

What Matters is That God Matters

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[0 : 00] So we are in Ecclesiastes together. It's my hope to finish Ecclesiastes 9.

It's been a while. But it's been good. It's been good because the word is good. The title of the message for this morning, what matters is that God matters.

I could even say it this way. What matters most is that God matters most. That's what I want to put forward to you through the message this morning.

Let me go right off the bat and put this quote up on the screen for you. Because I want you to think about this with me. To have Jesus is to have everything that God has to give us.

But to have everything without him is, in the end, to have nothing. I want you to think about that with me. To have Jesus is to have everything that God has to give us.

[1 : 14] In other words, when God gave us Jesus Christ to come and live in you, He didn't shortchange you anything that you need to live a life pleasing to him. When you got Jesus, you got all of God.

Now that is astounding to think of God, the maker of the universe, that we just praised from Psalm 33, living in you. You are in him and he is in you.

And again, to have everything without him is really to have nothing in this life. And then this as well.

Look at this. Christian living, then, is a response. You need to think of your life as a response to God. Your lifestyle, then, is saying something about God.

And more importantly, the way you live, your lifestyle, is saying something to God. It's either a message that God doesn't really matter or a message that God is who really matters.

[2 : 18] You with me? So, what I'm saying, in more technical terms, is that all of life is theological. All of life is about God.

Even unbelievers are living a life about God. They just don't know it. And they don't care about him. He doesn't matter to unbelievers.

But does he still matter? Just because I say there is no God, does that mean there is no God? Who am I? God matters. And the life we live as Christians needs to be lived back to God as a response.

All of your life as a Christian is being lived as a response. All of it. The question is, is it being lived in a determined way as a response to God in righteousness or something else?

Now, since you are responding to God by the life that you live, it means that God has done something. God has initiated something, right?

[3 : 33] You can't live in response to something without, first of all, a stimulus coming at you. God has done something. And you are responding to him in regard to that something.

Now, here's one way that the Bible tells you what God has done for you that warrants a response from you, beloved. Here it is. Let's put it up on the screen for you.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. God in human form came into the world to save sinners.

And that demands a response. The response is going to be one of I don't care or that changed my life.

But their responses, both of them. Right. The father has sent the son to be the savior of the world.

[4 : 37] Whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God, God abides in him and he in God. First John four.

Fourteen and fifteen. The father sent Jesus to be the savior of the world so that whoever would confess that Jesus is the son of God. God would then live in that person and that person in God.

That that's that should take your breath. What an astounding reality. You can see then why, as you read through the Bible, the radical nature of living for God is what it is radical.

Someone wrote a book called radical. And I want to submit to you that radical in the Christian life doesn't mean selling everything you have and moving to a third world country to serve Jesus.

Radical means living God in you every single day in your life in the details of your life. That's radical. Because God lives in you.

[5 : 49] You've been made a new creature, friends. Your entire being has been re-being. You're reborn. Now, there are only two ways to live that matter, according to scripture with God or without God.

And beloved, that is exactly how God views, as we saw in Psalm 33. God views or looks down on or his eye beholds the sons of men or mankind.

Male, female, black, white, rich, poor. Remember, God sees us in two classes. We either believe in him or we don't. We are either living with him and in him or we're not.

Now, that's God's economy. In all of the variety that he's made in human beings, that's how he sees us. Both, both of those responses to God, either living with him or without him, matter.

They both matter because both of those responses concern purpose we live for now and the place we will live after we die.

[6 : 58] So these are very weighty matters that we're talking about. As I, no pun intended, say, what matters is that God matters. As Christians, as followers of Jesus, there's only one foundational reality defining what matters most to us in this life.

Living in love for God and others because God loved us first. And there's your response. God loved us first.

He initiated. He acted in our wickedness, helplessness and sin. He sent his son to rescue.

And now we respond. And the rest of our lives are lived in response. Here's here's why I'm doing this. So many Christians miss the mark in this way.

They put a high priority on the gospel. As they are born again or saved. And then they forget or become absent minded about the reality that they need to continue to live in the gospel.

[8 : 08] The gospel doesn't stop when you're saved. The gospel keeps you saved and progresses you in that salvation as you live for Christ. You never outgrow your need for the gospel.

What is the gospel? The gospel is the wonderful, great news of what we just read in scripture on the screen. That God sent his son on a rescue mission to rescue sinners from themselves.

And by putting your faith or trust in Jesus Christ, then you can be forgiven for your sins by God the Father. So this is very personal. This is between you and God.

This is between you and God. Very personal. We bring glory to God as we live in his love. Here's another way of saying this.

I'll put it up on the screen again for you. This is saying the same thing in a more personal way. Your love for Jesus answers his love for you.

