, the grinders quit showing up.

They're not there anymore. And the word that means to, they translate it as being few, but this means to become little or small. And you get the idea that not only are there fewer of them, but the ones that remain are not as big.

In the ancient world, they used to mix sand with the grain to help it grind up. And they dug up, when they get skulls of people from this time, they look at their teeth, and the older they are, the more worn down the teeth are because this sand over time literally sanded away their teeth. And older people, their teeth were just worn down to the nubs because of the sand that they chewed in their food.

And so their teeth are diminished in a lot of ways, numerically and just in terms of the substance of them. The grinders cease because they are greatly diminished. This is the word for diminished, but it's in the Piel, which is an intensive stem.

They are greatly diminished. And the ones looking in the openings are darkened. This opening is the word that's used when it says, the windows of heaven will open and blessing will come down.

Or in the flood, it says the windows of heaven were opened. But they didn't really have glass windows like we think of in Old Testament days. These were more like hatches or portals.

They might have wooden shutters, but they didn't really have glass. The Romans really started using glass, but this is a thousand years before that. So these are the openings that are

shuttered.

And instead of people looking in or out of the windows, they're darkened. And by the way, I put the verb here for darkened in verse 2. While yet are not darkened, the sun and the light. This is kashak, kashak, C-H-A-S-H-A-K.

This is a fascinating word because you remember over in Isaiah chapter 14 where it talks about how thou art fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. Well, the word Lucifer is heliel, H-E-Y-L-E-L, heliel, which means shining one, something that shines or glows or flashes forth, heliel. And it's related to the word halal, which means to praise, to cause to shine, to talk about somebody as a shining and glorious thing.

And it says how thou art fallen from heaven, O shining one, heliel, son of koshek. Koshek is the noun that comes from kashak, and it does not mean morning. It means darkness.

And I was very gratified. You know, I got my new lexicon here just a couple of weeks ago, and I looked at Brown, Driver, and Briggs, I looked at all these other lexicons, and they always talk about kashak, and they say it's the dawn. But when I look in my Hebrew scriptures and go over to Genesis, where it says Jacob wrestled with the angel until the morning, and as dawn was breaking, he said, I will not let you go until you bless me, and he touched him in the thigh and all this.

It says as the dawn was breaking. Well, this is as the koshek was halal. Halal means to lift up.

And so they always say, well, as the dawn was rising, as the light was... And this is where they get Lucifer, son of the morning. But I think Satan got in there and affected the translator so that he could appropriate a title that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is the morning star? Who is the bright and morning star? It's the Lord Jesus.

What does the Bible say Lucifer is? The shining one. He was a shining one when he was in the throne room of God, but now he is a son of koshek. What is it that lifts at the dawn? What do you lift up so that you can see the light? You lift the darkness.

You lift the koshek. And that's what this is here, kashak, the light is darkened. So just remember, next time you go to Isaiah 14, and you get into there to how thou art fallen from heaven, it's, oh, Lucifer, he is the son of darkness.

And don't let anybody tell you any different. Well, yet are not darkened the sun. And so when you get down here, the ones looking in the openings are darkened.

The eyes are darkened. You can't see through the portholes anymore. This is sort of like cataracts and things.

They didn't have any cure for that in the ancient days. Well, just like we were talking about on the

break, you look at Revelation, and you have these symbols of flying scorpions and things that have locusts and things that have the power to hurt and all that. And it has a literal correspondence to physical events that happen on the earth, whether it's an asteroid or something that hits the earth and causes this destruction or whether it's a nuclear holocaust or whatever.

There's some physical correspondence to these symbolic things. But if we just stop there, we haven't really gotten the value out of Revelation. The Bible was written for our instruction.

We are to glean spiritual truths from things that are talked about in the future just like they were talked about in the past. We see Israel coming out under the blood of the Passover lamb and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and eventually crossing the Jordan and going into the land. That all has spiritual application for us.

We are redeemed. We have to fight battles and learn and grow in the wilderness for those 40 years, 40 being the number of testing. Just like in Ecclesiastes, 40 mentions of the word Elohim.

What is the test? How do you grab a hold of that yetrone prophet in this life? It's a test. Are you going to pay attention to God or are you going to get caught up in the affairs of this life? Well, that all has spiritual impact and spiritual application for us. Same thing in prophecy.

Same thing here. This is in its first translation, if you will. You translate the metaphor into real terms.

We're not really talking about people peeping out the windows and somebody slams the shutters on them. We're talking about not ability to see anymore. Your legs grow weak.

Well, is he just saying be sure and do this before you get old physically? What are these referring to in the spiritual realm? We have to prepare ourselves now. You know the old thing of the ant and the grasshopper. The grasshopper fiddled all summer long while the ant was storing away food.

