

02-06-09b Ecclesiastes

Let's pick up our study now in Ecclesiastes. We're resuming our final pass through the book with our completed translation. I say completed, but as I look here at the version we have before us this morning, hopefully by the time this is distributed on tape there will be a more complete one, but there in chapter 5, verse 9, I think I left that unfinished.

That's one of the most difficult verses in the whole book in terms of the Hebrew, which has suffered some sort of damage. The idea though, as we've seen thus far, is that Solomon is surveying life on this planet and in encouraging us as believers to lay hold of the eternal things that God has made available to us, he's talking about the things that distract us, the things that can be obstacles and can occupy our minds and cause us to miss that great truth. So he has spoken in the earlier part of chapter 5 about not letting your mouth cause your flesh to sin.

And this of course gets us in more trouble. We vow, we make promises, we say things and then we entangle ourselves in a web, oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive. But what this is primarily talking about here is talking to God in prayer because that's what he introduced in verse 1. Guard your feet, guarding your feet when you go to the house of God and to draw near to hear is better than the fools who do not know that they are going there and doing evil.

Do not be in a panic with your mouth. Do not be hasty in your heart when you go before God and anxiously bring forth a matter before the face of God. There is a lack of reverence in prayer that you can see all around us today.

And we know better. We know the way God has arranged life. We know that we are held in his gracious hands, that nothing befalls us that he didn't anticipate, that he didn't know about before the world began.

And for us to panic and fall apart and rush in with our dream and our big vision of how things can be fixed is to deny the very truth that we have claimed many times verbally when we say I am a believer and I love God and I want to serve him and please him and I want to bear eternal fruit in my soul. I want the seed of the word to be planted in my field and I want to be a hundredfold field. We say that, we tell God that and then we turn right around and the first time pressure hits or the first time something unexpected happens we run in and we undo it all in our prayers.

And prayer is a wonderful privilege and this is not a discouragement to prayer but it is an encouragement to think, to apply. This is one of the passages that tells us the nature of prayer. Prayer should be an application of what we know, not a mindless panic stricken appeal for help.

We have promises, principles and doctrines that we can claim. We have knowledge in our soul. If we are going to go into the throne room of God and represent ourselves before him in the name of Jesus Christ we need to have some sense of the awe and the fear of the Lord that is a part of

that and not literally go rushing in where angels fear to tread.

But you look at the prayers that get sent up, misdirected, misaddressed, wrongly phrased, praying for all kinds of ridiculous things by people who claim the name of Christ and claim to want to please God. Our mouth causes our flesh to sin. Just remember, as a general principle, a dream comes in many answers.

We don't go to God for the answer. We don't go to God and express to him our faith and our willingness to wait for an answer. We go to him with the answer.

Lord, here's the answer. I've got it figured out. Let me just have you.

I'm rubbing the lamp here. You're the genie. I want my three wishes.

Here's what I want. A, B and C. This dream, this unreal vision does not partake of reality. You want to talk about a vapor, a dream.

Boy, I don't even want to go down the road of talking about all this thing about you must have a vision. Without a vision the people perish and all that. There's all this talk about visions.

We don't need to construct a vision for a church or for a group of believers. We don't have to have a vision to live our lives as believers. God has already given us the picture.

We don't have to imagine one or create one. I have a dream speech. We don't have to do that.

God has a much better reality than any dream we can concoct. It's a matter of going before him and aligning ourselves and saying the same thing. Homologeo means say the same thing.

When we go before God we acknowledge his answers, his plan, his grace, his purpose. The eternal beauty of the good that is a part of his righteousness that we claim by faith. That's what we're after.

Why should we rush in and say, oh God, please take this problem away, when we can say, oh God, please show me how I can lay claim to righteousness by faith in this situation? Rehearse before God the promises and the principles and the doctrines that apply in that circumstance. Better that you should not vow than vow and not pay. When we went through this the first time I used the illustration of people who try to supply their own answers like in computer tech support.

But by many dreams you are causing vapors and words to multiply. You're just spewing inanities and things that have no substance. You are to fear God.