[9 : 12] Now that sums up the Christian life. Your love for Jesus answers his love for you. So you live your life each day answering with love.

The love Jesus has for you. Your love then is a response to what matters most to God. Now I'm going to say that again. You can see it up here. Your life is a response to what matters most to God.

Where we get into trouble is we live a lot of the time responding to what matters most to us. That's why what matters most to us needs to be Jesus.

We just we get in trouble so fast don't we. I want to encourage you today. I want you to be instructed in a way that encourages your life to focus on this wonderful God.

His son his word and his people. Friends that's what matters most to God. His son his word and his people. Now some of you have heard me say this before.

[10 : 22] I've had people that have talked to me about being saved. Being a Christian being born again. And they asked me how can I be certain that I'm a Christian.

And one of the things that I tell them right up front is this. Are you in your life evidencing demonstrating or showing. A growing love for the things that God loves most.

His son his word and his people. If you're not growing in a love for his son Jesus. For the Bible the truth.

And for his people the church. Bought with his blood. You need to think hard about whether or not you're truly a Christian. Now that's basic 101 Christianity.

So there's a way for you to know. There's a way for you to be certain. And that litmus test I think is one of the best. Well Solomon here.

[11 : 28] Is writing to help us escape lies. About all of this and embrace the truth. So this morning we're going to look. Specifically at.

Ecclesiastes 9 verses 11. Down through the end of the chapter verse 18. And we are going to take in the final two points. Of the little outline that I've been working from.

For the last few weeks or so. What I'm doing is I am outlining. Five important matters of life.

Showing God's wisdom for what makes life worthwhile. So let's read through the text together. We're going to pick it up in verse 10. Ecclesiastes 9 verse 10.

Whatever your hand finds to do. Do it with all your might. For there is no activity. Or planning. Or knowledge. Or wisdom. In the grave. Or shield.

[12 : 28] Where you're going. In death. Now that verse. Sums up. Pretty much. Everything he's been saying. In verses. One through. Nine. It's like a summary of the section.

And it hinges us into the next section. Verse 11. I again saw. So this is a repetitive kind of process. Solomon is engaging in.

Again. Then I saw. Under the sun. Here on earth. That the race is not. To the swift. The battle is. Not. To the warriors.

Neither is. Bread to the wise. Nor wealth. To the discerning. Nor favor. To men. Of ability. For time. And chance. Overtake them all. Moreover.

Man does not know. His time. Like fish. Caught in a treacherous net. Or birds. Trapped in a snare. So. The sons of men.

[13 : 25] Are ensnared. At an evil time. When it. Suddenly. Falls on them. Also. This I came to see. As wisdom.

Under the sun. And it impressed me. There was a small city. With few men in it. And there was a great king. Who came to it. Surrounded it.

And constructed. Large siege works. Against it. So this great king. Is making. War. Against this small city. But there was found. In this city. A poor.

Wise man. And he delivered the city. By his wisdom. Yet no one. Remembered that poor man. So I said. Wisdom is better than strength.

But. The wisdom of the poor man. Is despised. And his words. Are not heeded. The words of the wise. Heard in quietness. Are better than the shouting.

[14 : 19] Of a ruler among fools. Wisdom. Is better than weapons. Of war. But. One sinner. Destroys.

Much good. Well in previous messages. Here's what I've covered. We'll put these points up on the screen for you. One God. Worth. Knowing.

One fate. Worth. Studying. One life. Worth. Living. And next. That we want to cover. Next. One planner. Worth. Trusting.

Verses 11 and 12. One planner. Worth. Trusting. Now you can see the theme. Woven in this passage. Of the sovereignty of God.

The power of God. And that God is indeed. In the details. Of our life. Now. Just before we explore this point.

[15 : 14] Verses. 11 and 12. I think I want to. Do just a little bit more. Of connecting you. With the main idea. Of what we covered. Last week. And.

The main thrust. Of last week's message. Life is God's gift. To you. So make it count. For God. For God. Life is God's gift.

To you. So make it count. For God. Now the question. Then becomes. How. How do I make my life. Count for God. Well.

In summary. Here it is again. By living your life. So that your love. For Jesus. Answers. His love. For you. Man. I want you to hold on to that.

That is not original. With me. Living your life. So that your love. For Jesus. Answers. His love. For you. Man.

[16 : 11] That is such a great prayer. I want to just pray that. All day. Every day. Lord. Let me be living in a way. Where my life. My. My mouth. My words.

My deeds. Everything about me. Is answering your love. It's just a response. Of love. To love. What higher gift. Can I offer God.

Than that. To love him back. With the same love. He loves me. That's the Christian life. That's the Christian life. So you live his gift to you.

As your gift to him. God has given you his life in Jesus. Enjoy what he's given. Enjoy it. This is a message of enjoyment.

