

02-06-02a Ecclesiastes

How important it is for us to spend time in the study of God's word, in laying it up in our hearts. In Deuteronomy it says, These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. In Psalm 119.11, your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30.14 in Romans chapter 10.

What does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith which we preach. In Colossians he says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

We take a moment at the beginning of our worship in the word this morning to clear our minds, to be sure that we are in harmony with and susceptible to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, so that our time in the word will be beneficial not just today but tomorrow and the days following, that we have a source of strength hidden away in our heart that does shed forth the love of God and the grace of God in our hearts, that does give us the ability to resist temptation, that does guide us in right paths, that does enable us and empower us for all of the things that we are called to accomplish through faith in that word. So let's pause for just a moment and ask God's blessing on us as we study together. Father we thank you that even though the Lord Jesus Christ is not present bodily as he was in the days of his first advent, we have the powerful ministry of your spirit, we have the availability of your word as it has never been available before in history.

We thank you for the faithfulness of men as teachers and preachers who have spent a lifetime in studying your word and giving us a foundation and a groundwork to understand and to build upon. We thank you for the preservation of your word throughout the centuries in a miraculous way so that words that were written down by Moses over 3,000 years ago are still available to us as your inspired word. We pray this morning as we study and spend time in fellowship together in your word that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding even though we look at scriptures that were penned by Solomon so many centuries ago, we still find in them the power and the enabling strength to accomplish everything that you have called us to and called us for.

We pray that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified as we worship together. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 37. Psalm 37. This is subtitled in the New King James, The Heritage of the Righteous and the Calamity of the Wicked.

Our concluding study in the book of Ecclesiastes, the very last verse, in fact the very last words of

the last verse in Ecclesiastes, paint this contrast of good and evil, of righteousness and wickedness. And it seems fitting to see in this Psalm of David the blessing that God reserves for those who are obedient, those who are godly, and the fate of the wicked, however prosperous they may seem, it is short-lived. Psalm 37 begins this way.

Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness.

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret because of Him who prospers in His way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath.

Do not fret, it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall be no more.

Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth.

The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that His day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.

They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord, like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish into smoke, they shall vanish away. The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives.

For those blessed by him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.

I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken. Nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful and lends, and his descendants are blessed.

Depart from evil and do good, and dwell forevermore. For the Lord loves justice, and does not

forsake His saints. They are preserved forever.

But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice.

The law of his God is in his heart. None of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him.

The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more. Indeed, I sought him, but he could not be found.

Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright, for the future of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together. The future of the wicked shall be cut off.

But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord. He is their strength in their time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them.

He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them, because they trust in Him. It just doesn't get any clearer or any plainer than that. Well, let's return now to Ecclesiastes chapter 12, and we will find ourselves, before the morning is over, back at Psalm 37 to see a very interesting correspondence of vocabulary.

You may or may not have caught it in our reading, but I'll try to make sure we catch it when we return. We have been looking at Ecclesiastes chapter 12, this concluding section where all of the threads that Solomon has been weaving through his discourse and through his call to the righteous come together. You'll remember that he calls us to remember our Creator, chapter 12 says, Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth before the evil days come and the years draw nigh when you will say, I have no delight in them.

We have taken note of the fact that this is the strength and the ability that is associated with youth. And regardless of our chronological age, if we have opportunity and if we have ability to avail ourselves of the grace of God, to study the Word of God, to meditate on it, to apply it, then we are in the days of our youth. When you look at our life as an eternal span, everlasting into the future, what part of it are we in? Midlife? Maturity? Sessigenarian or septigenarian or octigenarian? We are in our youth.

And now is the time before the evil days come and the years strike where we say there is not to me in them a desirable goal. One thing I did not point out when we covered chapter 12, verse 1, is the mechanism by which those years come. In human life, old age is an inevitability.

If we survive without succumbing to an accident or some interruption of the normal three score and ten pattern of human life, we will all find ourselves facing the ravages of time, the influence of evil as it permeates creation in our human frame. We wither. We lose our abilities.

We grow old. Well, that is the metaphor in this chapter. That's the picture.