We should go before God, come before his presence with reverence and acknowledging his plan and purpose. Well, so that's one obstacle is our own thought process, our own sense of panic when we're in some sort of crisis. Then in verse 80 starts another one.

Oppression of the poor and twisting of justice and righteousness. You see this in areas where there's authority being exerted. The example here is the Medina, the province.

City government, local government is twisting and perverting justice. You can't get a fair hearing. You can't get a fair adjudication.

He says, do not be surprised. This word for surprised actually might be better translated as dismayed. Do not be dismayed.

It has the sense of being astonished in a negative sense, being wonderstruck in a negative way. Do not be dismayed over the desirable goal. And the idea is, what is the desirable goal? That there be justice and righteousness, that the poor be cared for.

That's what the law of Moses specifies and demands. That's what God's plan and purpose. Look at all of the passages that talk about the orphan and the widow and the stranger in your midst.

And yet, if the poor are being oppressed and justice is being twisted, well, that's the opposite of the desirable goal. He says, don't be dismayed over the desirable goal. And the idea is, look at the contrast between what should be and what actually is in circumstances by those who have authority.

And by application, this can be in your job, this can be in your marriage, this can be in your family, this can be in any circumstance where you find yourself under authority. It can be in the military, it can be in any kind of a school classroom situation. Someone takes their authority and twists it and uses it for evil.

And you think, the righteous man perishes off the earth. There is no good that is beautiful that's being laid. Look in a church, my goodness, you can't even begin to imagine the travesties that take place in the name of God and in a church.

Do not be dismayed. And I'll change this surprise to dismayed. In fact, I did.

I just didn't get it into this copy. Over the desirable goal. And then we actually start a fresh sentence here.

Because the high from over the high are watching and higher ones are over them. And the prophet of the land, and basically this is that difficult verse. But the sense of it is this.

I'm not sure we'll ever be able to straighten out the individual words. But the idea is, the prophet of the land is being consumed by this hierarchy. There's a structure, you know, the good old boy network.

The guy who promotes his crony. And there's nepotism, there's incestuous favoritism going on in the hierarchy. All the way up and down the chain.

And this is this protection system that goes on where people keep each other in power. You can actually see this even in the military, especially in the reserve. I've seen it where guys rotate from billet to billet.

And somebody is a friend of a guy that's got the ability to see who gets what appointment. And guys just rotate. They all kind of take care of each other.

And if you're outside that network, you're just an orphan. And they've got the little protection pipeline going there. And they're all going to make sure they get their years and their points and their retirement.

And if you're not in the network, you just have to trust God. Because you're not going to get any help. In fact, you're going to get just the reverse.

So the idea here is that the prophet of the land should be for everyone. Everyone ought to be able to participate. And this word prophet is Yitron, the prophet of the land.

This, again, is a temporal type of prophet. It ought to be for everyone. But instead, it's getting sucked up by this chain.

And there's a phrase here that has to do with the king being served from the field. Or the field is served by the king. It's muddy.

Nobody can figure it out. Check English translations. No two of them match.

But the idea is there is work going on in the fields. But the proceeds of that work, the Yitron, the benefit, the profit from that, doesn't go where it should. The poor ought to have a chance.

The corners of the fields ought to be left so that they can be gleaned. And they're not. It's a perverted government.

It's a perverted system of authority. And he says, don't be dismayed. The point here is when you see what ought to be coming to you or what ought to be going to those who are needy, going instead to people who are aggrandizing to themselves and constructing a network where they keep it all.

Don't be dismayed. Don't fall apart. Don't panic.

And he goes on to give some truths here in verse 10. The one loving silver will not be satisfied with silver. It doesn't matter how much you accumulate.

It will never be enough. And the one who loves abundance will not be satisfied with revenue. This word revenue almost literally means income.

It's from the verb ba, which means to go or come and to come in. And it's literally that which

comes in. It's income.

It's revenue. The one who loves abundance, it doesn't matter how much revenue is coming in. It's never going to satisfy.

This is all vapor. This government, this good old boy network, this perversion and corruption, this denial of justice to the poor, it's all vapor. Because when you multiply prosperity, you multiply those who eat it.

