

02-06-09a Ecclesiastes

Well, let's take a moment at the beginning of our worship this morning to go to the Lord in prayer. And as we do, we can do a couple of different things. One, we can first of all make sure that our hearts are prepared to be in the presence of the Lord.

We know from Hebrews chapter 10 that we can come before the throne of God with a pure heart and a full assurance because our hearts have been sprinkled and have been sanctified through the work of Jesus Christ and the cleansing that we can claim that John talked about in his first epistle. And it's a wonderful thing. We were talking about that last night after watching a vintage Billy Graham crusade that they aired on TBN last night.

And I wanted the girls to see one because Billy is nearer the end of his ministry than the beginning. And he and Cliff Barrows and Bev Shea and the team will probably only have one or two more nationally televised crusades and they'll be checking out. And having been faithful to share the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ for so many years, I thought it would be good for them to see one and to have an appreciation.

So we watched it last night and afterward we were talking about the fact that the things that he mentioned in terms of the work of Jesus Christ and cleansing us and saving us is not something that we just claim one time and then we get our ticket to heaven, so to speak, and we're all good to go. But it's something we can claim on a daily basis. The work of Jesus Christ was so powerful and has such far-reaching consequences that our salvation is really just the beginning.

It's just walking through the door to a whole new way of life. And it's something we have to constantly revisit and remind ourselves that we are being daily delivered out of this present evil age. We are hourly delivered from the weaknesses and the failures in our sinful nature.

And there's no more important time to do that than before we spend time concentrating on God's Word, not that there are not many other important times to do so. And when the scripture says, pray without ceasing, one of the elements of prayer, of course, is to do as the Lord instructed the disciples and acknowledge our sins. We know that without doing that we ourselves are not forgiven.

And there's not a lot we can do in the plan of God when we stand in an unforgiven state because we are in line for correction rather than production. So that's one thing that we do. We also give thanks to God for our standing in Christ and for the opportunities and the potentials that He's given us.

And we also acknowledge and ask for, even though we know that we haven't, we ask for things that God has promised because it is a confirmation of our knowledge of the promise. And that's the ministry of God's Spirit, which is also something that should be ongoing and constant and something that we're sensitive to all through the day. So with those things in mind, let's pause

and take a moment to go before the Lord in prayer.

Father, we do thank you for the many provisions that you have made for us in grace. We know that the means of access into that grace in which we stand is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And even now, as He sits at your right hand to intercede and to interpose Himself on our behalf, we thank you for His faithfulness.

We thank you for your love and His love in accomplishing our salvation and in giving us the wonderful opportunity that we have to live a life that has meaning, that has purpose, that has a fruit and a produce that survives the end of our lives and goes into eternity to reflect your glory. We pray that our study this morning will further that goal in each of our souls. We pray that we will be drawn closer to you, that we will be more closely conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray it in His name. Amen. Well this is the final morning for our Ecclesiastes study and I have sort of mixed feelings.

I really enjoyed the excavation of this book and to recover the wonderful truths and wisdom that Solomon distilled in this discourse. You have before you the completed translation that we have worked through together over these many months. And for our scripture reading this morning, I would like to begin and read this letter or this call from Solomon as it was issued.

We know that it was commonplace in ancient Israel as it was in the early days of the church when we tend to take a verse or two at a time and study it and parse all the verbs and decline all the nouns and do word studies and parallel studies and categorical studies. But these were delivered pretty much as an entirety. A priest or a scribe would stand up in a synagogue or at the temple and would read a huge portion if not the entirety of a book such as Ecclesiastes.

Isaiah they might weary of going through 66 chapters, but a book of this length it was not uncommon to have it read from beginning to end. Same with the letters of Paul. And there is something to be gained by seeing the continuity of thought and as we go through I'll remind you of some of the points of summary so that as we close our study of this book we leave hopefully clear in our minds an impression of what the thrust, the themes, and the main argument of this book is.

So in chapter 1, and hopefully you can read along with me in your translation, the words of Kohelet, son of David, king in Jerusalem. And one of the first things and one of the last things we want to establish in this book is that it was in fact authored by Solomon. That is such a minority opinion in the modern day you cannot believe it.

