

Many Years: Only One Life

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[0 : 00] Well, we're marching along in Ecclesiastes together. And I've just decided I'm going to do 15 more messages in chapter 12.

No, we'll do kind of a part two today based on what we covered last time in verse one, and we'll do some review together. The tentative plan right now is we'll have this message today, and then in a couple of Sundays from now, maybe the last, the final one in Ecclesiastes 12, going down from nine down through the end of the chapter.

But we'll see how that goes as I do some further study. Very similarly to chapter 11, where verse one in chapter 11 set the tone and made the kind of framework or parameters for the remainder of chapter 11.

Chapter 12 is very similar. Verse one of chapter 12 sets the baseline and the framework for how we're to understand what comes next, particularly in verses three through six.

So we're going to go back and talk about that in just a moment. The title of my message is Many Years, Only One Life. And that builds on the theme of what Solomon is talking about in this chapter as he closes out the book.

[1 : 31] You have been given or could be given many years as a gift from God, but you only have one life to live in those years, and that is the life before the Lord.

And all of us do that, even unbelievers. Even unbelievers live before the face of God, Coram Deo, right? They live in the presence of Almighty God and they'll give an account.

All of us are on level playing ground in that regard. The difference is this. If an unbeliever dies in sin without forgiveness from Jesus, then they will go to heaven and be judged.

And the verdict of that judgment will be eternal damnation and separation from God in the fiery pits of hell. Now that is, we can't even, we don't even want to imagine that.

And then there are Christians, those who have been forgiven, whose faith is placed squarely in Jesus Christ. Their hope for righteousness as they stand before the God of the universe is in Jesus alone and his righteousness being credited to them and their life.

[2 : 38] So as we stand before the Lord and he asks the question hypothetically that we would, why would I let you into my heaven? The answer that comes back is, you should let me into your heaven because I'm standing in the righteousness of your son.

I have been made righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ, your son. That's the only reason you should let me in. That's the difference between unbelievers dying without forgiveness and believers dying with it.

Unbelievers get condemnation. Believers don't. Jesus took our punishment for us. So when we stand before the Lord to be judged, it will be a judgment of righteous works against worthless works.

One will receive a reward. The other will be let go. I'll talk about that more in just a few minutes, but I'm introducing it to you now so that you can hold it in your mind as we move forward.

Now, in the way of a bit more of an introduction, the Bible is very interesting in this. The Bible has many sobering things to say.

[3 : 49] And here's one, just one of those sobering statements that we all share in as human beings. If we could put that up on the screen for him, Josiah. It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes the judgment.

And that's what I just introduced the chapter with. That's Hebrews 9, 27. Now, here's the thing. That truth will either fill you with the fear of death and negatively shape your life now, or that truth will fill you with the fear of the Lord and positively shape your life now.

Very interesting. The choice is ours to make. Will we live in the fear of death or in the fear of the Lord?

If you're living in the fear of the Lord, you don't fear death because you realize that death is the entry gate to meeting Jesus and standing with him face to face. And so there's nothing to fear in death because after death doesn't come judgment for you as a Christian.

Life happens after the judgment. That's amazing. And it's full of hope. The difference then between the fear of death and the fear of the Lord is all about where you are putting your faith.

[5 : 14] In whom do you trust for the forgiveness of your sins and for the hope of heaven? Well, connected with that, let me throw this out there for you to think about because everything that Solomon's doing now as he wraps up this book is really primarily aimed at the younger generation, those in the prime of life.

And as an older man, in his latter stages of life, as the sun begins to set on his life, and he probably had hair a lot like mine, except longer probably, very gray, he's contemplating much of what he wasted.

And he knew better. And so he's writing to say, if you're one of these people who are hoping for many years in life, I have something very, very important and critical to say to you. So listen to as I share these statistics about aging.

The U.S. Census Bureau has a series of articles warning Americans about an approaching demographic tsunami, which will have a defining impact on U.S. society over the next two decades. They are calling it the gray tsunami. Referring to the demographic shift, baby boomers will soon exert as most of them turn 65 or older.

[6 : 43] And I'm one of those. These are people born between 1946 and 1964. So I'm a boomer. The current estimate of boomers exceeds 73 million people in our country.

Boomers are currently the second largest generation in America only after their own children, the millennials coming behind us.

