

What is Life About? (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 November 2024

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 0 0] We will be in Ecclesiastes this morning, but I'm going to take you into some familiar territory in order to do that. We're dealing with a kind of a part two here in the passage that we're going to be looking at in Ecclesiastes from chapter seven.

And we're answering the question from this passage, what is life about? What is life about? Now, that's not a small question. And of course, it depends on who you ask as to what answer you're going to get, right?

If you ask someone out and about who does not follow the Lord, doesn't believe in the Lord, you're going to get an answer that has absolutely nothing to do with the wisdom of God.

If you ask people from different denominations and faiths around the world, imagine what kind of answers you're going to get from a Hindu, from a Mormon, from a Buddhist.

Just think about that question and the various answers that you might receive from different people around the world as they try to answer that question.

[1 : 0 5] And believe me, they are answering it, aren't they? Because they answer it by the way they live. You answer that question every day of your life by the way that you live. What is life about?

Now, for us, what's it about? Who's it about? It's about Jesus Christ. At least that's what we say if we say we're Christians, right?

It's about Jesus Christ. And so now we back up and we ask ourselves, how much of the way that I live my life each day, regardless of my occupation or what I'm doing in a given day, how much of my life reflects that I am living life for Christ?

Now, that means that you're adopting the wisdom of Jesus in the way that you interpret the issues of life. As life comes at you, you interpret or you perceive those things.

You make meaning of those things in life based on the wisdom of Jesus and your relationship to Christ. Everything comes through your understanding of who He is and why He's leaving you here on this planet.

[2 : 1 3] Isn't that the way we're supposed to live? This is the way we bring glory to God. We reflect the wisdom of Jesus and the character of Jesus and the priorities of Jesus by living the life that we live.

So we husband Jesus way. We wife Jesus way. We are employees and business people Jesus way.

And we don't have to guess at that stuff because we have the word. And this is what we want to talk about as we look into Ecclesiastes chapter 7.

But again, I'm going to take you into some familiar territory in just a moment. We're dealing with Solomon's answer to this question. And the question, in order to answer, it kind of takes us back to the beginning of human life on earth.

And so we're going to go, you can hold your finger there in Ecclesiastes 7. We're going to go back to Genesis. This is some familiar territory for us. And by the way, beloved, let me just let you know as you're turning to Genesis chapter 3 that I will be back in Genesis.

[3 : 21] Genesis. We're going to get there. Your patience is very welcome. And I thank you for it. But I hope that you come every Sunday saying it doesn't matter what Jeff preaches as long as he's in the word and he does a good job of being in the word.

It's the word. So that's what we're going to work on this morning. But I do have plans to get back in it. Suzanne and I will be going on a little hike excursion away, literally for me, as we go up into Crozet for this week and get some time away.

We try to do that each fall. And then so I'll be out next Sunday, but we'll have someone here to fill the pulpit. We know who that is. You'll see. And Greg will let you know more about that.

And then we'll be back the following week, but he'll be in the pulpit again. So I'll be back in the pulpit, I think, toward the end of November. And I've got one more message I want to do in relationship to what I'm preaching today.

And then we'll probably start back in Genesis in December, the first Sunday in December. And when we start back in Genesis, we'll be in the flood. That's where we'll pick up.

[4 : 24] So if you're wanting to prepare, we'll hit the passage that talks about Noah and his family actually entering the ark and what's going on with all that. OK, and we'll probably be several messages talking about that.

But for now, let's talk about Genesis 3, Adam and Eve. And what they did is they foolishly listened to or heeded Satan's answer to the question, what's life all about?

Well, God already made them to know the answer to that. And they were living it with the Lord. But they fell into sinful rebellion. And the devastating results of that on the human race have been with us ever since.

And it is truly devastating because this is what sends people to hell. Our souls separated from spiritual life with God due to personal sin.

Your sin does not send me to hell. Mine does. And so this is a very personal issue for each one of us. Now, here's how the exchange took place as God had already wired Adam and Eve to know and live out the answer to the question, what's life all about?

[5 : 34] It's about living in relationship to God as he made us to be. That was the answer. It was quite straightforward. But this happened in Genesis 3, 1 through 5.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, indeed, has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?

And the woman replied this to the serpent, from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat from it or touch it lest you die.

The serpent said to the woman, you surely will not die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Now according to Satan, listen to this, according to Satan, life on this planet as a human being is about being like God by not being limited in your knowledge.

[6 : 39] You hear that answer? It's about being like God by not being limited in your knowledge. That is a lie.

Why? Satan was lying. If you look at Genesis chapter 1, beginning in verse 26, then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

So here we have right off the bat, God is making humanity in His own image according to His likeness. That's the wisdom of God. And let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So there's an authority here that's being given to humanity to rule over what God has made. In other words, this is a way that God is saying to humanity, I made all this for you.

All of this is to serve you. And you are to rule over it. What a privilege. What a beautiful responsibility for our God to create an entire system of life based on serving us.

[8 : 00] Wow! As we serve Him. This is wonderful. And you would think this would be enough to keep them on the straight and narrow.

Go a little further with me and look at verse 27. God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them.