The literal verb here is akal, which means to eat. To multiply prosperity multiplies the eaters, the partakers, the consumers. And what is the skill that belongs to the lords of it? And this word skill is cheshbon.

It's the same word we've seen other places. It means the beneficial... I can't think of the English synonym that I use for this, but it has the idea of having a skill or an advantage, sort of an advantageous knowledge, an insight, having the knack, knowing how to make something go really well. So what skill belongs to the lords of this prosperity except to look with their eyes? They can see and take advantage of an opportunity, but this stuff is all going to go away.

Sleep is sweet for the worker, whether he eats little or much, but satisfaction for the rich does not allow him to sleep. This goes back to the idea of your conscience. What is going on in your soul? If you're seeking to satisfy yourself, you're never going to be satisfied, and even as you accumulate, you're going to be unhappy.

And what's the point here? Don't get caught up in the rat race. Don't get caught up in the... There can be sort of a competitive sense. There's sort of a pull, there's a draw, there's an attraction.

When you get caught up... If you ever get in an environment where there is power, where there's money, where there is something going on and people want to jump on the bandwagon and be a part of it, if you've ever been near a famous person or people who knew a famous person traveling their retinue... I saw them interviewing a guy, some unknown guy I've never heard of, but he used to play with Rod Stewart. He was a backup musician for Rod Stewart, and now he's got his own band. And he's really a jazz musician, and this was rock and roll, but he said, you know, I've done these different things at different stages that I enjoyed, but he said, you know, you don't know what it's like until you've been in the retinue, until you've traveled with somebody that big and that famous and that rich.

He said, the perks just are unbelievable. You can't believe how people fall all over themselves and the things that get thrown in and the things that get done and what money will buy and the adulation and the respect and the fawning and everything that goes on around somebody that's that powerful. Solomon is saying, that is something that will draw you away.

You will lose sight of the eternal Yitrone. And this happens in megachurches. This happens in

Christian ministries where a big idea gets underway and people start to feel like they're a part of something.

And any time you wind up getting in the periphery, the gravitational field, and the larger a church gets, the stronger that gravitational pull is, and it will suck believers in and give you a sense that you're a part of something big and something significant. And there is a part of our soul that searches for significance. And unless we're finding our significance in Christ, when we find our significance in what we do or what we are a part of, what church we attend, what group we identify with, there are people who would die for their denomination.

You ask them, well, what are you? They don't say, I'm a Christian or I believe the Bible. They say, I'm a somethingist. I'm this denomination or that denomination.

That's my identity. That's what defines me. And what a tragic thing it is.

And that's what Solomon is talking about here. He says, look, be a worker. And whether you have much or little, don't judge yourself by what you attain.

Don't judge yourself by how much you acquire. If you've got your heart in the right place, if you've got your focus on the good that is beautiful, your sleep will be sweet. What does David say? I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only, makest me to dwell in safety.

His eyes are on the Lord. His security, his confidence is in the Lord. I will lay me down in peace and sleep.

Thou, Lord, only, makest me to dwell in safety. Sleep is sweet for the worker, whether he eats little or much. But satisfaction, being sated, being filled is the word here.

Even when the rich is filled, he can't sleep. Satisfaction isn't satisfying. Then verse 13 of chapter 5. And I'm slowing down here just a little bit because I freshly retranslated this, and it's all fresh in my mind.

But verse 13, the word here is the word for affliction or illness. There is a sickening evil. You have the word for sickness or illness, and you have the word for evil.

There is a sickening evil I have seen under the sun. This is the strongest adjective. This is the strongest adjectival phrase in the negative sense that Solomon uses in the whole book.

And it's right here at the center of the book, which makes sense. What is the sickening evil that he's seen under the sun? It just makes you sick. It's an evil affliction.

But affliction is really not strong enough because you think, oh, well, it's an affliction. It sounds like something in your eye might be an affliction. This is a sickening evil.

Wealth that was being kept unto its baal, unto its owner or lord, unto his evil. You have the word

evil twice in this. And the idea of evil here goes beyond the moral idea.