That's the allegory, if you will. But what does it represent in real terms? Or in spiritual terms? In the same way that age has a picture of what sin does in creation. Adam and Eve, if they had not fallen, had not partaken of the fruit, we in our resurrection bodies freed finally of sin and ultimately sanctified, will not age.

We will not wrinkle. We will not stoop and bend and lose functions and lose abilities. That is a consequence of sin.

So what does this metaphor teach us? In human life, evil days come and years strike where we can say there is not to me in them a desirable goal. I don't have the opportunity. I don't have the ability.

If you've known people that get up into their late 80s and early 90s and are ravaged with decrepitude, many times I've talked to many, many elderly people who say, you know, I'm not sure why the Lord is leaving me here. I just can't do anything. There is to me no desirable goal.

It's difficult to find and you can't concentrate and you can't remember and you can't get out and do. You can't avail yourself of even normal opportunities to do things. Why is that? Old age and its decrepitude is a result of sin.

In the spiritual realm, can we reach a point after living a life of not availing ourselves of opportunities and of God's Word and of the ministry of God's Spirit, can we reach a point where there is for us no desirable goal? We can. We have to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. People do, and it's a biblical principle.

It's unsavory. People don't like to hear it. People's back gets up when you teach it or preach it.

I've taken abuse in the past for pointing this out in Scripture, but it's true. There is a sin unto death. There is a pattern.

Bob Thieme put a title to it and called it reversionism and reverse process reversionism. Reversionism is just a slicking up of the old Baptist notion of being a backslider. You're going in the wrong direction.

You're like the children of Israel out in the desert longing for the leeks and garlicks and having no faith and complaining and Meribah in the wilderness. Well, what happened to that generation? Did they enter the land? Did they enter the land flowing with milk and honey? Did they go in and see the conquest of the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Archites and all the other Hittites and

all the other ites that dwelt in the land? They didn't get to experience that victory. They lost opportunity and they lost potential by a pattern of faithlessness, a pattern of apathy, a pattern of hopelessness.

They could not cling to the promise of God that they would enter into the land and it became a self-fulfilling attitude. Because they could not believe God for the fulfillment of that promise, they actually did not see the fulfillment of that promise. We can reach years that strike us where we say there is not to me in them a desirable goal.

It's sort of like spiritual old age. If we allow the ravages of sin to permeate our soul, our soul is like a little old person that doesn't have strength and doesn't have ability and cannot find a desirable goal. That's why we are called to remember our Creator in the days of our youth.

If you're listening to the sound of this, guess what? You're in the days of your youth. People are always looking for the oil of Olay and whatever cream it is that will keep you from wrinkling. People get chemical peels.

Your upper lip gets those little vertical creases all around it. You can go down and they basically splash acid on your lip and peel the outer layer of skin off and it takes those wrinkles out, takes those creases out. So people go down and it looks awful when they first come back from that, but over time you look at them and then their upper lip looks kind of different than the rest of their face because it's got this baby new skin there and it's not very wrinkly and, of course, unless you get your whole face done, why then you start having an incongruous wrinkle here and not a wrinkle there and you think, well, that's kind of an odd looking thing.

I've got wrinkles and folds and so forth. You want to keep youth. Well, how much more so in the spiritual realm? This is a call to maintain youthful vigor in your soul.

A pattern of half-heartedness, a pattern of slap-dashedness, of inconsistency, such as you see in the history of the nation of Israel, results in aging, in loss of ability, loss of opportunity, loss of strength. There may not be a fountain of youth. Who was it? Ponce de Leon or someone that kept looking around in Florida for the fountain of youth? There is a fountain of youth for the soul and it is the Word of God.

It is the power of God in His Word and in His Spirit. If you remember your Creator, you remember why you're here, your soul can stay youthful and vigorous and to your dying day, regardless of what happens in the physical realm, you can be claiming for yourself righteousness by faith right up until you take your last breath, regardless of what happens in the physical realm. The consequences, the effects of that are eternal.

You may get a peel and you may exercise and diet and do all of the things and you may be a very youthful 65-year-old or a very youthful 70-year-old or a very youthful 80-year-old, but sooner or later, when you pass away, bodily exercise profiteth little or a little, depending on how you

translate that, but it's going to vanish away with the flesh. We're going to leave this flesh behind. But the soul, that's us and it's us forever.