And God blessed them. And God spoke to them. He said something to them. He spoke to His creature. And He said, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and over every single living thing that moves on the earth.

What a tremendous responsibility God has given to us. And then in verse 31, God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, and there was a sixth day.

Now, here's the statement that I want to make based on what we've read so far from the wisdom of God helping us to understand our beginnings and answer the question right from the beginning, what is our life all about?

[9 : 12] Heaven help us, there are so many people in our world that are aimlessly wandering around and struggling against the issues of life because they are not grounded in the purpose for which they were made.

They don't understand that they are worshipers to worship God alone. And they worship themselves and everything else. But here's the statement that I want to put up here. Adam and Eve were already as much like God as God wanted them to be.

They don't have to struggle to be little gods. That's the problem. That's what's going to happen. We're all going to struggle now with trying to be these little gods to our own self, right?

Gods unto ourselves. No, they didn't have to do that. God had made Adam and Eve as much like God, in my image, in my likeness, as God wisely wanted them to be.

Now, here's the rub. Satan's answer was about convincing this couple that God's ways were limiting them in their relationship with Him.

[10 : 23] And the rub is, that's a partial truth. Satan was saying this, though. He was saying, you're missing out on something that will open your eyes to being more like God.

Now, go back to the statement. If you will do this, it will open your eyes to be more like God. In other words, God's holding out on you.

You are missing out on something that God is keeping from you. I will show you the way to get more of that. But God, in His wisdom, had made Adam and Eve as much like God as God wanted them to be.

So this is a lie. And this is a lie that He continues to perpetuate on humanity today. It's the lie He whispers in your ear and in all the people that you know and interact with in relationships.

He's whispering the same thing in their ear if He's not shouting it out loud. God is holding out on you. There's more to life than this. Reach out and grab more and more and more.

[11 : 31] And if He can get you in that cycle, all the better for Him. Every single person living after Adam and Eve has had his or her mind corrupted by sin.

That wasn't the case though with Adam and Eve before they sinned. They knew the truth and in an uncorrupted way. It wasn't polluted at this point in their life.

Yet we notice that even in their perfection, listen to this now, even in their perfection, God had limited their knowledge. He did that by keeping them from the knowledge provided by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

I am limiting you in what you can know. But that is my wise plan for you and it is perfect. No, no, listen.

It is very good. Do you see that? It is very good that these people are limited in what they can know. Again, they're not little gods.

[12 : 46] They can't know everything God knows. That's not how God made us. Now, we're all nodding right now. I'm going to see how many of us are still nodding in about 10 minutes.

When this really gets down to the nitty gritty of how we live and things get really tough and we don't understand. We can't figure out the why.

We realize that our knowledge goes so far and then it stops and it gets really dark. And what we have to do, I'm getting ahead of myself but I can't help it. What we have to do at that point is we have to trust that what's dark to us on this side is full of light on the other side to God.

Because Jesus is there. There is nowhere that He isn't. And so the light of the Lord Jesus Christ is there beyond that place when our knowledge stops.

God's doesn't. God is there on that other side that we can't know. We can't fill in. And so what do we do? We need to live on this side of the light that God has provided.

[13 : 53] Live in the light that God has given. And when it's time for you to take another step and God to push it out a little bit more, then He'll do that. But not until you're faithful for stepping and living in the light that He's provided now.

It's as if the Lord tells us a lamp and a light, right? That illumines the way. And so He shines the light just enough for you to take the next step.

What's beyond that is dark to you. That's the realm of the Lord. Don't mess with that. If you try to step into the dark, what's it going to do? You're going to stumble. It's going to depress you.

Nobody wants to live in the shadows. Nobody wants... And if you're concerned about sin, only the people who aren't concerned about sin live in the shadows. Only darkness likes that place.

But people of the light don't. We want to live and walk by the light. But God will only give you so much light, especially as you're facing these issues of adversity in your life.

[14 : 57] And so what Solomon is telling us now in today's message is it's fruitless for you to waste yourself trying to go into a place you're not equipped to go. You can't know that.

So don't waste yourself trying to figure out why, why, why, how, how, how, what, what, what. There's something else God wants you to do with that moment and that time.

And that's not it. Trying to reach out beyond yourself. No. Don't do this. So I'm saying that God had limited them in this understanding and knowledge and He did not want them to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

If you look at Genesis 2, verses 16 and 17, well, I'll start in 15 because that's what God does with the man. Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Right? There's his job. The Lord God commanded the man saying, now, did you see that it said commanded? He's not making suggestions. Here. The Lord God commanded the man, from any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

[16 : 19] So God had limited Adam and Eve by His wise design so that they did not know all that they could know. But that was God's wisdom.

He wasn't holding out on them in some way that causes them to miss out on the joy of life or knowing Him. No. This is fatherly protection, isn't it?

Now listen, you can understand this because all of you who are moms and dads, don't you absolutely bask in the innocence, quote unquote, of your children in that they don't know a lot about the sickening things in the world.

And you just, I prayed that. I said, oh God, I would weep at night praying for my kids when they went to bed. I'd pray over them, you know, kind of thing. I'd sometimes, I'd get up in the night and I'd go up into their room and I'd kneel by their bed and I would just cry out to God in my own heart praying for them because I know what's coming.