This means misery, detriment, hurt. Wealth that is hoarded, it's kept, it's guarded. This is shamar, S-H-A-M-A-R, which is the Hebrew word that means to guard or keep.

This wealth is being kept, being guarded unto its baal, its owner or lord, unto his hurt, his evil. And that wealth perished in an evil business. And that word business is inyan.

It's the same word we have elsewhere translated answer. That wealth perished in an evil answer. And the idea here, keep in mind, we're at the very center of the book.

We have inyan mentioned at the beginning of the book. We have it here in the middle, and we're going to have it in the end. That wealth perished in an evil issue, an evil business, an evil answer.

And this man had begotten a son, and there was nothing at all in his hand. Nothing at all in his hand. That puts us in mind of Yitrong.

What are you going to have in your hand? And this man, as he came from his mother's womb, so naked he will return as he came, and he will not take anything away at all from his labor, which he can cause to go in his hand. Now the idea here is you can look at it at a surface level and say, well, the man had wealth, but then he made a bad business deal, and he lost it all. That's the way most of the English translations take it.

But my understanding of this, I think Solomon is aiming a little higher and illustrating at a little bit higher level. He's saying, this man guarded and kept all of this wealth, but it was a detriment to him. It was an evil to him.

It's like the rich man. Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. He kept this wealth to his hurt, but that wealth perished in the evil answer.

What is the evil answer? That everything in this life is temporary and you can't take it with you. It's the evil answer that Solomon defined back in Chapter 1. He guarded and kept the wealth as long as he was here, but when he died, he lost it all. He doesn't say, there he was in his house that used to be rich and he lost all of his furniture.

It says, as he came from his mother's womb, so naked he will return as he came. It doesn't matter how much you have in the bank. When you die, you're as naked as the day you were born.

In terms of what do you take with you? What does your soul carry away from this life? He will not take away anything at all from his labor, which he can cause to go in his hand. And again, you have halakh, which harks back to Chapter 1 again. And also, this is a sickening evil.

And I've got an extra N there, because I changed it from afflicting evil. It should be a sickening

evil. Just exactly as he came, so shall he go.

And what profit is there to him that labors for the wind? It harks all the way back to Chapter 1. The earth is going to go on. He labored and left his stuff in this earth and he's gone. Where is the Yitron? Solomon, in classic literary fashion, is restating and refreshing the themes that he introduced in the first chapter.

This is a sickening evil. Just exactly as he came. The Hebrew phrase here is very strong.

Just exactly as he came. What does Paul say? We brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out. Solomon says the very same thing a thousand years earlier.

What Yitron? What profit is there to him that labors for the wind? 17 of Chapter 5. All his days he is eating in darkness and great vexation and in his affliction and frustration. Behold what I myself have seen, good that is beautiful, Yahweh, is to eat and to drink and to see prosperity in all one's labor, which he labors under the sun from the number of days of his life that God gives to him because it is his portion, it is his allotment, it is something that is given to him by God. Also every man to whom God has given wealth and treasures and the power to partake, the power to eat from them and to receive his allotted portion, his inheritance, and rejoice in his labor, this itself is the gift of God.

Capacity, this is the good that is beautiful, this is the Yitron that lasts beyond, right smack in the center of the book. Every man to whom God has given wealth and treasures and the power to partake from them. What a contrast with the man we've just seen, the man who tried to guard and hoard his treasure in this life and when he died he's as naked as the day he was born, he takes nothing in his hand.

But what Solomon saw, good that is beautiful, is you do these same things, you eat and drink, we saw this in Luke, in Noah's day they were eating and drinking, in Lot's day in Sodom they were eating and drinking until the day that destruction came. The good and the bad all eat and drink and engage in the normal labors of life, but some people are gaining that good that is beautiful and others are not. Every man to whom God has given wealth and treasures and the power to partake from them.

These are things that God has given and the idea is you recognize that it is from God, you acknowledge that it belongs to God and you view it as a stewardship and you look for the good that is beautiful. This itself is the gift of God. And this man in verse 20 will not much remember the years of his life.