So I cannot emphasize strongly enough that when Solomon launches his final roundup here and he's collecting all of these threads and all of the thoughts that are presented to us here in this book, he says, when you think about that question, what profit is there to living under the sun? It is the development of the strength of your soul. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. We start out with so much potential, with so much ability, with so much opportunity.

Don't fritter it away. Don't age your soul until your eyes are darkened. He just got through telling us up in chapter 11.

Remember chapter 11 where he said it is sweet to see the light? Remember that? Up in 11.9, rejoice, oh young man, in your youth and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes and know that for all these, God will bring you into judgment. In chapter 12, he says, remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh for childhood and youth are vapor.

The childhood and youth that we have in this life are fleeting. Make use of them while you can because in the blink of an eye we are going to be in eternity and we are going to be in a status that is determined by the choices that we make and the priorities that we set, the goals that we pursue, the values that we cultivate in this life. There is a great stratification of believers in eternity.

Jesus talked about it over and over again. Many who are first shall be last. Many who are last shall be first.

All of the talk you hear about equality and created equal and all of that is not biblical. The Bible constantly distinguishes the elder from the younger and the blessings that go regardless of that beginning status to those who are the seed of Abraham by faith. Well, it is sweet to see the light.

Up in 11.7, truly the light is sweet and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun. Let him live for many years and rejoice in them all but let him remember the days of darkness that they will be many. Well, we have the opportunity to see the light.

We don't have to have our soul lapse into a state where the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain. That's when old age creeps in in the physical realm. You can no longer do things with your hands.

The keepers of the house tremble. The strong men, the legs, are caused to be crooked. The grinders, the ability to chew your food and to take in healthful, nourishing food, it becomes a vicious cycle because a lot of old people wind up getting malnourished and the grinders cease because they are greatly diminished and the ones looking in the openings are darkened.

We saw in Luke, just not too long ago, how important it is for the light of the body to be the eye. When you are light inside, everything is light. You don't want to be darkened.

The doors are shut in the street and the sound of grinding is made low. You can't avail yourself of it. You are no longer susceptible to that nourishment and the strengthening that comes from what God supplies.

This becomes people who are hard of hearing and hard of heart when it comes to the teaching of the Word of God. Not just its teaching, but the absorption and the digestion and the metabolizing of the Word of God into the heart. Hearing you hear and you don't understand.

Seeing you see and you don't perceive. It's illustrated so well in the pharisaic attitudes of Jesus' day. When you see this picture, people say, this is old age in the physical realm.

That's fine, but what does it mean? Why do I care about Ecclesiastes chapter 12? Because this decrepitude in the physical is a metaphor, it's a picture of decrepitude of soul. We start out as new believers, we start out in the faith with opportunity, with strength, with vigor, with whatever time remains to us that God provides. We've got to remember our Creator in the days of our youth.

Remember, I can't remember the first part of the verse in the New Testament where Paul is talking and he says, created unto good works? We as believers have been created. If any man be in Christ, he is what? A new creation. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. We are in our youth. Failing to get that engine going in our soul, failing to understand what life is about and to pursue heartily as unto the Lord, our calling results in aging and decrepitude and loss of opportunity, loss of ability.

The doors are shut, the sound of grinding is made low. One will arise for the sound of a bird. Paul talks about this in the New Testament.

Tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Flighty, impulsive, unstable. We were out here, Patty and I were talking this morning and heard this thump and a bird at high speed smashed into the kitchen window.

I had seen him coming. He was racing another bird. You know how birds will do.

The two of them will kind of weave through the air and chase each other up and down and around. They were playing this game and one bird went high and right and the other bird tried to go low and through what he thought was a hole in our house but it was our kitchen window. He smacked into the window and fell senseless.

Fortunately, there was a plastic chair right below. It took him 10 or 15 minutes to get his breath back and he eventually came to this used to happen in Southern California every week. We had a

great giant glass door and everything is so bright and our house was light and birds thought that was just an opening to fly through.

It seems like almost every week we had at least one bird fly into the door and knock himself senseless. But flighty, impulsive, flying through the air, not pulling up until the last possible moment when it's too late. Rising up at the sound of a bird, all the daughters of song are muffled.