But part of the validity of the observations that we've seen in these 12 chapters is that they were conclusions drawn by a man who had the resources to explore to the uttermost every alternative. And there is no one but Solomon that qualifies. There is no one but Solomon who was a son of

David who was king in Jerusalem who can lay claim to the accomplishments and the extent of investigation that is put forth in this book.

So once again you are either denying the claim of the book and therefore denying its inspiration or charging God with error or you are flying in the face of modern scholarship and modern reason. Some people try to straddle the fence and say well this was an artifice, it was a literary device where the man who wrote the book is posing as Solomon. This is specious and it's a sorry argument.

It's kind of like people who go to Romans chapter 2 and say Paul is presenting a hypothetical when he says that believers could come under judgment for not having faith and patience. So when he says the word of Kohelet son of David king in Jerusalem, this is Solomon. There is no two ways about it.

And then he states one of the major premises of the book and that is that everything is vapor. The dual phrase as we noted before expresses an ultimate. The ultimate in impermanence, the ultimate in transience.

You can't find anything that is more temporary than this. Vapor of vapors says Kohelet, vapor of vapors, everything is vapor. What profit is there to a man in all his labor which he labors under the sun? Now this question is answered in chapter 12.

A generation goes forth, a generation comes in but the earth stands still unto the ages. There is a background that is still. If you ever watch the old Warner Brothers cartoons, you'll note, and if you've ever seen the way they made those, they would paint a background and then make cells, C-E-L-S, which are clear transparencies that have the characters on them and they shuffle those transparencies to make the movement of the characters in front of a static background.

And from scene to scene the background doesn't have to be repainted, they simply change these transparencies of characters. And the idea here is that the cycles, the regular repetitious cycles in nature are the background against which the life of man rises and falls like the grass. So a generation goes forth, a generation comes in, but the earth is static unto the ages.

The sun rises and the sun comes in and unto its place, panting, it rises again. There's a very famous book called The Sun Also Rises and this is where that title comes from. Unto its place, panting, it rises again.

Going forth unto the south, turning around unto the north, turning, turning, the wind is going forth and upon turning the wind returns. All the rivers are going forth to the sea, but the sea is not filled. To the place where the rivers are going forth, there they return to go forth again is the implication.

All words are laborsome. A man is not able to speak. The eye is not satisfied to see and the ear is not filled to hear.

That which has been is that which will be and that which has been done is that which will be done and there is nothing new unto the sun. There is a word that is spoken. Look at this, this is new.

It has been multiple times, numerously, unto the ages which have been before us. There is no remembrance of former things nor also of latter things that will be. There will be for them no remembrance among those who will be after.

What's the point? It can be very discouraging to look and realize that you are like a bug on the windshield of history and the first time the rain comes and the bug washes away, no one will ever know you were here. Look at the generations that have passed. The earth seems to go on forever and just like at a funeral, it puts us in mind of what is the meaning of life.

That's the essential question. What is the meaning of life? I, Kohelet, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem and I gave my heart to inquire into exploring wisdom. All that has been done under the heavens, it is a grievous answer that God has given the sons of men to be answered with.

I have seen all the doings that have been done under the sun and behold, the whole is vapor and feeding on wind, pasturing on wind. What has been bent is not able to become straight. What is lacking cannot be counted.

I myself spoke with my heart saying, behold, I've caused wisdom to be magnified and increased over all who are before my face in Jerusalem and my heart has looked to cause wisdom and knowledge to multiply. And I gave my heart to know wisdom and knowledge, rantings and foolishness. I knew also that this itself was feeding on wind for in much wisdom is much aggravation and increasing knowledge is increasing pain.

There is nothing that flies in the face of modern philosophical thought than these statements because the answer to social ills is thought to be education. If we can just educate people about sexually transmitted diseases, if we can just educate people about how to overcome poverty and how to overcome crime and if we can just spread wisdom and knowledge, if we can give education to kids in the inner city, then they won't turn to a life of crime. Wisdom and knowledge, life skills, how many seminars do you think are being held all around the country on every problem imaginable? Child training, marriages, being single, not being single, being old, being young.