He's not banking and building up his esteem and his self-image and all in the years of his life. You know people who just can't get away from what they've done and what they've accomplished and you can't talk to them long before you find out who they knew and what they did and where they've been. The years of their life, that's who they are.

They're clinging to it. It's what makes them have value in their own eyes. But this man that God has given these things to, he's not going to much remember the years of his life.

Why? Because that's not what's important. That's what passes away. What is important? God is causing the answer.

God is causing the issue. This is a hit field. God is causing an answer in the joy of his heart.

He's got a joy that you can't take away. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. This is something that God gives and God creates in the soul.

And you have something permanent. You have something lasting. God causes the answer.

You notice when you have the good that is beautiful, God is in it everywhere. God gives the wealth. God gives the portion.

And God causes the answer in the soul. It's all about God partaking of the eternal, partaking of the divine. So then you get to chapter 6. In contrast to that, there is an evil I've seen under the sun.

It's multiplied upon men. A man to whom God gives wealth and treasures and honor, and there is no lack for his soul from all that he craves, but God has not caused him to be able to partake, to be able to eat from them. For a foreign man will eat them.

This itself is vapor and it is that evil sickness, that evil sickness right here at the center. How many chapters in Ecclesiastes 12? Where are we? 6-1. What is Solomon talking about? Same thing at the beginning, same thing at the end.

This is what the book is about. Are you going to partake of the good that is beautiful or the evil, sickening answer? If a man begets a hundred sons and lives many years, and many should be the days of his years, his years are full of days, but his soul is not satisfied from prosperity, and also there is no grave for him, I say a stillborn child is better than him. And there is some confusion about who it is that the grave belongs to here.

Some say there is no grave for the stillborn child. There is no grave for either one of them. There is no remembrance.

There is no lasting memory. He says a stillborn child is better than him. For in vapor he comes, and in darkness he departs, and in darkness his name will be concealed.

Is he talking about the stillborn child or the rich man? Take your pick. He is talking about them both. In vapor he comes, in darkness he departs, and in darkness his name will be concealed.

Also he does not see and does not know the Son. Is there calm to this one more than that one? It

actually says to this one more than this one. It is both zeh, Z-E-H in Hebrew, but we vary it in English because that is the way we speak.

Is there calm, this is the same word. Remember, better a palm full of calm than two palms full of dissension and so on we had earlier in the book. Same word, is there calm, is there peace to this one more than that one? Even though he lived a thousand years twice, but he has not seen prosperity.

This is tova, the feminine form of tov, which is the word good. What is the idea here? The prosperity that comes from God. God has not caused him to be able to partake.

He has not been given that portion. He does not have that joy in his soul that comes from partaking of the eternal. He is no better than a stillborn child.

What is the difference? They are both going to the same place. They are both going to end up in the next life with the same amount. All man's work is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not filled.

You could probably supply the word that in front of the second word there. All of that man's work is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not filled. It kind of reminds you of Paul talking to Timothy, ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge.

For what is the remainder? What is left over? What is the portion to the wise more than the fool? What is left over for the afflicted who knows to walk conspicuously before the living? Some people parlay their affliction into a kind of prosperity. They get attention. They get their demands met.

Better the vision of the eyes than the walking of the soul. This also is vapor and feeding on wind. We talked about this before.

The idea is to be seen and to have your needs met, to get over in this life in some fashion, to be a living dog better than a dead lion and so on. This is vapor and feeding on wind. None of this partakes of the eternal.

That which is was long ago called by its name, and it is known that He Himself is man. He is not able to judge with the one mightier than He. These people forget that there is a judge in heaven.

There is a God who is sorting out the wheat from the chaff, the gold from the stubble. There are certainly words being caused to multiply that are multiplying vapor. What is left over for man? What is it that is important and what counts? Who knows what is good for a man in his life from the number of the days of the life of his vapor? And it passes like a shadow.

So who will tell to a man what will be after him under the sun? There is an answer to those questions, and it is God. If man does not turn to God, he will never find an answer. A name is better than good ointment.

In the day of death and the day of birth, better to walk to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, which is the end of all mankind. The living will set it upon his heart. If we remember that this life is short, it is going to end in death, and we are going to be judged by God, we will keep our mind on these important things.