You're easily disturbed and yet you can't hear anything. Paul talks about those women who are ever hearing and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. They fear a height and terror is in the way.

No spirit of adventure. No willingness to accept a challenge. No courage.

Be strong and of a good courage. God told Joshua, Be not afraid. The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Don't have any courage. Fear any kind of an elevation. Fear any kind of a height.

This is true in the physical realm for an elderly person with brittle bones. But how tragic for it to be true of a soul. Regardless of our physical age when we have no spiritual stamina, we have no spiritual courage.

We want to take no risk, take no step of faith. The almond tree blossoms and the locust is a burden to himself. No ability to bear a burden.

How can you bear with others when you can't even bear your own load? You know that wonderful passage in Paul where he talks about bearing one another's burdens and then two verses later he says, But each one must carry his own load. You've got to be able to carry your own load before you can bear with or help someone else bear their burden. And here is the grasshopper with those powerful hind legs and the ability to fly and travel.

He can't even bear his own weight anymore. Decrepitude. Spiritual octogenarian.

Shaky. Feeble. Can't see.

Can't hear. Can't chew. Can't stand up.

Can't grasp. What a tragedy. Why does Solomon paint this picture? It's a wonderful... You can see the wisdom that God invested him with because he's talking about human life and the opportunities that pertain to it.

But he began that talking about the rising and the setting of the sun. Under the sun. What do you do under the sun? Because human life is going to end.

And here is the type of ending that many human lives have. If you live long enough, this is what

inevitably happens. And he's saying there is a transcendent life.

There is a transcendent issue beyond what is accomplished or what is attained or what is possessed in this life. And so now when he pictures with these graphic images the feebleness and decrepitude of old age, he's saying, remember your Creator in the days of your youth. You don't have to get this way spiritually, even if it's inevitable in the physical realm.

Because everything pertaining to this life is going to pass away. But the soul goes on. Do you really want to enter the kingdom leaning on a cane while yet the rope of silver is not parted and the basin of gold smashes? We have been provided not just manna.

God has set a table before us in the presence of our enemies. Our cup runs over. We've been set a royal table, a banquet feast.

And while it's available to us, what a shame to cook a wonderful ribeye steak on the grill. That to me is just the best beef there is. It is a home-grilled, tender, juicy ribeye steak.

But if you set that on a plate in front of somebody whose sense of smell is gone, whose teeth are gone, who can't even see it, it's the most wonderful steak in the world, but they've lost the ability to appreciate it. Can't taste it. Can't see it.

Can't smell it. Can't chew it. Can't eat it and enjoy it and get the strength and nourishment from it.

It's a wonderful thing that they have lost the capacity and the ability to take advantage of. Well, here, all of your ornaments, the banquet table adorned with the silver rope, the golden bowls, that stuff is parted and gone away. The bowl is smashed and flattened.

You have the picture here of the jar at the spring being shattered. The wonderful cool spring water. You go from the picture of the most royal, sumptuous banquet hall with all of the accouterments of wealth to the simplest thing, a spring, where you want to drink the water, and yet the jar, to take any of that water away, is shattered.

Or the wheel at the cistern. You have a natural spring out there in the land, outside the city perhaps, and here you have a cistern where someone is trying to store the water against the time of drought and the time where there is no rain. And you can't draw from the natural spring because the jar is smashed.

You can't draw from the cistern where it's been stored and contained by human efforts. You can't avail yourself of that either. It reminds us of what he said earlier about the ones who are trying to grind.

The grinders are few. And that that is ground, the sound of grinding by others is made low. You can't avail yourself with your own hands or take advantage of the efforts of others.

Spiritual decrepitude will result if we do not take advantage of our youth and our opportunities. Remember our Creator in the days of our youth, before the evil days come and the years strike where we can no longer pursue a desirable goal. A pattern of hard-heartedness will limit our options.

I quoted it last time, I quoted it the time before, and I will quote it again. Galatians 6, 7 and 8. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. Corruption of the flesh is inevitable as we age.

It's a function of sin. Sowing to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And people that can't sort out the terminology of the Bible, anytime they see everlasting life, they think it's salvation.

But you don't gain eternal salvation from the lake of fire by sowing to the Spirit. Salvation is by grace through faith. What does it mean to reap life everlasting? Life in its fullness.