They're going to be exposed to the filth that is our society. They are. Now you need to get them ready. Don't hide them from it. You need to get them ready to answer it in the Lord.

[17 : 36] Don't send them out there in this protective bubble that you've kept them in. I understand that. I've been a dad. I know what I'm talking about here. I understand what you're feeling in that.

Your fatherly and motherly heart wants to keep your kids protected from things that you don't want them to know about. Right? And so there's a time when your wisdom will say, it's now time for me to help them understand God's way in this.

Right? Because you've got to get them ready. Well, why would it be any different if we are sinners and we want that best for our children? Why would our Heavenly Father not want that best for us?

And so, He limits what we know. Doesn't that make sense? That's exactly what we're being taught here in Scripture. And so what are we called on to do then?

Trust our Father. Trust our Father. Don't question Him. Don't pout. Don't pitch a fit. Eh!

[18 : 44] I don't want that. I want this. Eh! Don't do that. That's just going to make you miserable. It's also going to make you and I miserable if we don't turn to the Lord and His wisdom and say, Father, I want to trust You with this.

And then you pray, Lord, help my unbelief. Why would we pray that? Because all of us are weak. We struggle. Especially when the heat gets turned up.

Right? It's tough. Well, we're coming to this place and we're understanding that God is making limits on these people but it's because He's wise and He's loving and He's caring.

Which is what Satan's lying about. He is calling into question the character of Almighty God. Look at this up here. God lovingly limited Adam and Eve. Contrast that.

But Satan disastrously deceived them. And it's terrible that they were deceived. He tricked them into thinking and acting contrary to the wisdom that God Himself had given them.

[19 : 48] And so what was he able to do? Well, Satan was able to pervert a basic reality about the way God made us. God made us in His image but with wise limitations.

He didn't make us little gods and turn us loose to rule in our little fiefdoms. That's not the way it works. We want to act like that sometime. But the fact is we're not God.

We're not God. We never did possess we never were intended to possess God's full knowledge of everything. This is going to start rolling together I think in a few minutes.

By God's good design we didn't need that much knowledge or even that kind of knowledge. What happened was Satan took it and exploited it. In other words Satan because he lives in the darkness he wanted to take that place on the other side of what we know that place where we can't know because it's not God's will for us to know.

He wanted to take Adam and Eve and exploit this over here. In other words don't look at the light don't try to think in terms of contentment and joy and fulfillment and the wisdom of God for life.

[21 : 04] We want you to try to step over here and live in this and boy that will unsettle you. Man it's just ridiculous. But you know what? We fall for it.

Why? Because we're weak and we want answers. We want the pain to stop. We want the grief and the hurt and the sadness to end.

We want answers. And God says I'm the answer. You will find all that you need in me.

Even if the circumstance doesn't change. Can we say amen to that? Well this is where the rubber meets the road. This is when we start really dealing with the reality of just how much Satan wants to exploit us in those times of adversity and weakness.

Now look I'm going to put this up here for us. The real catastrophe here is how our sin separates us from our source of life. Joy. Peace.

[22 : 08] Patience. Kindness. Understanding. Gentleness. We all die physically and we have all died spiritually. So it was no long or paradise for Adam and Eve because they took on a sin nature.

And the moment that they sinned in their heart they took on a sin nature. And that sin nature has been passed down through Adam and Eve so that each of us has an inner irrepressible desire to go against God and His limitations.

We push back. We try to live as our own little God. Now I'll take you over if you would to Ecclesiastes.

And I want you to look with me just real quickly at what chapter 9 verse 3 tells us. Some of you may remember this. It was several years ago. We were here if you can believe that.

Ecclesiastes 9.3 this is an evil in all that is done under the sun. In other words in life. That there is one fate for all men.

[23 : 18] What is that one fate for all men? Death. Death. We all die. Furthermore the hearts of the sons of men while we're alive on the earth the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives.

Boy how encouraging is that? And afterwards they go to the dead. Now there's one fate for every one of you sitting in this room. You're going to die. Your life is going to come to an end.

And then what? See? And then what? But while we're alive we have a problem. Our hearts are full of evil and insanity is in our hearts throughout our lives.

This insanity could be defined here as an incredible self-focus. We were made to be God-focused and yet there is this incredible battle with self-focus against the Lord.

And this is insane. It has nothing to do with the way God made us. It's what sin's done to us. And so it goes throughout human history. Mankind has sinfully labored apart from God and His wisdom to try and understand the world and man's place in it.

[24 : 34] You see this. Now look, some of you have studied and you've read through books on history. You've read about philosophy and stuff like that and as you've done that, you've seen how people have wrestled to come to terms with what life is all about, haven't you?

You've studied that. You've read some of these people. You've talked to some of these people out in the work-a-day world. Now I can illustrate this a little further in the example of, and this is very quick and super brief, but the example of Greek philosophy and the philosophers behind all of that because these men are credited with laying the foundations of how our Western civilization thinks, how we reason, how we understand more about who we are and why we're here.

We can trace this way, way back into Greek philosophy. The earliest Greek philosophers, these are men like Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander.