Everybody thinks if we can just get more information, we'll be better off. But no matter how much you stuff a brain with knowledge, when it dies, it's gone. And so much wisdom just becomes much aggravation and increasing knowledge is increasing pain because the more you come to understand about this life, the more you realize that it's temporary.

Billy Graham, again, was talking last night. So much of what he said chimed in with what I was thinking about for our lesson this morning because he talked about how in traveling around, this was a crusade that was preached in the 70s, and that he had heard Barry Gibb of the Bee Gees.

You remember that was back when the Bee Gees were really big.

And he said, here they were on the pinnacle of fame. They had more money. They had more opportunities.

They were just at their pinnacle and Barry Gibb said, I have this, inside I feel like there's nothing but warmed over death. And it just did not satisfy. And he winds up asking the same question.

What does it all mean? What is it all for? So Solomon decides, well, if anybody can figure this out, it's him. I said to myself in my heart, go forth now. I will put you to the test.

And that go forth, you can see the repetition of the verb halak. I want to try to get, become more one with creation. It all goes forth and comes back.

I'm going to see if I can go forth and come back with some fresh knowledge here. Go forth now, heart. I will put you to the test with joy.

Look for good. Behold, this was vapor. It didn't result in anything permanent.

With reference to laughter, I said it is being made a fool. With reference to joy, what is this doing? I explored with my heart to prolong my flesh with wine. My heart was leading with wisdom, lay hold of foolishness, control it, until I could see which of these is good for the sons of men that they should do under the heavens the limited number of days of their lives.

He tries all these different things. He causes works to be great. He plants these gardens.

He makes reservoirs. He gets servants, catalogs and sheep. He collects in verse eight silver and gold, the wealth of kings and provinces.

He gets the singers and one of the more difficult passages in the book, the last part of verse eight. After very careful study and analysis here, I think that very last part is a noble lady and noble ladies. I went back through that study again to finish this translation and I'm convinced that's what he was saying.

I became great and increased more than all who were before my face in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, my wisdom stood firm for me. All that my eyes asked for, I did not withdraw from them.

So what is the quest here? In the limits of the world, in the fishbowl of time and circumstance, Solomon tries everything, every accomplishment, every attainment, every possession and he got the satisfaction that you get from attaining these and accomplishing these things. In verse eleven, I turned myself among all my works that my hands had done and the labor which I labored to do and behold, the whole was vapor and feeding on wind. There was no profit under the sun, nothing left over.

So I turned myself to look at wisdom and rantings and foolishness and then you have kind of a garbled verse there. The basic idea is what is the man going to do who comes after the king? If he's done all these things, who can top him? Who can do more? I saw for myself that there is profit to wisdom as opposed to foolishness, like the profit of the light as opposed to darkness. The wise have their eyes in their head, the fool is walking in darkness, but one fate befalls them both.

So I declared to myself in my heart like the fate of the fool is going to befall me, so why was I then more wise? Why did I have wisdom left over more than the fool? I answered in my heart that this was temporary. Now this is a kind of Jatrone, this is not the permanent profit that is the ultimate subject of the book. He says there is a profit to wisdom as opposed to foolishness.

People can live wisely in this life and it's the same kind of profit that there is to light over darkness. It's always better to walk around in a lighted room than in a darkened room. You don't bark your shins, you don't stumble and trip, you don't hurt yourself, but in the end you're just as dead whether you're wise or foolish when you're talking about living skills.

So there is a profit to wisdom as opposed to foolishness. It's like the profit of light as opposed to darkness, but he says in verse 15, did it ultimately benefit me? Did I have wisdom that was left over? I answered in my heart this is a temporary benefit, it's a temporary wisdom. For there is no remembrance for the wise together with the fool unto the ages forever, in that after the days to come the whole will be forgotten.

How will the wise die? With the foolish. And I hated life because it was evil to me. The work which I had worked unto the sun, the whole was vapor and feeding on wind.

I myself hated all my labor which I labored unto the sun, specifically that I caused rest for the man who would be after me. Who knows whether he will be wise or a fool, but he will rule in all my labor which I labored and which I was wise unto the sun. This is temporary.