This is upbeat. This is good. God has given you his life in Christ. Enjoy what he gives. Now. This is so important for us. I think to grasp.

[17 : 08] I want to take. These few minutes. To help you connect. A few things here. Before we actually launch in. So you guys say. Boy. This is all for free. Right. That's right. You're not going to get charged.

Until we get into verse 11 and 12. And beyond. Right. This is all for free. But listen to this. Solomon commands us to do these things. Remember this from last time up here on the screen.

Go. Eat. Drink. And enjoy. Life. And we said that these are imperatives. These are commands. These are not negotiable things.

These are hills to die on. In terms of what the Lord wants you to do with your life. Go. Eat. Drink. And enjoy. Now that. Verses. Seven through nine.

Just let your eyes look back at verses seven through nine. Go then. Eat. Drink. For God has already approved your works. In verse seven. Let your clothes be white.

[18 : 05] All the time. Oil on your head. And then this. And nine. Enjoy life. With a woman. Or the man. Whom you have all the days. Enjoy your spouse.

Enjoy your marriage. Enjoy the life and friendship that you have. Enjoy your friends. In your family. And the different ways that God's provided for you. In life.

Enjoy all of that. For sure. In other words. What he's telling us here. Is to make the most of this. Make the most.

That. But. Listen now. That does not mean. That we are at liberty. To pursue. Anything. And everything. We might want in life.

And then kind of. Baptize it. For God. And say. Yeah. Well I'm doing this for God. When really. It has a lot more to do with what you want. And how you want to be.

[19 : 01] Right. And then we try to. Justify it. With these little things. We write off. And say. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. This. This for Jesus. It's not about that. It's not about pursuing. Whatever you want in life.

So here's the key. The key to enjoying our lives. While at the same time. Honoring God. Is. Look up here. Make enjoying Jesus.

What matters most to you. Make enjoying Jesus. What matters most to you. Is that up there? Yes. Excellent. Make enjoying Jesus.

What matters most to you. Now as soon as I say that. If you're like me. I know what's happening. You're sitting there going. I don't do that.

I just. I don't enjoy Jesus all the time. Or do you? Is there anybody in here. Who will raise their hand. And tell me. Every second of the day. You're totally cognizant.

[19 : 59] Of enjoying Jesus. For the record. There's no hands going up. And there better not be any hands. Up out there either. No.

Me neither. Is that a problem. What do you think? Is it a problem. That we're not more God conscious. All day long. Every day.

Now I'm going to show you some scriptures. Because I don't want you to sit here. And think that's impossible. It's actually not. It's actually not impossible. The fact that we don't do that more.

And that that isn't more of the natural aspect. Of the Christian life. Points towards something that we all have in common. What is it? This right here is teacher's pet.

Now if you don't know that. I love that. See. Yes. Sin. She said. Sin. Sin. Sin. We all have that in common. And that's the problem.

[21 : 00] That's the problem that we're dealing with. Here's what we're talking about. We want to enjoy our lives. As God's gift to us.

And we want to enjoy the material blessings. God gives to us. But. We don't want to enjoy any of that. More than we enjoy him.

Now the question is. Can we engage in the activities. And in the functions of our lives. And in the relationships of our lives. Draw enjoyment. Deep enjoyment.

Wonderful enjoyment. In those moments. And if we're not actively. Actually thinking about Jesus in that moment. Is that bad? Is that sin? Does that say that I'm enjoying this stuff more than I am him?

Oh. Help me with this. How do I work this out? What does all of that mean? Well. I think this is something that.

[22 : 01] We each grow in. So this is a process. So going. And eating. And drinking. And enjoying the things of life. Are good gifts.

From God. But. If we come to enjoy those gifts. More than the giver. Hear me now. Then why should the giver. God. Give us more of what is coming.

Between us. And him. Why would you do that? Why would you want him to do that? I wouldn't. But again.

The problem is. We often don't stop long enough in life. To think like that. If I'm enjoying the stuff of life. More than I'm enjoying the giver of that stuff.

I've got a problem. So. I don't. I'm not going to ask God to give you more. In your life. If it's clear to me. That you're not honoring him.

[22 : 59] With what you have. In life. Because it's getting between you and him. And I'm a pastor. He's a pastor. We're shepherds. We're going to say. Something else.

I don't know what we're going to ask. But we're not going to ask for that. We don't want to do that. Here's the idea that I'm talking about. Don't worship stuff.

Or other people. But we do. In other words. Let me. Let me get personal with you. For those of you who aren't married.

And you've been married. Widowed. Widower. Think of a really close relative. Or friend. In place. But I want to do this with marriage.

Here's what we can do in marriage. We can actually expect. Or demand. Our spouse. To be. What only God can be. For us. And when we do that.