You may not know those names, but these are ancient Greek philosophers that began to lay the foundation and labored very hard to define the nature of being, being, existence, because they thought that this was the key to unlocking a complete knowledge of the universe.

This is how we're going to unlock that ultimate knowledge of who we are and why we're here and how all this works. But then you add to that, add to the foundation that these philosophers laid, names that you'll be more familiar with, names like Plato and Aristotle, Socrates, Parmenides, Democritus, Epicurus, all of these philosophers built on this same foundation as the men previous to them.

[26 : 33] And so, it went on and carried then into the 17th century, the 18th centuries that we're a little more familiar with, right into today. We are standing on the foundation in secular, secular wisdom.

We are standing on the foundation of much of what Greek philosophy has brought over to us. They all thought that the path to the nature of our being, the answer to the question that I put up there earlier, they all thought that the path to the nature of being was discovering the basic ingredients or the most necessary components and elements that hold all of life together and make life possible.

It's what the philosophers called the ultimate constituents of the universe. That's what they were after. I'm going to put that up here so you can see it. The ultimate constituents of the universe.

This is what they were seeking. And the idea behind it was this. If we can come to the place where we understand how life works and how we work within it and we can break that down, then we will have a working knowledge of the way this thing moves and as we see the way that it moves and the different things interact, we will get a better picture of the whole and understand it.

Well, that works great if you're thinking in terms like this. Like you have an engine, a car engine or whatever, and you want to know how a car engine works. I don't know.

[28 : 10] I don't even care. I don't care how they work. I just want to push the gas and go. And when I push the gas and it doesn't work, I call the guy at the shop and I say, hey dude, it's not going.

Vroom, vroom. No vroom, vroom. Can we fix this? And so we get it down to him. That's the way that works for me. And I'm fine with that. But if you want to know how an engine works, maybe if you take it apart and you spend enough time looking at all the different things that do all the different things they do, maybe you could back up and you could say, oh, okay, that whole thing is connected to this thing and that thing goes up like this and as this thing turns, it moves this thing and they go up and down like this and it creates this thing inside the cylinder and then the thing, and then it just goes.

That's pretty good, wasn't it? Yeah, that was pretty good. Alright. That's fine if we're talking about an engine. But what happens when we start talking about the God of the universe?

How are you going to break that one down? How are you going to figure out all the constituent parts of God in His mind, in His creative genius and power and wisdom?

How are you going to do that? And put Him in your box and say, oh, that's how He works. Oh, that's how I fit into how He works. Now I get it. No, you don't.

[29 : 32] And I don't either. And we weren't meant to. We were not meant to know the ultimate constituents of the universe. They thought if they could get a hold of this, they could come to this place.

And everything is moving toward this one thing that I'm about to say in philosophy. If they could figure these constituent parts out, they could then come to the place where they could explain why things change.

That's what they wanted. Why do things change? Why can't things stay the same? Why do we have to die?

When we die, what happens? Does something change? Then maybe they could get to the ultimate knowledge. Theologian and author John Frame responds by saying this.

This is how he answers this. This is so good. He says, God does make knowledge available to human beings. Okay, good. Right.

[30 : 40] But, to gain knowledge, notice, we must begin by listening to Him. Stop there. You with me? In order for us to gain knowledge, we have to begin by listening to God.

It's so critical that we get that in the right order. We can come to know the world when our thinking is based on God's revelation, what He reveals to us about His world.

That's found in creation, to be sure, but also in the Bible. Then, we must know our limits so that our goal must be not to gain a divine knowledge of reality, but to obtain a human knowledge sufficient to carry out whatever calling God has given each of us.

That is so good. What is He saying? Well, if you go back up into this, then we must know our limits. God reveals certain knowledge to us.

He makes it known because if He didn't, we couldn't know it because we won't discover it, especially as it relates to God. And so, when God makes this knowledge known to us, what are we to do with it then?

[31 : 56] Well, we need to understand that as He makes it known to us, we need to understand our fences, our parameters, our boundaries, our limits. Why?

Here's what the psalmist said about this. So important, Psalm 131.1. Don't turn there, let me just quote it to you. I don't involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me.

That's the psalmist. I don't involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me. I don't go there. I don't try to walk into God's domain and reach beyond the wisdom of the Lord.

How could you do that? But we do it. God's got us in a certain situation and we're moving through it and what do we continue to do? We continue to demand more. We continue to demand answers.

Very difficult for us to find a sense of contentment and joy and peace. Why? Because I lack a certain understanding and that unnerves us. We don't like being in a position where we lack understanding.

[33 : 02] And so we reach for more. But we're reaching into an area that's too great for us. And so we need to wait a minute. Let me back up here. Maybe there's wisdom in me thinking to myself in this moment, Jeff, wait.

be silent and know that I'm God. I need you to know that I'm God.

Know that I'm God. And you stop acting like you are, Jeffrey. It's very sobering.

We need to know our limits. limits. And as we understand those limits, our goal becomes not for us to reach out and try to gain a knowledge about our situation or ourselves that only God has and obviously is not sharing, at least not right now.