I turned about my heart to despair upon all the labor which I had labored unto the sun. Then chapter 3, that famous section, there is an appointed time for everything and there is a time for every desirable goal, every chepetz under heaven. There is a time to give birth and a time to die, a time to plant, a time to uproot what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build up, a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time for mourning and a time for dancing, a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones, a time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.

We saw that some of these are advantageous things and some are disadvantageous, some are positive, some are negative. There is a pattern here that we studied in detail. There is a time to search and a time to give up is lost, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear apart and a time to sew together, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

What prophet, what yitron does the doer have in that which he himself labors? Even if you are wise from an earthly perspective and you get these right, you know when it is time to heal and you know when it is time to kill, you know when it is time to gather and when it is time to cast away, where is the prophet in the doing of all of these things? Solomon says in verse 10, I have seen the answer, one of the key words in the book, I have seen the inyan, which God has given to the sons of men to be answered with. And this word kind of straddles the semantic domains between an answer or a response and something with which you are occupied or busied. It is not a business and it is not an occupation and it is not a task, it is something that is a response, it is an answer.

There is another word, anad, that is very close to this, that is the noun, answer. But inyan, it is the concept of this is what has been put on your plate, this is what has been put before you that you have to grapple with, that you have to deal with. So I have seen this issue which God has put before, it is a decision point.

You have come and asked a question, you have raised your eyebrows and said what is this all about? God has said, here is something for you to look at. Everything he has done is beautiful and although this word only occurs a few times in the book, it is key, yafei. Everything that God has done is beautiful in its time.

Also, he has given eternity in their hearts, without which man will not find or attain to the doing which God is doing from the beginning and to the end. This transcends our lifetime, doesn't it? The beginning to the end is the beginning of all of those cycles of nature we had in chapter 1. God has put the knowledge in our hearts that there is a span beyond what we see in creation, beyond our life span, beyond the waters and the winds and all the other cycles of nature. And without seizing and laying hold of that knowledge, we are never going to understand what God is doing from the beginning to the end.

I know that there is nothing good in them, there is nothing good in man, for whether he were to rejoice or do good in his life, and indeed every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his labor, it is a thing given by God. Any good that you see in what you do, you can't really lay claim to as belonging to yourself. It is something that, you know, who gave you breath, who gave you strength, who gave you opportunity, who sustained you and allowed you to lay hold of these things and accomplish anything, it has all been given by God.

I know that everything that God will do, it will be unto the ages, it will last forever. There is nothing to add to it or add upon it, there is nothing to diminish from it, for God has done that which they will fear from before his face. The eternity that God has put in our hearts, the knowledge that he has given us is that there is a transcendent righteousness, there is a transcendent good that God accomplishes, good that is beautiful.

And nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it, that is what we have to try to

partake of. So when we are faced with this answer, faced with this issue, what is our decision? Are we going to continue to just do these transient, impermanent, vaporous things or are we going to start looking to the Yitron, looking to the prophet that comes from God? What has already been, that which will be already is, but God will intensively seek out what is pursued. God is going to examine our hearts and find whether we continue in our circular, temporary pursuits or whether we latch on to those permanent, beautiful things that he has put before us.

So you would think, and this would actually be a good place for a chapter break, because, or for a *silah* like David uses, because it is worth stopping and meditating on that. God interposes, up to this point, we haven't seen much about God. It's talked about nature and the cycles of the seasons and the question that man raises, but then it says God has put this issue before us.

This is the miserable status that God has placed before us, this evil answer. That's just not good enough. Why live a life of vapor and disappear? It's not good enough.

God contrasts that temporary with the permanent and with the eternal and with the good that is beautiful. We know there's nothing good in us. We have to partake of that good that belongs to God.

What God does lasts beyond time and God has done it and it should elicit fear. It should elicit, not abject terror, it should elicit respect and worship, godly fear. God will intensively seek what is pursued.

Underline it, double underline it, highlight it. That is one of the keys, one of the key statements of the book. God is analyzing to see what do we do when we come up against this brick wall, when we come up against the fact that we can't generate anything but vapor.