Life in its blessing, fruitfulness, meaning, reflection of the glory of God. It's eternal in the sense of quality. It's everlasting in the sense that it partakes of the everlasting with a capital E. It partakes of God and His divine nature.

If you sow to the Spirit, remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Because the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the Spirit will return to God who gave it. We have a finite amount of time on this life, and be the days many or few.

It is incumbent. It's not just an option. It is a calling.

It is an obligation to pursue it. Vapor of vapors in verse 8 says Kohelet. All is vapor.

Remember how temporary and transient this life is. We don't have this opportunity for long. Remember Christ in the garden? He took Peter, James, and John with Him.

He said, I need to pray. It was the last night of the Lord's life on this earth. He asked His three most advanced pupils, His three closest friends and disciples to come with Him and watch with Him in the garden.

And what happened? The Spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. And they faded out. And He came back and He said, Could you not watch with Me one hour? Could you not stay with Me and realize the importance and support with prayer and with fellowship for one hour? Our life on this planet is so brief and so like a vapor.

Can we not watch for one hour? Can we not remember our Creator for one hour? Vapor of vapors says Kohelet. All is vapor. Then in verse 9, He answers the question here that He posed

in chapter 1. What is the Yitron? What profit is there for a man from his labors in this life? What can you carry away that is left over? That's what Yetar as a verb in Hebrew means.

To be left over. To have as a profit margin. Something that remains after you subtract out some other thing.

Verse 9 says, And what is left over? Because Kohelet was wise, still he taught the people knowledge. And he listened intently and diligently, searched out and straightened out many proverbs. Mashalim.

Mashalim are illustrations, parables, allegories, memorable ways of packaging divine truth to communicate it and to impress it on hearts. Kohelet intensively, verse 10, sought to find words of Chepetz. The desirable goal.

Because in your youth, you still have the ability. The years have not yet struck where you say, There is no desirable goal. There is no Chepetz that I can pursue.

He intensively sought. It's a P-A-L. It means he made this a major effort to find words of Chepetz and a correct record of words of Emet, words of doctrine, words of truth.

Then verse 11, and this is one of the key, this is one of the most overlooked verses in Ecclesiastes. It's one of the reasons the book is misunderstood. This is key.

This sums up everything in the book. The words of the wise. This is the translation I've given you.

And if you didn't pay any attention to any other translation I gave you, you've got to get this translation right. Because you will not find it in your New American Standard. You will not find it in your NIV.

You will not find it in the King James. The words of the wise are like agricultural tools. The words of the wise are like planting tools.

For the provenance of this word, you can go back to 1 Samuel, where it talks about the army of Israel in the days of Saul and Jonathan, where the Philistines had a monopoly on the ironworking and on the blacksmithing. And any Israelite who wanted to have his tools sharpened had to take them to the Philistines. And it's explaining why only Saul and Jonathan out of the whole Israelite army, they were the only two that had an iron sword.

Everyone else had bronze, which doesn't hold an edge as well. It's more brittle. It's heavier.

It's not as good a weapon as the forged iron that Saul and Jonathan had. And he's explaining it's because the Philistines used this monopoly to keep the Israelites down. And then it goes into a list of all of the different things that the Israelites had to take.

The plow shares, the various pointed instruments to do agriculture with. And this is the word

that's used. The words of the wise are like these agricultural tools.

The plows and the hoes and the picks and the things that are used to work the soil. Planting tools. And these are tools that you sharpen.

They have to have a point. That's how it's used there in that Philistine passage. The words of the wise are like these sharp implements for agriculture.

Planting tools. And those who keep watch, who guard and watch over and value that which is planted are the masters. They are Baals.

They are the lords. They are the authorities. They have control.

They have mastered what is collected and given a single pastor. Solomon has done this work. It reminds us of the calling and the obligation and the function that God has assigned to pastors and teachers in the church.

It's the job of a pastor and teacher to go in and collect and distill from the Word of God truth and put it in one place. Put it into a lesson or a sermon or a book or whatever it might be. But to put that nourishment, that spiritual manna from heaven onto a single plate so that you can digest it.