Then in the wintertime, the grasshopper is out there shivering, knocking on the door saying, Hey, Mr. Ant, why don't you let me in there and give me a snack? To take advantage of the opportunities we have now. Our Christianity is not pie in the sky, by and by. We have opportunities now while we can see, while the Word of God is made clear to us, while we have the challenges that we face.

Look at challenges as opportunities. They are not here to crush us. They are not here to enfeeble us.

They are here like the silk strands of the cocoon for us to struggle against, for God to pour His power into us, and for us to get used to exercising it and get used to measuring ourselves by His standard, the eternal standard, the standard that we will be judged by at the judgment seat of

Christ. We need to do that before these evil days come, because guess what? If you wait until you can't see where you're going anymore, until you can't stand on your own two legs, until your hands are shaky and your grinders are few, what are these things in the spiritual sense? What do the body parts represent in the spiritual sense? What are the hands? Remember the blood that was put on the earlobe and the thumb and the toe of the priest to sanctify what he heard and what he did and how he walked through life. The parts of the body represent areas of function.

What does it mean if your hands are shaking? It means that your ability to apply gets shaky. What was the thing said about Moses when he was 80 and 120 years old? His eye was undimmed. Why? Because Moses learned in his 40 years in Midian how to trust God, and that faith carried him through the difficult days of leading Israel.

We need to learn and remember our Creator in the days of our youth, while yet the evil days do not come and the years strike us, where we will say, there is no point to my life. And believe me, you don't have to wait until you get old. There are things that can enfeeble our hands now.

We can have things that give us shaky hands now. What about the legs? The strong men are caused to be crooked. Legs are walking through life.

Halak. How many times did we see that in chapter 1? The verb halak, to walk. It is our spiritual walk.

The days can come where our walk is interrupted and our legs are caused to be crooked. Why? Because we have not taken advantage and availed ourselves of the strength of God that is available to us. The grinders cease.

What do you do with your teeth? You chew your food. You take in your food. By lack of exercise, we can lose the ability to chew meat.

What does Hebrews chapter 5 say at the end? At such time as you ought to be teachers, you have need of one to teach you again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. You need milk and not solid food. You can't chew.

You've lost your teeth. Your grinders have become few. Don't wait for evil days to come and you get there with shaky hands and twisted legs and not enough teeth to get in there and chew the spiritual food that you need to be strengthened in the inner man.

And the ones looking in the openings are darkened. Remember in Luke when we studied, Jesus said that the light of the body is in the eye and if your light is darkness, then how can you be illuminated? How can you see if there's darkness on the inside? He said make the inside light and you'll be able to see clearly everywhere. So the doors are shut in the street.

The sound of grinding is made low. One will arise for the sound of a bird. Meaning you haven't

heard the song of a bird and you get up and you say, you know I used to be able to sit here in my breakfast nook and hear the birds and I've got to go up and try to go outside to see if I can hear the birds.

All of this is talking about deafness. And you can reach a point and people can paint themselves in a corner as they go through their life where they can no longer receive the instruction of the word of God. They become hard of hearing.

And why does Solomon devote four phrases to hardness of hearing? These others got one phrase each. But hearing the word, remember Proverbs chapter 2, incline your ear. Hearing is so important because it's what makes all of these others possible.

And so he devotes four different phrases to loss of hearing. The doors are shut in the street. Have you ever had this where there's all this noise outside? You can have this even outside your office or whatever.

You've got to get up and shut the door to block out the sound. He says now you want to hear the passing of people and the voices of laughter and children playing in the street but somebody's got up and shut the door. It's very muffled.

You can just barely hear it. The sound of grinding is made low. I was talking to somebody yesterday because in the garage sale we were trying to sell this rock tumbler.

Have you ever seen these rock tumblers? You get a little plastic thing and you put rocks in it with grit and then you run the thing day and night and day and night for days and weeks and weeks and weeks. And it got so irritating. Every time I would go out to the garage I'd say... It's the sound of grinding.

And it's very irritating. But if you go deaf, people would love to hear anything. Hey, I'll even take the sound of grinding.

Just let me hear something. But even the sound of grinding, which is a loud and irritating noise, has become muffled. Now I've known some people that were very happy to be deaf.

There was a man named Mr. Perky that used to live up near us in Rogers County, Oklahoma. And he had a hearing aid, but he kept it off pretty much all the time because he liked the silence. He said, you know, I like this.

It's peaceful. Wife starts talking, you know, just turn it off. Didn't have to hear it.

The sound of grinding is made low. And one will arise for the sound of a bird. You wish... Whatever happened to that sound of music and the sound of birds? You get up early in the morning and you hear that there are people that really enjoy that.

And they say, one will arise for the sound of a bird, but all the daughters of song are muffled. The choruses and the music, it's just dull. It's far away.