Well, you would think that it would turn us to God, but instead, verse 16, he says, and yet I've seen under the sun the place of justice being guilty of crime and the place of righteousness being guilty of crime. People don't turn and don't try to partake of God's righteousness. I said in my heart, the righteous and the criminal, God will judge because there is a time for every purpose and concerning every doing there.

There is a desirable goal in these mundane daily things. It's not just the accomplishment of justice. It's not just the accomplishment of righteousness, but there is a desirable goal.

There is a good that is transcendent, that is beautiful, and God is going to judge both the righteous and the criminal to see if that is present. So, verse 18, I myself said in my heart on the matter, the sons of men are to sanctify God, to take note of His separateness, of His purity. They need to get a clear idea of where God is.

The sons of men are to sanctify, purify God, and to see that they themselves are animals. There is a clear choice here. There is an issue God has placed before us.

Here's eternal good. Here's temporary vapor. Which one are you going to choose? By contrast with God, man is nothing but animal with reference to himself.

They themselves are animals. They with reference to themselves. For there is that which befalls the sons of men, and there is that which befalls the animals.

There is one thing that befalls them both is the idea. As one dies, so dies the other. There is one spirit or breath to all, and the remainder of man from animal is nothing, because all is vapor.

When you look at the earthly and the mundane and what man can generate and what man can accomplish, you can't do anything more than what an animal does in the earthly realm. If we don't reach out and seize what God offers us by way of the eternal, and by way of the good that is beautiful, and the everlasting eternal, our life means no more than an animal's life. I've often thought about the little white cat that Patti had when we got married.

We had him for so many years. He had a personality. He had likes and dislikes.

He was a presence in our house for years and years, but he's gone. After the first couple of years, even the little fuzz balls that we used to find in the carpet and on our clothing and stuff we put away have all disappeared. There's no trace of him other than in our memory and a few photos.

Where is the mark that he made? It would be difficult to prove that he was ever here. It's no different with the life of an unbeliever or of a faithless believer. When history is reviewed and you look at what is taken away from history to go into the eternal future, if all you generated is wood, hay and stubble and it's burned in the judgment fire of God, then what goes into eternity? Not any more than a moose that died up in Canada someplace.

Nobody ever saw it. It was born. It lived.

It ate. It mated. It died.

It's gone. Who knew it was ever there? Generations upon generations of Chinese lived over in China during the time of Christ and during the time of the Israelites and during the time of Abraham. There were generations after generations of Chinese, thousands, millions.

Who knows? There's no trace. There's no record. There's no proof that they were ever here.

That's what this verse is saying. Just like an animal, we should recognize that there's a difference between what is temporary and temporal and what is permanent and eternal. All of us are walking to one place in verse 20.

All are from the dust and go to the dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men whose descent is upward and the spirit or breath of the animals whose descent is downward to the earth? Well,

there's an answer to that question. God knows.

God judges. God evaluates. God will intensively seek what is pursued.

But from our point of view, with our powers, we can't see a difference. I have seen, Solomon says in verse 22 of chapter 3, that there is nothing good from which man will rejoice from his doings because this itself is his portion. For who will bring him to see what will be after him? It's kind of complicated when you render the Hebrew straight into English, but the idea is, why should a man rejoice from his doings when it doesn't last? It doesn't mean anything and he won't be here to see its effects.

Even if somebody does something great, you know, everybody touts Julius Caesar and the wonderful armies and government that he founded and so on. He's not here to see it. He doesn't know how famous he is.

They always name libraries and buildings and memorials after men and say, oh, this is the so-and-so public library or grade school or whatever. If the man is dead, what good does it do him? He has no earthly idea that anything was named after him or that he was famous. So there's nothing good to rejoice about when you have no idea.

I myself, verse 1 of chapter 4, returned and saw all the acts of oppression which are done under the sun. Behold, the tears of the oppressed, they have no comforter. The hand of the oppressors was power, but they had no comforter.

I myself applauded the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still alive, but better than both of them, the two of them, is the one who has not ever lived, who has not seen the evil work which is done under the sun. It kind of reminds you of one of the friends of Job who says, man was born to suffer. Surely his sparks fly upward.