Otherwise you have to sit down and here's your Bible full of 66 books, 39 Old Testament, 27 New Testament books, and you're trying to go through there and figure it all out. We normally have full-time occupations and full-time obligations and family and so on. And so God has designated ones to go in and collect and distill and prepare meals, if you will, from the Word of God and put it all in one place.

Well, in the Old Testament age and in an agricultural economy with the figure of a flock or a herd, what do you do to feed them? How do you shepherd them? How do you nurture and cause them to grow and flourish? You provide them pasture. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack.

I shall not want. What does he do? He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The paths of righteousness, he comes right out and tells us what the metaphor means.

The green pastures and the still waters are the paths of righteousness. And he does that because it is a desirable goal for him. It's his name's sake for which he does that.

Green pastures. Here Solomon has taken and collected all of these things diligently and intently and intensively sought and found these and collected them. And he has, like sharp implements, he's dugged the holes.

He has planted the seeds. He's made this rich pasture. He collected them all into a single place.

And those who keep watch over that that has been planted are masters of what has been collected. If you see the value of it and you treasure it and you feed on that. Now the reason I'm emphasizing this in verse 11 is I want to tell you something about that word.

Because in most English translations they say it's been given by one shepherd. And the word shepherd is from the very same root. It's resh, the letter R, followed by the letter ayin, followed by the letter hey or h. And there's a, they put a holem in there, they put an o and it becomes roeh.

And that's the word for shepherd. R-O-E-H in Hebrew is the word for shepherd. Well, we've seen many times, I don't know if you remember or not, but in Hebrew if you want to take a, well let me start a different way.

There's a preposition, there's a preposition maim or the letter m. And when you put m in front of something it means from. And so if you put a maim in front of the word roeh, you would have from a shepherd. And that's how this looks, the way the Masoretes have pointed this text, the way they assign the vowels, which is just arbitrary on their part, it's not a part of the original text.

But they vocalize this and tradition and listening to some other guy read it all down through the centuries, they decided that this maim in front of that means from, shepherd, and then the word for one, echad, is the last word in the verse. So it says from, shepherd, one. However, the word for pasture has the very same consonants.

The word for pasture comes from the verb raah, which means to shepherd or pasture a flock. And we've seen many times in the past that you can take a verb and make it a noun by putting a maim in front of it. It makes it kind of like a gerund or an ing word in English.

So to take the word that means to pasture or feed a flock in a pasture, to make that a noun, you put a maim in front of it. And all through the scriptures, in the Old Testament, when you find the word for pasture, it's this verb with a maim in front of it. Very same consonants.

And I think that this has been mispointed. Because from one shepherd just comes out of the blue. He hasn't been talking about a shepherd.

He hasn't had a sheep metaphor anywhere in there. What he is talking about is planting. He's got plenty of context for our agricultural tools, for collecting and putting these in one place.

And you don't guard a shepherd, but you do guard a pasture. You have to keep outside animals. You have to keep outsiders from coming in and uprooting.

Or an enemy coming in and sowing bad seed, as in Jesus' parable. So pasture makes much more sense. And that's literally what the consonants are here.

So if you wonder why everything you read elsewhere says shepherd with a capital S, they're saying, well, you know, shepherd is sometimes used as a title for the king. He is the shepherd of Israel. But we just have no context for that here.

It's a stretch to say, well, this is a reference to Solomon as king, and he is one shepherd. You just don't have enough context to support that. But what we do have is perfectly valid.

And let me tell you why I think this is the way it is. Because this use of that root, ra, ar, and then the ion and its various infixes and forms goes back to something we've seen throughout the book. What is the familiar phrase that we've seen all the way through Ecclesiastes when he says, this is vapor and what? Feeding on wind.

This is vapor and feeding on wind. And what is the word feeding? It's from that very same root, ra, pasturing, grazing upon, getting one's nourishment from, the wind, stuffing yourself with wind. You're like a cow out there, and instead of eating grass and eating grain, you're eating wind.

You get puffed up for a moment, but there's no substance there. It's a temporary feeling of fullness that immediately disappears. So what is he saying here? The words of the wise are like these planting tools.

You've collected all of these things, all of these mashalim, these proverbs. They've been edited. They've been straightened out when they were wrongly applied or wrongly put together.