[23 : 57] We're in trouble. When we do that. We're setting our marriage up. For failure. And disappointment. Our spouse. Cannot be for us. What only God can be.

Our spouse. Can't be our hope. You put your hope. In your spouse. You're in trouble. Our spouse. Can't be our savior. Our spouse.

Can't be our identity. We might be soul mates. Knit together. Spiritually. In the Lord Jesus. But my spouse. My wife.

Cannot be. Jeff's identity. I'm setting her up. For failure. If I do that. If I begin. To demand. Of her. This. Neediness. That says in me.

You've got to. Affirm me. You've got to. Secure me. You've got to help me. Feel. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little.

[24 : 49] Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Little. Son.

as a unit. You understand? Christian marriage, above all things, is supposed to be a depiction of the love that Jesus has for his bride, his spouse, if you will, the church.

Now, that's Ephesians 5, right? So I don't look to my spouse to be what only Jesus is supposed to be for me. But I share life with my spouse and hand in hand, we walk forward in that love for Jesus, not asking, expecting, or demanding something from each other that we know only our God can supply.

But we look together to him to supply it. And as he supplies it, we share it with each other. I share Jesus' love for me with her.

She's first in line to get that. I share Jesus' wisdom that he gives me with her. She's first in line to benefit from that. The gentleness, the tenderness, the kindness that Jesus brings into my life as my Savior, she's first in line.

[26 : 32] As I turn from my Savior to the real world, she's first in line to receive that from my life. You follow? Oh, this is all for free now.

Okay? This is, I'm just, I'm just wanting, I'm desperate for you guys to make some connections here with me this morning. So in terms of honoring God, in terms of enjoying, enjoying what he gives to you in life, here's how I would encourage you to think about this.

Right up here on the screen. The only way our enjoyment of God's gifts would threaten our joy in God is if we separated the gift from the giver, failing to thank him for all that we receive at his hands.

Now, a few moments ago, I told you that living in this God consciousness isn't an impossibility. It's the normal Christian life. I want to show you in Scripture and back that up.

All right? I want you to think that's just my opinion. Because my opinions don't matter. So I'm going to put you to work now. Before we go back to Ecclesiastes, hold your finger there. And if you'd go to Colossians, where you're doing all your memory work, chapter 3.

[27 : 45] Colossians chapter 3. I want you to see this in your Bibles with me. What are we dealing with as we turn here? We're dealing with the reality that God has called us as his people to live in a constant God consciousness of him all day through the day in all the matters of life.

Is that really possible? So that everything that we're living in life is being lived as a response to him. Not to circumstances, friends.

You're not so much responding to the circumstances in your life as you are to God working in those circumstances in your life. You see the difference? Responding to God in the circumstances of your life gives you a steadiness because God doesn't change.

Circumstances are all over the map. But if you read through those circumstances and lay hold of Christ Jesus as you go through them, what are you holding to?

The steadiness. This doesn't shift. You see? And God holds you on that rock. That's the psalmist speaking. God is my rock.

[28 : 56] Do you see how oftentimes in the scriptures he says that? And there's all kinds of trouble going on around him? But what's steadying him? He's reached into those circumstances to the God that is in them and behind them in all those details and holds on to God in faith.

Holds on to those promises. And that takes him through. Look at Colossians 3.17. And just see if your Bible gives you any clauses or exit strategies or eject handles to bail out here.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. You know what those alls mean in the Greek language?

What do they mean, Greg? All. Whatever you do in word or deed, that pretty much covers just about anything going on in your life.

What does it say? Do all of it in the name of. That means by the will of God, according to the will of Jesus working in your life. And he doesn't stop there.

[30 : 09] Giving thanks. Giving thanks. It's really hard to be thankful to God when you're not even aware of him. Let me give you one more in Ephesians. Greg, I might not get finished with Ecclesiastes 9 today, brother.

Ephesians 5, verse 20 is a good cross-reference for that. Ephesians 5, 20. Now, I want you to notice some of the superlatives here.

Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

Again, friends, I just say in order for you to be giving thanks to God always in all things in word and deed and whatever you're doing in life, bringing glory to God, then you have to have a constantly cultivated God consciousness about your life.

You need to begin to see and grow in seeing everything as coming from the hand of God. You with me? Here's the counter to that.

[31 : 30] Here's the issue that we face. We learn to be comfortable with an absent-minded spirituality. We learn to grow comfortable in an absent-mindedness about God.

I'm a Christian. I got saved and I cruise. There is no cruise in Christianity. No cruise control. Zippo. In fact, there's not even automatic transmission.

It's standard shift, baby. You got to work the clutch. That's the Christian life. Right? That's right. That's what it is.