This is talking about hearing the Word of God. This is our spiritual refreshment of soul from hearing. And it's like music.

It refreshes. It restores. That's why the psalms, the 150 psalms, those are all lyrics to hymns.

I think it's going to be so great when we get to the Millennial Kingdom and David can play the tunes for us that went with those songs. And the sons of Korah and Asaph and all these other guys can play those songs and we can hear the music that was a part of the Word of God. They fear a height and terror is in the way.

You don't have any stability in times of threat or in times of pressure or in times of danger. Everything scares you. Everything throws you off.

You don't want to plant. You don't want to do anything because of the wind, because of the rain. You know how old people are.

Don't want to drive at night. Can't see. And even not so old people.

They fear a height and terror is in the way. The almond tree blossoms. Have you ever seen an almond tree blossom? What color are the blossoms? They're snow white.

The whole top of the tree turns nothing but white. What does it mean when the almond tree is blossoming? You've gone gray. You just look old.

Your physical appearance looks old. And you don't have to get old to be old in your thinking, to be worn out in your spiritual life and say, you know, I may look young on the outside, but my soul is 100 years old. And I just wish this life was over and I went to glory.

I just want to be like an angel with a trumpet hanging on a mobile over the baby's crib. I just want to be frozen in bliss in the eternal future. The locust burdens himself.

Grasshoppers are really light. One can land on you and you don't even know he's on your shoulder. But now even a grasshopper is heavy.

It talks about how you can't bear any weight at all. The slightest burden, the slightest challenge just throws you for a loop. The caperberry crumbles.

The caperberry was a stimulant. And instead of being a juicy berry that gets in your system and kind of gives you, it's like caffeine, instead of doing that, it just crumbles and dries and you can't even eat a caperberry, much less get any benefit from it. For man walks to his eternal home is probably not a bad translation.

I just give you the literal here because that's what the Hebrew says. For man walks to the house of his ages, olam ka, with the extension there for, it's olam o, actually. Olam ka would be your ages, but olam o, his ages.

And mourners go about in the street. There are people bewailing, oh, he used to be strong and virile, but now he's just got to write his obituary and put it in the paper because he's over with it. He's had the lick.

People look and say, you know, no more fruitfulness, no more productivity. We're mourning his passing. He's died.

He's non-functional. Well, we'll pick up in verse 6 next time, but the point here is now is the appointed hour. Now is the day.

We still have the chance to be invigorated and revitalized by the power of God's Word. We don't have to generate the strength. We don't have to pick ourselves up.

We don't have to shoulder the load of whatever circumstances face us. God is here and God is near. And Solomon says, look, before you get to the point where you're so overwhelmed with limitations that you can't even see the stars, you can't see to guide yourself and go in the right direction, you don't know which way is east and which way is west anymore, before you get discouraged, before you get overwhelmed in fear and trembling and incapacity, remember your Creator.

Remember that God formed you out of the dust of the ground and raised you up to reflect His glory. And He has equipped you and He's given you. He has chosen you.

You are Bahurim. You are chosen ones. You are invigorated.

You are youthful. You have the vitality that God makes available to you. Use it while you can.

And remember, you don't have to see the ships come back in. Trust God. God sees and God knows.

When you struggle against the cocoon and struggle and don't give up, you don't just lay there and say, you know what? A little too strong of a cocoon? I think I'll just lay here and die. You keep struggling until you burst free. That is what gives you the strength to fly.

That's what gives you the strength to extend your wings and reflect the beauty that God created in you. But we have to look to God. We have to do like the psalmist did in our scripture reading this morning and turn to God.

If we're discouraged, go to God. If we're struggling, go to God. Remember your Creator.

He has not forgotten us. He hasn't given up on us. We are still breathing and therefore we are still

in our youth.

We are not old and gray and gone until checkout time. If you are still alive, God has a plan for your life. God has made provision for your life.

All of the beans and bullets are in place to make that attack and achieve that victory. It's just up to us to remember the Creator. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank you for your grace and your faithfulness toward us. As Paul the Apostle said, even when we are faithless, you remain faithful because you cannot deny yourself. We know that we are the unique possession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We share His sonship, His status as your Only Begotten and Firstborn. We share His inheritance. We share His priesthood.

We share His destiny. All of those things are ours because we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death and His burial and His resurrection. We pray that we will be ever mindful that God the Holy Spirit will continue to impress on our souls the opportunity that we have each and every day, even if we don't see results, even if we don't see impact in circumstances or in time, to know that there is no thought, there is no motivation that is not unseen and is not unnoticed.

You are faithful to remember and you will reward the good and faithful servants. We ask that we will be good stewards of the things that you have entrusted to our care, that we will reflect the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name.

Amen.