We don't reach out to that. We obtain a human knowledge. We ask God's wisdom to help us in this moment of being human so that we can apply that wisdom in our human situation and then carry out whatever it is that God wants us to do.

[34 : 19] And you know what, friends? It might be wait. It might be more wait. Stay in the circumstance. But we need to know that, don't we? But what we want to do is reach beyond that.

Let's get to the answer. Let's get to the other side. Let's get beyond the grief and the pain and the adversity and the hardship and the challenge and the trial. And he says no.

You need enough knowledge for you to as a human being. You're not God, Jeff. Stop acting like it. You need enough knowledge as a human being to follow in my wisdom according to my will and be faithful.

That's what you need, Jeff. That's what you need. And it's right here. You don't have to guess. Let me say it this way.

The ultimate and only force holding all of life together is Jesus Christ. You say, Jeff, where in the world did you come up with that?

[35 : 23] Well, I'm brilliant. No. I read it in the Bible. I read it in the Bible. I'm going to share it with you right now.

Listen to this. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. for by him all things were created.

Do you hear that? By him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, all things have been created through Christ and for Christ.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Can you say it more simply, more clearly?

In Jesus Christ, all things in life hold together. In other words, if Jesus ever took his hand off of it, what would happen? It would all be destroyed.

[36 : 29] All things in life hold together by the Lord Jesus. That's Colossians 1, 15-17. Colossians 1, 15-17. Okay, that's my introduction.

Now, let's go to Ecclesiastes chapter 7. Now that you're sufficiently ready to see what we're going to talk about today. And in verse 15 of Ecclesiastes chapter 7, I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility.

These were the verses that we dealt with last Sunday. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness. There is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous.

Don't be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked. Do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?

It is good that you grasp one thing and also don't let go of the other. For the one who fears God comes forth with both of them. That was last time. That was last Sunday.

[37 : 40] And that dealt with point one of this three point outline down to the end of the chapter. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. This is for today. Indeed there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and never sins.

Also do not take seriously all the words which are spoken so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others.

Well I tested all this with wisdom and I said you know what I'll be wise but it was far from me. What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious.

Who can discover it? I directed my mind to know to investigate and to seek wisdom and an explanation. See he wants the same thing we want and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.

Wow Solomon you better be careful. See he's diving into stuff here he shouldn't be diving into. And I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets whose hands are chains.

[38 : 58] One who is pleasing to God will escape from her but the sinner will be captured by her. Behold I've discovered this says the preacher adding one thing to another to find an explanation which I'm still seeking but have not found.

I have found one man among a thousand but I have not found a woman among all these. Behold I have found only this that God made men upright but they have sought out many many devices.

What in the world? Last week I pointed out to you that from verse 15 all the way to the end of the chapter Solomon is building on this reality about your life.

I want to put him up here for you. First of all God is in careful control of your life. By his wisdom he brings both prosperity and adversity to your life and you can never work out the full measure of God's ways in doing any of this.

God's work in this is beyond your capacity to understand or even to control. So don't do it. Bank on these three things.

[40 : 08] This is what I left you with last time. So through Solomon's writing God is going to then provide us with three, this is what I'm calling it, three critical insights. It's so good of God to do this for us.

Three critical insights into his wisdom about what? About what life is about as we live in God's seasons of prosperity and adversity.

So here are three insights from the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 7 that's going to help us navigate these times of wonderful prosperity so we don't get puffed up and proud and forget God like we don't need him.

Or times of adversity when we think we've got to try to play God and get over whatever's going on in our lives. The first point that I gave you from last Sunday the first of these insights is this.

Life is not about excesses it's about fearing God. And there's the verses there that we covered last time. The second point that we're going to deal with the second insight is this.

[41 : 11] Life is not about excuses it's about faithfulness to God. That's what I've been talking about in my introduction. So you're well prepared for me to move through this. If you look again with me at verse 19 Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.

Indeed there's not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and never sins. Also do not take seriously all the words which are spoken so that you will not hear your servant cursing you.

For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others. The deal here is you can't excuse your way through life and glorify God.

Can't have it both ways. When you face adversity and sorrow and suffering and the inequalities of life this particular approach that he's condemning right now will find you excusing your sin in life.

you'll come up against these things and maybe you'll know what the truth is or you'll be reminded about it but what we want to do is stick a but in there but or some other way that we try to think yeah yeah you know I know now look there are two primary thoughts that seem to carry this section and serve to tie it to the verses that are both before and after these several verses 19-22 first of all in verse 19 what he says in 19 wisdom in the fear of the Lord that's what he was just talking about in 18 do you see that the one who fears God comes forth with both so he told us last time enjoy your life and pursue godliness grab one hold on to the other because the one who fears God gets both of them so fearing the Lord is the key to this passage having a high and holy reverence for God and bowing your heart in humility to God and his wisdom and ways that is the key to you being able to enjoy life grabbing one and holding on to the other as you pursue godliness the key to those two things is the fear of the Lord a high and holy reverence for God helps me enjoy life and it helps me hold on to pursuing the Lord see this is brilliant stuff