A lot of times you think, well, why come into a life of pain? There are people who hold off on having children because they say, I don't want to bring a child into this troubled world, have them experience all these fears and problems. I myself, verse 4, saw all the labor and all the successful work for which there is jealousy of a man from his neighbor. The fool is folding his hands and eating his flesh.

Better a palm full of calm than two palms full of labor and feeding on wind. I myself returned and I saw vapor under the sun. There is one and there are not two.

Also, son and brother are not to him. There is no end to all his labor. His eye is not satisfied with riches.

For whom am I myself performing labor and depriving my soul from good and prosperity? This is all vapor and it is an evil inyan. That's a place where I should have added the Hebrew word again. It is an evil inyan.

Inyan-ra is what you have there. It is a miserable issue. This is the way God set it up.

Why? God leaves us in this status in the fallen human race because it is supposed to turn our attention to him. Two are better than one because to them there is a good recompense in their labor. If they fall, one will lift up his companion.

Woe to the one who falls and there is no second to lift him. If two lie down, it will be warm to them. But for one, how will he be warm? If one overpowers him, two will stand before him.

A cord of three is not quickly broken. These are human ideas of help. But if you are all dead in the end, what does it matter if you died sooner or later? What does it matter if you got overpowered? What does it matter if it all blows away in the wind? Better a youth poor and wise than a king old and a fool that does not know to be warned anymore.

For from the house of bonds he comes forth to rule. Also in his kingdom he was born being poor. I saw all the living who were walking under the sun with the second youth who will stand after him.

This talks about no matter how great your story is, you can be a king who pulled himself up by his bootstraps and had poor beginnings. I think Solomon had his father David in mind. He was the last and youngest of the sons.

He was out doing a servant's job with the sheep and he started out being poor and a youth and he became a king. He supplanted a father foolish king who was old and would not be instructed anymore. But there was another youth who supplanted the second king.

You had the old foolish king, you had the youth who came from being poor and he became king, but now here is another youth that is going to supplant him. Whether you are an old and foolish king or you are the youth who became wise, you are still going to be supplanted, you are still going to be replaced. There is no end to all the people, to all who are before their faces, to the ones after, they will not be pleased with him.

No matter how great your story is, somebody can be unhappy with you. People were unhappy with Saul, he was one kind of a king. Here is David, he was another kind of a king.

People were unhappy with him. He got run out of town by his own son. It is all vapor and feeding on wind.

It is just strutting and fretting. So chapter 5, we begin to get some practical application, some practical knowledge on how to seize and lay hold of that eternity and that good that is beautiful. To guard your feet when you go to the house of God and to draw near is better than fools, for they are not knowing ones to do evil.

It looks like we have a word left out there. They do not know that they are doing evil. There are people who go to the house of God and draw near to hear, I think is the word that is missing there in my print out that you have before you.

Draw near to hear is better than the fools, for they are not ones who know that they are doing evil. Do not be alarmed with your mouth and your heart. Do not be hasty to anxiously bring forth a matter before the face of God.

When is it that people like to go to God? It is when they are alarmed, when they are in a panic, when the chips are down. I will go to God. God has the answers and they think this is a form of reverence and worship, but when you go before God in a panic, oh God help, oh God, you know this is the common preface to a lot of prayers.

In your heart do not be hasty to anxiously bring forth a matter before the face of God, for God is in heaven and you yourself are upon the earth. Therefore let your words be few. And the implication is carefully chosen.

Do not go to God in a panic, for a dream comes in many answers and the voice of a fool in many words. What is the idea here? If you just go in and you start babbling before God, this is not what God is looking for. This is not the kind of reverence and worship that God is looking for.

God wants us to think, to metabolize, to digest what we know and to draw conclusions and to come before Him with viewpoint based on His word, not just come in with a rambling incoherent cry for help. We think that we have the answer. We are alarmed and we think we know what will fix the problem.

I have the answer. So and so has got to get well. I have got to get that job.

I have got to get that house. I have got to get this problem fixed. This person has got to get out of my periphery.