He goes on to talk about aggravation is better than laughter because in the distress of face the heart is made good. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning. The heart of fools is in the house of gladness.

If you get preoccupied with pleasure, instead of remembering that the trials of this life work patience, prepare us for the next life, better to listen to the rebuke of the wise than for a man to listen to the song of fools. The sound of nettles under the kettle, that is what the sound of laughter is among the fools. This is vapor.

It doesn't last. Ill-gotten gain will make foolish the wise, and what is given will make a ruin of the heart. Preoccupation with details of this life.

It doesn't have to just be possessions. It can be circumstances. It can be relationships.

The outcome of a matter is better than its beginning. How do you end up is better than how you start. All of us had a pretty shaky start.

We can look back at things we regret. It's not how you start, it's how you finish. And an enduring spirit is better than a proud spirit.

A long spirit is better than a tall spirit. Do not be troubled in your spirit to be angry. Anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Do not say, why is it the beginning days were better than these? Wisdom is not causing you to inquire about that. Good is wisdom with permanent possession. Not only do you have wisdom for this life, it helps you not stumble in the dark, but it's a permanent possession.

It's an inheritance. And it is profitable to one seeing the sun. For in the shade is wisdom.

In the shade is silver. And profit is knowing that wisdom gives life to her owner. Even though your form may drop and turn to dust, you have a life that partakes of the eternal.

Look at the work of God. Who is able to straighten that which he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity, the day of benefit, be for good. And in the day of calamity, look also at this.

Corresponding to this, God is working in a manner such that man will not find anything after it. God reminds us constantly that this life is temporary. People will remind you that your accomplishments don't make you golden forever.

You can do great things today. Nobody will remember tomorrow when you goof up. I have seen everything in my days of vapor.

There are the righteous perishing in his righteousness. There is the transgressor living long in his transgression. Don't be excessively righteous.

Don't make yourself overly wise. Don't get preoccupied with worldly wisdom. And don't just throw it all over because you will die in what is not your time.

It is good that you take hold in this, and from this do not cause your hand to rest. Fearing God comes forth from them all. Every time you wind up on a positive note and an encouraging note in Ecclesiastes, it is when Solomon starts talking about God and the eternal things that he makes available to us.

Wisdom helps the wise. More than ten rulers are in a city. He talks about cursing others and knowing that you have been cursed by others.

He has tried all these things with wisdom. You can read the rest of chapter 7 there. Remember, this is fairly fresh in our minds.

Verse 25, I turn myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and ingenuity. That is the word I was looking for earlier. What is the ingenuity? Cheshbon, and to know evil folly and the follies of rantings.

And I myself, in finding more bitter than death, the woman, the one who has snares and nets as her heart, chains are her hands. The good one before the face of God will escape from her. The transgressing one will be captured by her.

All of the alluring things of life are pictured in this woman. The snares and nets of this life, the things that allure, the things that distract our attention, make us forget who we are and why we're here. Look, he says, this I have found, says Kohelet, one to one to find the reckoning.

I'm comparing one thing to another. My soul intensively and repeatedly sought and have not found one man from a thousand I have found, but a woman in all these I have not found alone. Look at this.

I have found that God made man straight, but they have sought many reckonings. Many other ingenious ways of deciding how to live life. Who is like the wise? Who knows the interpretation of a matter? The wisdom of a man lights his face, and the strength of his face is changed.

I myself guard the mouth of the king for the sake of the contractual promise of God. He talked earlier about keeping that vow and not spoiling it with many words. He returns to that subject here in chapter 8 because we're kind of reversing our chiasmic structure a little bit.

Do not hurry from his presence. Walk, do not stand in an evil matter. For everything which he, God, purposes, hephetz, he will do.

In which the matter of the king is foremost. Who will say to him, what are you doing? The one keeping the contractual command does not know an evil matter. The time and the judgment, the wise heart knows.

To every purpose there is a time and a judgment because the evil of man increases greatly. Reinforcing, repeating, you know, people don't like repetition and reinforcement, but that's what Solomon is doing here in the Word. How many different ways has he told us? There is a desirable goal.