[43 : 44] I love the way God breaks this stuff down for us trust God with your life and obey God in your life how many times are we going to hear that in sermons it's just everywhere in the Bible trust God and obey God that is better than the combined worldly wisdom of even ten seasoned leaders in a city typically that's the way they'd set up the city and then out at the city gates would sit the wise men and if you had an issue in life that you needed some help with you'd bring it to the city gates where the wise men sat and the wise men would hear your case and then they would adjudicate or whatever and so he's saying look the wisdom of God in trusting the Lord and obeying the Lord because you fear the Lord because you have a high and hope that is better than the worldly wisdom of ten seasoned leaders so he's just giving you a contrast you can seek out the ten wisest people in the world or in your community about an issue of life and all of those ten guys combined cannot touch the wisdom the morsels we're not getting the second leftovers from the

Lord you know the world wants to convince us that the most sophisticated answers to the issue of life lie in the minds of worldly men and women and combined they're supposed to give us this wonderful brilliance to live by well let's look at where we are in the world today where's that gotten us I love washing machines my wife's got a great big one I bought her one of the biggest washing machines I could find right dump it all in there baby get it done I love that technology wonderful but you know what that washing machine got nothing to do with my soul love my car love going from A to B in a comfortable way got nothing to do with my soul the issues of life hit us at our soul and so we need the soul care of Jesus we need the wisdom of God to help us navigate this in God's way for God's glory that's what the world doesn't understand for the world it's just about problem solving to get past the pain to put you in a better position of authority or power as if we can control all that no then if you look at verses 20 through 22 look at those with this man on earth that you know doesn't sin and you need to think carefully about this words that are spoken so that you won't hear your servant cursing you based on what you've said and so now it's coming back at you you've also realized you likewise have many times cursed others so you need to be careful and humble even those who are wise and righteous will still sin isn't that true so excuses and denials don't change this reality about life under the sun trying to excuse yourself and deny the reality of sin in your life look look folks knowledge puffs up and so as we acquire knowledge and we don't take that knowledge and hear me please hear me on this if we don't take the knowledge that we're receiving from the

Lord as we study the word and come and say tsk tsk you'll be here one day God's wisdom humbles us before almighty God and we use that wisdom to glorify God and bless other people and so as soon as you feel yourself using the wisdom of God as a weapon against others or to justify your position be careful pride goeth right you're going to fall don't use these excuses and all that flaw in the human character that is that we still sin that particular flaw in the human character prevents anyone from being able to depend on their own wisdom or righteousness to provide them with the enjoyment of God's good gifts that is a great quote from

Dr. Barak his wisdom on this Dr. Barak is one of the commentators that I looked into with this he's a professor out at the master seminary so beloved one of the chief ways that we excuse our sin is blame shifting we just go outside of ourselves to blame another person or we shift the blame off onto society or our parents or our job or our boss it doesn't mean that some of these people aren't culpable in sinning against us you know wives blame their husbands husband blame their wives children blame their parents blah blah blah blah well none of that means that people don't sin against us but when we're sinning in response to being sinned against whose problem is it yes amen thank you if Suzanne sins against me and my response to her sinning against me is to sin back that's on me I can't look at her and blame shift and say yeah well if you no

I can't do that I have to own the sin that comes out of my heart when we depend on our own wisdom and righteousness we're in big trouble we blame shift to other people in situations Solomon uses an example here of our speech and he uses our speech to challenge our self righteousness our tendency to judge and be self righteous there's nothing wrong with standing on convictions folks this is something different and so look what he says in verse 21 you do not to also do not take seriously all the words which are spoken so that you will not hear your servant cursing you for you also have realized you likewise have many times cursed others in verse 21 he's talking about people have and will wrong you in their speech people are going to say hurtful sinful things to you we tend to focus on those things and allow those things to fester in our hearts so that then we feel justified in our sinful attitudes and actions toward others isn't that what we do that's what he's saying he knows we do that then verse 22 comes in just consider that you also are guilty of sinful speech and let that humble you by the fact that even in your attempts at wisdom and righteous living you still manage to sin against others each day and so that should humble you that should put perspective on the battle that we all have to speak righteously and lovingly into each other's lives so what does that say that says

[51 : 36] Jeff stop doing this and start doing this as you look to the Lord right I don't want to get all introspective and stay right here looking at Jeff because that's that's going to really depress me I'm going to get really discouraged if I look too intently and too long into Jeff no and so I want to look to Christ I bring that sense of the fact that I sin in my speech to the Lord and it humbles me before the Lord and I begin to work through that with Christ see this is how practical this is where is the hope for anyone in this life under the sun to be helped against the onslaught of sin in this example sinful speech well the hope is in verse 18 in the fear of the Lord we're back up into the fear of the Lord the sobering truth is that Solomon wants each of us to come to terms with our own sinfulness and he has a purpose for that so that we will be far less likely to focus on the sin of others and be unforgiving toward them in the process if

I focus on your sin it's I'm going to be tempted then to be judgmental to become bitter and resentful and to be unforgiving towards you is that not true and so what do I need to focus on what Solomon says hey Jeff whatever it is that you're judging this other person about or whatever has happened from this other person to you even if it's true even if they have said or done that to you in a sinful or harmful way have you never done that to them have you never done that to someone else has that not been part of your life at times are you not guilty of that so let's take the emphasis off of that and doing this and let's put it back here and let this wisdom humble you before the Lord and give you more of a forgiving spirit toward them so that you can pray for them and that you can come alongside of them and patiently long sufferingly bear with them in that issue I won't do that if I'm blame shifting if