OK, there's so much more I want to say about this. We're not going to say it. We'll wait. We'll save it. Let's turn to what Solomon says. All right, we'll go back to Solomon and Ecclesiastes.

Hopefully, hopefully, hopefully all of that hasn't worn you out and you're ready to go to Ecclesiastes now. Here's the thing. As I do all of this, I realize. I want to brag on Jesus and I want my New Testament friends to realize that there's Jesus all through this.

[32 : 44] Now, he's not saying Jesus, right? But there's Jesus. This was written for a reason. And we all know that the Bible was written with Jesus as its center.

Right? So this is all about honoring God and his New Testament Christians. We honor God through our relationship with his son, Jesus Christ.

I just want you to hold on to that so that you're living out of that relationship and that character and you're not seeing this as some kind of a go eat, drink, do.

It's not license. It's not legalism. It's Christ and him crucified. So in verse 11, he says this, I again saw under the sun.

The is not to the swift. The battle isn't to the warriors, neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability for time and chance. That's interesting.

[33 : 43] Overtake them all. Moreover, man doesn't know his time. Oh boy. So here's what we're like. We're like fish caught in a treacherous net or birds trapped in a snare.

Really? So the sons of men are ensnared and they're ensnared at an evil time when suddenly it falls on them. What in the world is he talking about with all of this?

What is going on? Well, what do I mean when I talk to you or mention to you in this point one planner worth trusting one planner? This is the counter to the philosophy that you have all the time you want to do whatever you want in whatever way you want.

That's not true. It's also not true when people say, well, we may not have all the time we want, so if this is it, I'm just going to do as much as I want to do when I want to do it in whatever way I want to do it because it's all about me.

That's not true either. They're going to find out real quickly that's not true. So here's what makes the counsel of verses 7 through 10 so critical for us.

[34 : 54] The reality of this life, the reality of living under the sun in this existence that we have on earth is that things often do not turn out like we plan.

Now does that happen to you often? Even in the details of the day, right? You set out with a certain thing going on in your head or your heart or for your family only to find out that this happened or the kids did this and you got to stop and you got to go take the diaper off and put them in the bathtub and say let's spray all this you know.

Hey that's real isn't it? That's right. Or you're driving along and everything's supposed to be great and you hear somebody getting sick in the back seat and you're pulling over. See we raise three of these little guys.

We know, right? Or whatever. Or your spouse gets really sick. Or you lose your job. Or the economy tanks. Or this weird thing called COVID hits the world.

And makes the world go even more crazy than it was before. This is the question in all of that is well where's God? Where's God?

[36 : 03] And I want to encourage you he's gone nowhere. He is right where he's always been. Look at this up on the screen with me. This might help. The mind of man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps.

That's Proverbs 16 9. So we learn to build our expectations on what seems to us to be the most plausible outcomes for the things for the way things work and are supposed to work as we understand them.

We have an idea this is the way stuff's supposed to work. This is the way all of us are supposed to be able to get married and have beautiful kids and live into old age and retire and do the things that we want to do.

And it just you know what sometimes not so often maybe sometimes. I want you to notice the text.

Notice the text in verse 11. See if this is how it reads. The swiftest person will win the race. The battle will always be won by the best and bravest warriors.

[37 : 09] Wise people will earn a good living. Discerning people will get wealthy. Skilled people will find favor with those who value their skills and appreciate them for who they are and what they bring to the table.

And what does Solomon say to all of that? No way. No way. That's not life. It's just not. Sometimes people recognize and do right.

Often times they don't. So what do we call these? Ironies. These are the ironies of life that we all live with. Every one of us. Paradoxes.

Incongruities. Contrarities. They all serve to reflect the wisdom Solomon gave us back in chapter 8 verse 17. Look there with me.

What does he say in 8:17? And I saw every work of God. So he is alert to this. I concluded man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun.

[38 : 14] Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover this work of God behind the scenes. And though the wise man should say, I know, in reality, he can't discover either.

Even the wisest of men cannot look into these circumstances and see all of the nuances and details of how God's working in adversity and prosperity.

Can't do it. So I've encouraged you through nine chapters now, don't waste your time trying. You've got a lot better things to do with your resources and your time and your relationship with God than playing God.

Live by faith, not by sight. faith. That's what we're being encouraged to do. Notice, and I'll put this up on the screen for you here. Notice what he says.

And I saw every work of God in 8:17. I saw every work of God. And then notice in chapter 9, verse 11, I again saw under the sun.

[39 : 22] So now we have two connecting thoughts here about the ironies of life. back in 8, I looked, I tried to look at the work of God, and you know what?

You can't figure it all out. You just can't do it. Now he comes in chapter 9, verse 11, and he says, I've noticed that the swiftest person doesn't always win the race.