And these chepetz words, these words of truth, have been planted in the ground. These implements have been used to plant a pasture. You take the seed, you collect it, you put it in a bag, and then you go to a pasture and you sow it in the ground so that it will bear fruit all in one place.

It's one pasture. You can go to one place and get the truth that you need. Solomon has tried to distill in one place this book, Ecclesiastes.

These twelve chapters that we have been studying are the distillation, the wisest man to ever live in Old Testament times. Given wisdom from God, given wisdom by God, to do what? To shepherd my people Israel. What has he done? He said, if I'm going to shepherd the people, I want to plant a pasture for them where they can feed, where they can get the nourishment that they need, where they can get the viewpoint and the perspective and establish the desirable goals, the chepetz, to make their life count, to come away with something in their hand.

What more can a king do? He can be a good administrator. He can be a good politician. He can be a good diplomat.

He can be a good governor. But for God's chosen people, Israel, what's the best that a king could do? He can do what David did. He can do what Solomon did.

Feed the people with eternal truth. So Solomon sought diligently. He listened intently.

He straightened out and searched out these mashalim. He intensively sought to find words of chepetz and a correct record of words of truth. And what did he do? These words of wisdom that he collected like planting tools.

And now, what's our responsibility? What was the responsibility of the people to whom Solomon originally presented these collected words of wisdom? To keep watch, to guard them, to internalize them, to take them and digest them, and to preserve them, to become a master of what has been collected and given a single pasture. We're going to pause here and take our break. And when we come back, I'm going to show you a fascinating string through the Word of God using this vocabulary and using this concept.

But as we close our first lesson and our first investigation this morning, remember your Creator in the days of your youth. How do we do that? How do we maintain the youth in our soul? What is the means of not aging and losing ability and losing opportunity and losing the ability to gain that desirable goal? We have to guard what has been entrusted to our care. We have to be good stewards of the wisdom and the truth that's contained in the Word of God.

It has to be important to us. We hear the teaching of the Word of God. Thoughts about the Word of God and its applicability to us strike us from time to time, don't they? We find ourselves going through life and we say, oh, I'm a believer and here's something that really makes a difference.

This is a spiritual truth manifest in my life. We need to guard that. We need to be a master of that.

We need to cultivate it and encourage it in our souls. This goes hand-in-hand with the idea of meditating on the law of the Lord day and night because it is as simple as the old phrase, use it or lose it. And by cultivating an attitude of being constantly aware of who we are and why we're here and the God that we serve, our soul stays young and vital and enabled and God can use us to seize and exploit opportunities.

We will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. But we have to guard that that has been entrusted to our care. This is what Paul told Timothy.

Guard that which has been entrusted to your care. The truth and the wisdom of the Word of God has been entrusted to our care. We've got to value it.

We have to consider it precious. We have to consider it worth preserving. Otherwise, the grinders are going to cease because they are few.

The light that is sweet to the eye is going to become dim and we will find ourselves, as is the case with so many believers in our current age, unable to appreciate, unable to assimilate, unable to avail. Have you ever wondered? You can hear and see some of the greatest things in the plan of God. It just rocks your soul when you see some of the truths in the Word of God.

And there are other believers and it just doesn't seem to make a dent. They are insensitive, unimpressible, unteachable, because their mind is just somewhere else. That's spiritual decrepitude.

That is the silver cord parting and the golden bowl getting smashed. They can't even go to the spring and carry away a jug of water anymore. And they may still be young.

Whatever happens to our earthly body, we want our soul to be youthful and like Caleb. It never ceases to amaze me and to impress me when I think about Caleb going into the land and Joshua's dividing it up amongst the tribes. It comes to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh.

He says, Well, Caleb, oldest man in Israel, which part do you want? Caleb had the oldest body in Israel and he took the challenge that even the young men were afraid to take. He said, I'm going to go up and I'm going to give me the mountain that's infested with enemies. I'm going to go up and I'm going to seize it.

I'm going to claim it by conquest. And he did, because his soul was not decrepit. He could still see the light.

He had that chepetz and his chronological age made no difference whatsoever. We want to catch that same fire and have that same sense of opportunity and of ability that comes to us from God. Well, let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, I'm going to show you something really fascinating about this single pasture.