There is a purpose that comes from God. And how many and varied are the crookednesses and the distractions, the things we rail against and that we rant against, the things that allure us and distract us. Think about our life.

Think about the things we're going to do this afternoon and tomorrow and the next day. What are the fixed objects in our life? We have relationships. We have requirements.

We have employment. We have bills to pay. We have places we live.

We have things to take care of. We have all of the grist for the mill of daily life. Any one of these things can turn and pull us away.

How many of them has Solomon made? And when we have a problem in any one of those areas, we have a challenge, or we have something that goes super well and it suddenly draws us in and we say, boy, this is really taking off. This is going great. I love this.

This is turning into a fine accomplishment. I'm really enjoying this ride. I'm enjoying this particular area.

It's carrying me along. Whether it's a success or a failure, whether it's a positive or a negative, whether it's a good or an evil, if it draws us away from our perspective on good that is beautiful and things that last and what God will bring us into judgment for, it is a pitfall. It is a foolish thing.

It is a vapor. Measure by the standard of permanence. Many, many things.

There are people you just can't believe. I have such a fund of illustrations that I keep refusing to use because it is something that I am now seeing every day, how easy it is to get distracted by people and get distracted by issues and get distracted by situations and who shot John and who did this and what turf is this person protecting and what sense of self-importance has been bruised by this development and who had an issue and this person didn't like it and so now they're at odds and they're not speaking. I want to lay claim to this and oh no, I'm going to lay claim to it.

All of the politics and the fruitless, useless vapor that can easily consume our lives in any given area. Take your pick. Pick any area and it can be a distraction.

Solomon turns this every which way and he says, look, you've got to measure by the standard of permanence. Everything can be vapor. Everything starts out as vapor.

If you don't make an effort to seize and lay hold of the good that is beautiful and have it in your hand when you leave this life, you're going to leave this world empty handed. You're going to be like the man who had all of these accomplishments and did all of these things and guarded his wealth and when he exited, he's naked as the day he was born. Saved yet so as by fire.

Useless to the master. Useless to God. No reflecting surface at all for the glory of God.

You know why people are going to be in the darkness which is outside in the kingdom and beyond? Because they have no reflective surface. They're like a black hole. Light goes in that direction and it doesn't reflect.

It doesn't bounce off. It doesn't reveal the glory. It disappears when it hits that surface.

Why would God put people who are non-reflective in the place of His glory, in the place of the celebration of the Lord Jesus Christ? He's looking for things that reflect. You know, one of the characteristics of these people that are all into the macabre and the dark and the Satan worshiping and all that, did you ever notice that they all dress in black and they get black tattoos, they have black eyeliner and black nail polish and someone put black paint on their teeth? Black, black, black everywhere. Why? Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with Him. So why would people be in the darkness outside? Because they don't reflect.

They don't partake of the light. So this is what we're being called to. Verse 6 of chapter 8, to every desirable goal, every chepetz, there is a time and a judgment because the evil of man increases greatly.

Left to itself, it's like the second law of thermodynamics. Everything goes to disorganization. Everything put together falls apart.

There is not for Him knowing what will be, for that which will be, who can tell it to Him? How many times has Solomon asked this question? It's a ringing refrain. Who can tell you what's going to come after? There is an answer to that question. It's God.

But if you look around in the human world, nobody can tell you. Nobody can predict the future. The distinguishing mark of God, read Isaiah.

He says, I am the God that tells you what will happen before it takes place. Read Ezekiel. He

says, you can tell me from the other gods because I tell you ahead of time.

I can tell you the end from the beginning. I knew before I ever created the world everything that was going to happen. Verse 8, there is not a man of mastery in the Spirit to restrain the Spirit, and there is no one foremost in the day of death.

There is no sending forth in battle, and evil does not deliver its lords. There is no aid that you can get. It doesn't matter what a lord you are in this life and how much you accumulate.

In the day of death, you are just as helpless as a stillborn child. And I couldn't help but note here 7.12 where we had the phrase that wisdom gives life. That wisdom that was in the shade, that silver that was found in the shade, it gives life to its Baalim.