The most mighty warrior doesn't always lead the troops into successful victory in battle. The most skilled laborer isn't always the one who's recognized.

appreciated. These are ironies. These are realities. Now the question comes, what are you going to do with them, Christian? What's that going to do to your life?

Do you know what it does to many Christians? It twists them up and warps them. The heat, the heat that God applies to their life to refine them, to purify them, to burn off the impurities, the heat, Christians will allow that heat to warp them, twist you out of shape, make you what's that character?

[40 : 40] It just came to me, Suzanne, help me. The character in Dickens that we saw that he was all, you know, he was all twisted and all messed up and he had the greatest name.

Oh, I hate it when I do that. I shouldn't have mentioned it. Dickens comes up with the greatest names for characters. You hear the name and you see that's what they are.

And this guy was a wretch. He was awful. Wish I could think of that. Anyway, Christians can become like that. Because of the circumstances and the heat of life will twist us off, make us cynical.

Now, where's Colossians 3.17 and Ephesians 5.20 in that? Giving thanks in all things. It's not there.

This is why I want to encourage you to be very, very careful about how this works out in your life. Notice at the end of verse 11, it reads, because you might have a question about this, so I'm just going to deal with it real quickly.

[41 : 45] Time and chance overtake them all. In these ironies of life, time and chance overtake people. And he's going to tell us that overtaking is like getting caught in a trap.

It comes on you real suddenly. What is he talking about here? Time and chance overtake them all. All five translations I typically work from had this same rendering, all five of them, time and chance.

I was hoping I'd find one of them that I trust that wouldn't say that, and they all said it. So then I had to keep digging. And I dug and I dug, and here's what I came up with, again I'm so indebted to Dr.

Barak, who helps me so much with these naughty problems that I face often. Dr. Barak believes that Solomon was using two words, I'm putting it up here on the screen, two words, time and chance, to convey a single meaning.

It's known in literature as a *hendiadys*. *Hendiadys*. And that meaning was more like what we would understand as a timely event or a timely happening.

[42 : 54] And that fits the context a lot better. I was reading that and thought I'm buying into this, this sounds right to me because as I've studied through this now very carefully, that holds the context and the main point Solomon's making a lot better than the idea.

Here's what we can know for sure. When you study the Bible and you understand the working of God as a God who's in control of everything, you understand there is no such thing as luck and there's no such thing as fortune.

Let me read your fortune. No, no such thing. And there's no such thing as luck. I know what we mean when we say well good luck. I'm not going to say to my brother Wesley well good luck on Thursday.

I'm going to say we're going to be praying for you. Because I know who's in control of the details. So I'm going to go to him and ask him to help you. That's what I'm going to do.

If you'll join me in that. We can know that. No luck. So when it comes to the way life works, we have to always consider the one factor that keeps just about everything in our lives from being certain.

[44 : 06] Except for the certainty of death. And that factor is God. God. Oh you don't want to forget him. What does the scripture tell us?

Look up here on the screen with me again. Many plans are in a man's heart but the counsel of the Lord will stand. Make your plans but just understand that God's counsel about your life is what's going to stand.

Now are you good with that? You see, that's Proverbs 19 21. We can plan what we want but it doesn't mean that the outcome we want is going to happen.

Even though we might work hard and think we deserve it. It still might not happen. Again are you going to let the heat of that moment twist you out of shape and make you bitter and resentful and cynical?

The planner controls the details and the outcomes and the question is is that a good thing?

[45 : 10] Are you okay with God being in control of your life? If you say not really I'm going to say well tough. In all love tough. Because he is.

He's in control and it is a good thing. The truth is most of us don't like that arrangement. The truth is now come on we're going to be so honest with the Lord because he sees into our hearts anyway.

There's not an unbeliever on the planet that's good with a sovereign God. Not one. They don't like the idea that God's in control of everything and that they are going to answer to him.

The Bible tells us that. But there are also many Christians who aren't okay with the fact that God is in control of all the details of their lives. How do I know that?

Well sometimes we're guilty of trying to control those outcomes. We're sometimes guilty of complaining. Does complaining sound to you like people who are content with God's way of dealing with things?

[46 : 14] No. Say what about when people are bad to me? Well I can just tell you this. Whenever anything bad happens to you it's because God has taken a hike and he's out of the picture and he's no longer God anymore.

God don't you know my heart Lord. Don't strike me dead. Isn't that ridiculous? Now when you hear your pastor say that doesn't that sound ludicrous and you just want to say he's blaspheming.

Well the Lord knows my heart. The shock value of that though is the reality that we sometimes live. When we complain and grumble we're complaining and grumbling against God not just circumstances.