This thing has to happen. That is what will fix it. And we go before God and we rant and we ramble and we tell Him all of these things that will solve the problem.

God is in heaven. You yourself are upon the earth. Let your words be few.

Why are we in this vein at this point in the book? Well Solomon has just spent several chapters talking about all the things that are just vapor. You can strut, you can fret, you can struggle, you can contend, you can possess, you can acquire, you can achieve. It all blows away in the wind.

You are no better than an animal. How do you start to lay hold? Well the first thing is you have got to reign yourself in. Part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

And we have got to recognize the Olam, the eternity that God has put in our hearts. We have to

stop and acknowledge that there is a good that is beautiful. God is going to intensively examine and seek out what it is that we are pursuing.

What are we after? Well are we going to come in and say I am after a quick fix? I am after a circumstantial solution. Solomon says no, slow down, stop, think. Your dream, your big idea is going to come out in all of these words.

And your foolish voice is going to come out in many words. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it. For there is no delight, there is no chepet in fools.

Fools are not going to seize and lay hold of the desirable goal. What is this vow to God? If you are going to be one that dedicates himself to finding the good that is beautiful, if you are going to lay hold of the eternal, if you are going to seize that which is eternal and that which represents genuine, worshipful, godly fear, you have dedicated yourself to that. That is your vow.

Well, do not fall apart and fail to pay it. If you have recognized this, if you have seen what Solomon is saying so far, then do not just fall off the wagon and forget all about it the first time you are in a panic. Do not delay to pay it.

There is no chepets, there is no desirable goal in fools. Pay what you vow. If you know that there is an eternal good, that there is righteousness you can claim by faith, do not waste your time not claiming it.

It is better that you should not vow than that you should bow and not pay. You have the same idea in the New Testament, our believers, if they had not known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and fallen away from it. Like a dog returning to his vomit and a sow returning to the wallow, our believers who have tasted of the heavenly gift and the good word of God and the power of the age to come, then they fall away.

Why? Because you know better. You are without excuse if you have been taught and have learned Christ and the things that Christ gives us and then fall away. This is the message of Hebrews chapter 6. Not laying again the foundation of all of these things.

The rain is falling on the field and it ought to be producing fruit. You do not want to be near a curse and fit only to be burned. This is an Old Testament expression of the same truth.

Better that you should not vow, that you should not ever say, I want to reflect the glory of God, I want to seize and lay hold of that divine righteousness and that eternal good. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin. Do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake.

Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? Because by many dreams you are causing vapors and words to multiply, for you are to fear God. Orient yourself to the plan and purpose of God. That is this section in a nutshell.

Once you have done so, do not fall away from it and do not say, oh, it was a mistake. I do not think that is really what scripture was saying after all. The presence of the messenger, somebody has to bring this message, someone has to communicate it.

In the Old Testament it was the prophets and the priests and the scribes and those who communicated God's word and the Holy Spirit himself who had a ministry in the Old Testament. Do not say, oh, that was not it after all. If oppression of the poor and twisting of justice and righteousness you see in the province, do not be surprised over the capets, over the desirable goal that the high from over the high are watching and higher ones are over them.

What is verse 8 saying? Basically, it is discouraging when you look around and you see distortions and twisting of justice and you say the desirable goal is being lost here. It is impossible to pursue the desirable goal because look at how the ones in authority are twisting and perverting justice and righteousness. And he says, know that the high from over the high are watching and higher ones are over them.

Well, then we have the prophet of the land and another garbled verse. So this is probably a good place for us to pause and take a break or recollect our thoughts. But we are in a place where Solomon is exhorting and he says, look, you have seen that God has this answer that goes beyond the miserable answer that we first encountered.

There is a way to seize and lay hold of the eternal, but now there are going to be discouragements. You have got to not panic when you are discouraged. You cannot run in before God and just start blathering and blabbing and coming up with your own dream and your own vision.

Stay calm, fear God, keep a grip on your vow, your dedication to seize righteousness by faith. You are going to see things that discourage you. You are going to see things that want to dampen your willingness to continue and he is going to explain those.

But there is a power from God, there is a solution from God that he is presenting in this book and that is what we will pick up and look at when we continue.