I'm making your sin all about what you've done to me did I do that I can't do the neck thing my back is too we get attitude that's the point we get an attitude and make excuses we can point out the wrong we've suffered from others we can point out how unfair and how unjust life is or we can go back to last week's message and consider the work of God we can ask ourselves God what work are you doing in my life by bringing this person into my life or bringing this circumstance to the place that you've brought it to now it's uncomfortable Lord it's hard God this is grievous to my soul Lord this this is tempting me to be distracted in my walk with you and Lord this is this is just hard okay consider the work of God and remember Solomon says you can only go so far in your understanding of that work you have limitations you with me you can only go so far so go as far as the wisdom and light of

God will let you go and stop and don't be demanding don't be discontented in it don't lose the joy of walking with the Lord don't cease being thankful to God for the life that you have see these are all the things we get robbed of when we let that focus slip now we're putting our eyes on earthly things when our eyes should be on heavenly things we're grounded here in the earth but we understand that as we do this we're left here to glorify the Lord now what does that mean what does that mean for me in this moment are we more about the failures of other people or about being faithful to God as we live in his wisdom that brings us to the issue then of focus let me just do this real quickly here life is not about excesses faithfulness to God life is not about explanations it's about focusing on

God this is what Solomon wants us to understand in other words you cannot explain your way through life and glorify God when you face adversity and sorrow and suffering and injustice of life this approach will find you spinning reality in your favor all every time in other words this is self favoring this is you and I battling against self favoring in verses 23 through 25 I tested all this with wisdom and I said you know what I'll be wise but it was far from me so he didn't he didn't succeed what has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious who can discover it I directed my mind to know to investigate to seek wisdom explanations to know evil folly foolishness madness well where'd that get you Solomon not so good he's once again rehearsing the reality that God's wisdom for life cannot be discovered because it's divinely revealed by

[57 : 05] God himself and it's limited to what God wants you to know he just keeps making the point he's reminding us that the depths of the workings and the will of the Lord in applying prosperity and adversity to our lives is beyond so he says hey if you're in a season of wonderful prosperity go for it enjoy it live man grab it be happy yay if you're in a season in a time of adversity and your heart is grieved and you feel burdened look to the Lord and consider the work of God because in both God gets the glory in both he brings both prosperity and adversity and so look to the Lord in verse 23 Solomon is joining the long line of Greek and many other philosophers that we talked about in searching out ultimate questions ultimate answers so he applied all of his great wisdom and his resources to discover all of this but he candidly admits did you notice in that verse verse 23 it was far from me even the wisest man who ever lived on the earth besides

Jesus couldn't figure this out he couldn't figure it out remember the search that we talked about a few moments ago what constitutes being Solomon is talking about his search for that which is that's what he says that which is or that which is come into being in other words what is at the very heart of what makes life what it is that's what he wanted to search out what is at the heart of what makes life what it is why is it this way what is it exactly that he's wrestling with finding one of the commentators I thought had a good take on this so I'll share it with you it's by Michael Eaton he says it is all Solomon's search is about all that exists as God controls and decrees it that is beyond his comprehension in verse 24 this work of God in people's lives is remote and mysterious the NAS says who can discover it no one it's a place you can't go now folks listen one of the ways you can apply this is to your own life for sure but you may know of people who are wrestling with some of the issues of life and they're perplexed and they're you see them scrambling around and doing all kinds of things and you want to go to them and share this wisdom with them and say you know the scripture speaks to this process as human beings we all go through this in different seasons of our life and perhaps what the Lord is trying to tell you is and then offer them this wisdom from scripture not just your opinion but the wisdom from scripture this is what

Solomon wanted to know now here's the soundness of the wise warnings that we dealt with in verses 8 through 14 here it is this brings us to the kernel right here if you spend your life searching out and being bitter about what you can't know and can't control especially in other people especially in other people who are hurting you in some way if you spend your time involved in all that you're going to waste your life and miss the blessing of enjoying God's good gifts to you throughout your life because you can't control it you can't change people you cannot change other people you can try you can manipulate and blame and yell and scream and beat you can try all kinds of stuff but what you're going to do is cheat yourself of true joy then in verse 25 I directed my mind to know all this and investigate it and where did it get me Solomon confesses his driving desire was to obtain an explanation for this deep seated nature of folly that is living in your own wisdom while you spurn the wisdom of