Yeah. Where is God when it doesn't turn out like we want? Verse 12. Moreover then man doesn't know his time. Fish caught in a treacherous net.

Birds in a trap. So and he likens it to us. So mankind people are ensnared at an evil time and when it suddenly comes on them. I think that helps further the point.

[47 : 29] And so let me ask you let me ask you. When is the best or the right time for trouble to come into your life? Just think about that. Just think about that.

If you ask the average person is there ever a good right or best time for you to experience hard bad sad or tragic things. Because I know you don't like any of that right?

And you often complain about it right? So you tell me when the best time is. The Lord the Lord says I get to decide that.

Now do you trust your sovereign God to do the very best and highest thing for you or not? Verse 12 says we are ensnared at an evil time.

That is we get caught up in difficulties. We get caught up in hardships and troubles and the circumstances of life. We don't know when trouble will come into our lives.

[48 : 28] So it comes like a trap. A trap. You wouldn't walk into a trap if you knew it was a trap. Most likely it comes suddenly unexpectedly surprisingly. That's how life works often.

But when hear me now when not if but when these times come you can't just write God out of your life. Or you can't not in reality.

You can't live like God his wisdom or his ways no longer matter. I'm experiencing difficulty so it's all about me and my walk with God doesn't matter right now.

I just need to get this problem solved. I need to make this pain go away. You can't do that and still expect to enjoy your life.

In the trouble. The question then becomes can we actually enjoy life in the trouble. And I say absolutely. I didn't say enjoy the trouble.

[49 : 33] I said enjoy life in the trouble. So as a God fear there's one planner worth trusting and his plan is never foiled by your trouble.

Your trouble is always within the greater purposes of his plan and that's why we need to hear what Solomon says next. There is up here on the screen one truth worth serving.

One truth worth serving that completes my little outline. Hmm. Is that what it's saying? Yeah. You good. Okay.

One truth. My slide person over here is making noises so I'm tuning in. Yeah. One truth worth serving verses 13 through 18. Also this I came to see as wisdom.

Now notice how many times wisdom comes up in this passage whenever you're reading the Bible and you're reading it in chunks or taking a passage and looking it over. Notice how many times you have repeated repeated phrases or words.

[50 : 35] So count up the number of times wisdom is mentioned. So also this I came to see as wisdom under the sun and it impressed me. Here was this guy in the city. They made war against it.

Verse 15. The wise man delivered the city by his wisdom. No one remembered him. Verse 16. So here's what he concluded.

Solomon concluded wisdom is better than strength but the wisdom of the poor man is despised and his words aren't heeded. The words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler.

Wisdom is better. What do you think the point of the passage concerns? Wisdom. Wisdom. The wise. That's right. Seven times in the New American Standard Translation seven times in these verses Solomon uses wise or wisdom.

So that's the main idea that we can focus on. And what we want to center on is the story. The story is the middle part bracketed in all this talk about wisdom.

[51 : 41] So that serves as kind of the meat. So let's zero in on the story. Solomon tells us in verse 13 that he actually witnessed this as a true story.

Look back up in there with me. Also this I came to see as wisdom under the sun and it impressed me. So Solomon saying I witnessed this and it had an impact on me.

It influenced me. In my life. I wouldn't think that'd be an easy thing to do with a guy who was the wisest man in the world and with the richest man in the world. But this impressed him.

So much so he drew some conclusions. First here's the first thing he thought. Look at the text with me. Yet no one remembered that poor man. And then notice this.

But the wisdom of the poor man is despised and his words are not heeded. No one remembered him and no one heeded him after the fact. People tend to forget.

[52 : 41] To discount and to dishonor wise people and their wisdom. You know why? Because people live for the moment. We're trained to live for the moment and we don't see the value of wisdom carrying us through the moment to the next one.

The steadiness the rock that we plant our feet on and can draw from on a constant basis. Most of us live by the seat of our britches just trying to get through the next moment of pain or the circumstance that's uncomfortable or the problem that needs to get solved.

And God says that's not the way I call to live. That's not a thankful Christ honoring life. There's something better than that. That's what I'm calling you to.

That's what the text is calling us to. People tend to forget the world doesn't treasure the wisdom of God. They consider it to be foolish. Secondly.

Wisdom is better than strength, he says. Wisdom is better than strength. The wisdom of God is better than what mankind tends to trust to guide his life. People trust in all kinds of things to guide their lives, to give them direction in life, to bring focus and purpose and meaning to their life.

[54 : 02] Solomon is telling us there's only one thing that can do that in your life and do it in a steady way, a constant, trustworthy way. And it's truth. It's God's wisdom.

It's truth. We drive our lives into the truth and define our lives by the truth in Christ. Third, the words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

What's he saying here? He's building on this idea of wisdom. We could probably best understand the gist of this by turning to another of Solomon's Proverbs.