It gives life to its lords. But evil does not deliver its lords. All this I have seen, and to give my heart to all the work that is worked unto the Son with which a man gains mastery over a man for evil to him.

We are returning to that refrain of the corrupt authority structure and the oppression of the poor and the twisting of justice. Instead, I have seen the wicked approach come in from the holy place. They go forth and they commend themselves in the city that they have done right.

This is vapor. We don't commend ourselves. We saw this in Luke.

We should say, I am an unprofitable servant. Even if we do manage to do what we are supposed to and we serve as we should serve, both in the field and in the house, we should say, I am an unprofitable servant. I have done no more than what I am obligated to do.

Let God size up. Let God judge evaluation of profit. Because the edict against evil work is not worked quickly, instead the heart of the sons of man is filled up in them to work evil.

Because the one sinning, working evil a hundred times, endures for it. I myself know that good will be to those fearing God because they will fear before His face. Returning to that refrain, it is the fear of the Lord.

It is the beginning of wisdom. It is the beginning of laying hold of that yitron. There will not be good to the wicked.

He will not prolong his days like a shadow because he did not fear before the face of God. There is vapor which is worked upon the earth, verse 14, because there are righteous ones that befalls them according to the work of the wicked. There are wicked ones that befalls them according to the work of the righteous.

I have said, and I am telling you again, this is temporary. It is vapor. I myself commended pleasure because there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and drink and be

pleased.

And this will accompany him in his labor in the days of his life that God has given to him under the sun. When I gave my heart to know wisdom and see the answer that is worked upon the earth, there is your inyon again, for also in the day and in the night sleep with his eyes he is not seeing. I saw all the work of God.

Man is not able to find out the work that is worked under the sun on account of which man will labor to seek and will not find. If the wise one will speak so as to know, he will not be able to find. There is no human... We have been teaching the girls about the way people learn, the three methods.

You have empiricism, which is observation. You have reason or rationalism. And you have revelation.

Those are the three ways by which we learn. Empiricism and rationalism will never seize and lay hold of good that is beautiful. It can't happen.

It is only by revelation. And that is what God does for the righteous. That is what Solomon is talking about here.

Well, these more recent chapters I am not going to review in detail. We have been here in the not too distant past. Chapter 9, I have given all this to my heart to make all of this clear that the righteous ones and the wise ones and their works of service are in the hand of God.

This sums up much of what we have seen. We will skip on down. I will let you review the rest of those chapters.

They should be in our recent memory. Let's look at the last two verses of chapter 12. We will begin at verse 10 here.

Kohelet intensively sought to find words of Chepetz. Look at all of the different ways we have seen in this book where he has tried to impress on our hearts the importance of seeing that desirable goal in our lives, laying hold of it by faith, having something in our hand when we leave. The words of the wise are like these planting tools, scratching the hard ground to plant the seeds of the word.

If we master these things that have been collected and given a single place or a single pasture, we need to heed the warning. There are a lot of books. There are a lot of people meditating and trying to figure the answer out, but we just got through seeing up in chapter 7 and chapter 8 that the wise are never going to come to it by reasoning.

It is by revelation. It is what God has revealed. Kohelet has gathered that, put it in one place, revealed it for us, talked about it so many different ways, turned it from side to side, from top to

bottom, investigated it all, put it into the best words he could find.

Well, people can make books. There is just no end. They can meditate until they are blue in the face, until they are weary of the flesh.

The conclusion, when all has been heard here in verse 13 is, fear God and keep His commandments. This is for all. This applies to every person.

It doesn't matter if you are poor or great, rich or destitute. It doesn't matter your situation, your pressures, your successes, your failures. It's all the same.

Fear God and keep His commandments. This applies to every person. Why? God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

God will judge. It isn't our judging. It isn't our finding good in what we do.

It is the evaluation of God. That should be the standard by which we measure every endeavor, every desire, every thought and intent of the heart should be measured by the righteous standard of God's Word. That's what the book of Ecclesiastes is all about.

And that concludes our study of this wonderful book. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank you for the privilege of studying these truths.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister them to our heart.