God no I got this God and he says no no what did he discover I can't do it I can't understand it look at 26 I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets this is his answer to what he sought out in verse 25 I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets whose hands are chains that doesn't sound like a woman you'd want to be with does it one who is pleasing to God will escape from her okay but the sinner will be captured by her well I don't want to be captured by her who is this chick what's she all about I don't want any part of her what's he talking about well this is the work of God as Solomon confesses that he can't know these answers he's not woman bashing that's not what he's doing here he's not picking on the ladies he seems to be using the dangers of a seductress figuratively you know what a seductress is right that's a woman who uses her own ends to get what she wants in feminine ways and it doesn't matter who so in other words this is a woman who snares men for her own selfish purposes and that's represented here as foolish living so this woman is being used in a figurative sense to represent foolish living that is living by your own wisdom or worldly wisdom that's what's going on here this is the only way we can understand this contextually so hence similar to being in the clutches of a seductress to be ensnared by your own foolishness is more bitter than death because it creates so much suffering in your life and you just want it to end you say when will this be over the wise and righteous person whether they're male or female can escape the worst of this kind of a slow death because that's what it feels like but the sinful person living apart from

God and his wisdom will be captured and they'll be consumed by her or foolishness foolishness will consume you and it will come to define you and your life will look like it so in verse 28 I'm still seeking but if not found I found one man among a thousand but I've not found a woman among all these I found one man among a thousand that simply means that finding true wisdom among men or women is very rare this is his point he's speaking figuratively he's a brilliant guy he's speaking figuratively I've looked and looked and looked and among all the men and women finding true wisdom is very rare because it means being focused on God and his will for your life not being consumed with your own plans and problems but I have not found a woman among all these that's his way of contrasting and saying I've not found godly wisdom among even one person who's living apart from

[64 : 29] God he continues to use this figurative language this is what best fits the context and language of the chapter where wisdom and folly are being contrasted and warned about so here's what he does he adds all this up everything that he's found to this point about God's wisdom in deciding listen now God's wisdom in deciding the timing the duration and the intensity of assigning prosperity and adversity in someone's life he adds all that up and here's what he finds verse 29 I have found only this here it is all this lifetime of searching all of the resources of his life and wisdom applied to trying to get to this ultimate constituent parts and here's what he found he finds that God made men men and women mankind upright but they have sought out many devices that's it this is referring to mankind on the whole so God made both men and women upright Adam and Eve but they both have sought out many devices the Hebrew word for devices could also be translated schemes they've sought out many schemes that that pretty much captures us the word for upright is also straight right level God made a straight right level but we seek out many schemes contextually the idea is that though

God originally made men and women wise for right living holy living from the beginning people have found all kinds of wicked ways to express their rebellion against the wisdom and ways of God and so I'll give Dr.

Barak a word here and then we'll close with some quotes from scripture God however is not to blame for the absence of wisdom mankind is from the fall to the present people have turned away from God and away from his wisdom they've all walked the path of folly people pervert the right way of God that's true isn't it so it's not about explanations explanations as if God owes you and me an explanation for all that he does in our lives that's one of the things that keeps us in these funks and in these cycles that we get into is that we we are in in our own heart we're like we're secretly demanding that God provide an explanation and until I get one this is what you're going to get it's really not even about answers it's not because you could get an answer in the circumstance not change one bit it's about focus and faithfulness it's about keeping your heart tuned to

God's wisdom in his word so that you can know the wise and wonderful way of hope for wandering and wayward hearts that's where the hope is so I'll put this last scripture reference up here and then I'll pray God after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and in many ways in these last days our days has spoken to us in his son that's Jesus whom he appointed heir of all things through whom also he made the world you see the emphasis on Jesus here he is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature and upholds all things by the word of his power in that encouraging he upholds you even in these times by the word of his power when he had made purification of sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high therefore he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them for that's our hope isn't it that's our hope but where does it start it starts with you listening to him listening to his word let's pray together friends father God we honor you and thank you for the goodness of your heart and as we turn to your word and ask to know your wisdom I want to encourage my brothers and sisters here father with your wisdom for life particularly when they're facing these trials and difficulties and Lord I'm very very aware as a pastor and as a citizen of our country I'm very aware that we're just a couple of days away from knowing who's going to be our next president and vice president and I know that there are people all around the world literally who are in all kinds of knots about what's going to happen and who's going to get in and if this person gets in it's going to be the ruin of our nation and if that person gets in oh it'll be terrible for the whole country and Lord we come to you now in the wisdom of what you've just taught us and here's what we know we can't know we have no idea what's going to happen in either direction but we can come to the word and we can see where the Bible tells us that you channel the king's heart in any direction you want and so father in some ways it doesn't matter who gets in because they're going to serve your purposes one way or the other and so we pray that your will will be done that's what we pray we pray that your will will be done I pray that each one of my brothers and sisters here who are eligible and can will vote whoever they're going to vote for Lord just lead them to vote go vote that's what we want to know Lord help us to be faithful and to be good stewards of the freedoms that have been purchased for us with the blood of our brothers and sisters across the time that we've been here and thank you almighty God for your goodness in

Jesus Christ who gives us this wisdom and these freedoms that we count a wonderful privilege help us to be prayerful for our leaders in our country help us to be prayerful Lord that they would be wise and that they would turn to you and whoever gets in God help us to be faithful in supporting them in prayer and trusting you we thank you for the hope that you give us in Jesus and I pray blessings on my brothers and sisters in my absence as Greg shepherds as he seeks to honor you and all that he does I pray that you will give him much wisdom and grace Lord as he carries the torch of your love for your people as we seek to be under shepherds in Jesus name we pray according to the glory of the Lord Jesus amen