Let me just read it for you and then I'll give you the reference. All right, let me read the text from Ecclesiastes again for you. The words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

Listen to this and see if it helps. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.

[55 : 08] I think the ESV says the tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

That interesting. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, makes knowledge acceptable. All right, parents, you want your kids to receive the wisdom of the Lord.

You want your kids to be open to the wisdom of the Lord. You want other people in your life that you deal with to be warm to the wisdom of the Lord.

Well, first thing you need to remember and hold on to is the world's never going to pat you on the back for being a good Christian. They're going to persecute you. They're going to call you foolish, make fun of you. They're not going to give you the promotion.

If you live for Christ, these things are going to happen. But as we deal with people in the wisdom of the Lord, a wise tongue, the tongue of the wise, those who have the wisdom of God residing in them and they're speaking good speech from that wisdom, the tongue of the wise commends knowledge, makes knowledge acceptable.

[56 : 15] People people hear it. And because you're offering it in the wisdom of the Lord with carefulness and love and tenderness, it can warm. It can balm. It can be readily accepted.

That should be happening between us. How many people in here really give two hoots about my opinion?

None. But you probably have a really high regard for people who want to speak God's opinion to you as you should. And that's what we need to do. So the words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler.

Yes, absolutely. One commentator added that this helps us understand that powerful people listen to me now, powerful people in this case, a ruler, whoever that is, can sometimes make it really difficult to listen to the voice of wisdom.

You ever had that? You ever had a boss or an influential person in your life make it difficult for you to hear and heed wisdom because of the way they were abusing their power? Boom. Boom. That's life.

[57 : 25] Again, are you going to let that twist you up? Are you going to look to something more steady? And then fourth and finally, wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys good.

No matter how superior wisdom might be, one foolish act by a sinner can destroy the good results of wisdom. That's a quote from Dr. Barrett. One foolish act by a sinner can destroy the good results of wisdom.

Have you ever experienced that in your life? You try to do the right thing. You lay the groundwork. You prepare. You go in. You do your thing. You're hoping that all of that will hold and carry. And one person just tears it all to pieces.

What are you going to do, Christian? Where are you going to go? How are you going to manage that? We go back to what we said before.

If you're living your life in love as a response to the love God has for you, that's going to help orient you. It's going to give you perspective. It's going to help you battle against an absent-minded spirituality and have a God consciousness about those events.

[58 : 36] And your greatest treasure and desire in those moments is going to be, how do I please the Lord? Not how do I get out of this? How do I please the Lord in it and through it?

Well, you don't want to be that foolish person. Works that other people lay in honor of the Lord.

So under the sun, from an earthly perspective, foolish, evil men can and do thwart and dishonor the good of the wisdom of the wise. But hold on to this.

The Bible is clear. God and his purposes cannot be ruined and they cannot be undone. All that God wills will stand.

Every single bit of it. Again, it's why I took you to Psalm 33 for our call to worship. I want to put this back on the screen and let you see it. Y'all throw that up there for me, Michelle.

[59 : 36] Psalm 33, 8 through 11. We read this this morning. You see that? Let all the earth reverence the Lord. Fear means high and holy regard for the Lord, not trembling as much as regard.

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him, for he spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations and frustrates the plans of the peoples.

But the counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart from generation to generation. See, nothing can thwart the plans of God's heart for your life. Nothing. Not even you.

You can't even get in God's way. Does that help you? And then finally, this look at this one. Look at verses 20. And 21.

Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield for our heart rejoices in him because we trust in his holy name. There's a lot of richness there. A lot of richness.

[60 : 36] So then, this is how we'll end with these five points. There's one God worth knowing, one faith worth studying, one life worth living, one planner worth trusting, and one truth worth serving.

But none of this happens in our lives apart from God. May he be blessed and exalted forever. Will you pray with me?

Father, your word is such a treasure and it's such a joy to sit and hear from your truth and your wisdom about life.

It's so practical and it drives right into the bone and the marrow of how we live and what we think and what we do. So we ask that you would help us to honor you.

That we would be good doers of the word and not hearers only. That we would heed what we've heard and put it into practice in our lives.

[61 : 40] That we would review this and hold on to the central truth that living our lives in a way that pleases you is all about answering with love the love that you have for us.

Please help us to hold on to that this week, Lord. I pray that your people in their hearts would go through this week with a greater sense of God consciousness and gratitude in their lives, looking for fresh ways that you are working in their lives so that they can offer you a new song.

That is a fresh song of response to those fresh ways of you doing and ministering and loving and showing your steadfast love to them. God, may you bless these precious hearts and souls and may you keep them and guard them against evil and help them to live lives that please you as they build treasure in heaven.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.