Those people were the folks born between 1982 and 2000. And they're a challenge, I'm telling you. You think boomers are a challenge. The population of aged people has grown steadily throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

Think of this. In 1900, there were 3.1 million Americans 65 and older. In 2000, there were 35 million. But get this. Just 18 years later, in 2018, there were 52 million Americans age 65 and older.

[7 : 56] And the number is compounding dramatically. Greg, you and I, I guess, we're going to add to that pretty soon, right? Here's a milestone for our country.

The Census Bureau currently projects that by the year 2034, Americans age 65 and older will outnumber children 18 and younger.

That will be the first time that has ever happened in recorded American history. That's coming. That's what they're predicting based on the projections over the last probably 10 years in the trend. Now, here's what I do with all of that. Given what we've been seeing in Ecclesiastes about the futility of a life lived without God, I'm wondering how many of these millions will grow old having wasted their lives and then looking back on their lives full of regret and with feelings of the vanity and emptiness of what life has been for them without God.

I wonder. I can't help but wonder that because I think about people in terms of their souls. When I see people, God has helped me to learn how to see people in terms of who they are before him.

[9 : 23] They're living, breathing souls. They're embodied souls. That is the most important thing about being human. You are an embodied soul. Soul. Most important thing about you is your soul.

Your soul's relationship before the Lord. How many of these millions of aged people are going to waste their lives living apart from God, come to the end of their life and have nothing more to show than what they were able to earn or do here on this planet, laying up no treasure in heaven and having no regard for the things of eternity.

I said this to you last time. Growing old is hard, but there is something harder, and here's how I put it to you. It's growing old and looking back on a wasted life not lived as a gift from God in the joy of Jesus.

That's hard. I can't imagine right now. I'll be 60 this month, and I can't imagine right now with what's going on in my life looking back on how I've lived, being full of regret and knowing that I'm not ready for death.

I'm not ready. I'm not prepared. I really don't know for sure what's on the other side of death, and I really don't know for sure if there's a heaven for me.

[10:45] Oh, I just... But there are lots of people like that. And the thing is, we can do something about that. We can.

Let's read together in Ecclesiastes chapter 12. Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, I have no delight in them.

Before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened and clouds return after the rain. In the day that the watchmen of the house tremble and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few and those who look through windows grow dim.

And the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low. And one will arise at the sound of the bird and all the daughters of song will sing softly.

Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road. The almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along and the caperberry is ineffective.

[12:01] For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. And so he says again in verse 6, Remember him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed.

The pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. All is vanity. Now there's a lot of puzzling kinds of metaphors metaphors or an analogy comparisons being made in the heart of these verses that we're looking at.

And we need to do something with that. We need to try to understand what it is that this very brilliant wise man is communicating to us as he closes this book down and talks to us about what it means to live your life as a gift before the Lord.

So I started off with you last Sunday introducing this section with this particular item on the screen here.

[13:20] The first point, the reality of God's judgment. The reality of God's judgment. I don't want you to miss the point that what Solomon is moving toward as he closes the book is to sober us with the reality that we will all stand before God giving an account of our lives and we will enter into judgment.

Solomon is very concerned about that as he looks back on his life and contemplates the young lives of those that he's writing to. So he begins in chapter 12, what we call chapter 12, remember also your creator.

Now the question that we asked last time was who is this creator we are to remember? We can't just fabricate some idea or ideal of God.

God is who he is. And Solomon knows who he is. And he's calling us to remember this specific being, this specific person, if you will. Who is he?

When we interpret what Solomon means by creator, we look back into the book for what he has said about this. And I think it's important that we review this together.

[14:37] So in chapter 3, verse 11, we're reviewing what Solomon has said about the creator, specifically about God as creator. What is he saying to us?

In chapter 3, verse 11, he, God, has made everything appropriate in its time.

God, the creator, has made everything appropriate in its time. That is a work of God as creator.

In chapter 7, verse 13, Solomon says, consider the work of God.

All right, so that's what's on the table now. Now we're considering God's handiwork, the activity of God as creator. For who is able to straighten what he has bent?

[15:36] One activity of God, one reality of that activity is this. Whatever God purposes to do gets done, and we can't change it. If he bends something or turns it left, it bends and stays turned left.

That's the idea. Now notice in verse 14, in the day of prosperity, be happy, but in the day of adversity, consider, and here's what he wants us to consider.

God has made the one as well as the other. So here's the point. Consider, I'm sorry, this is, oh good, thank you, Josiah. I forgot to mention that.

This will help you see the emphasis that's coming through with these. Consider the work of God as creator. What he does stands. God has made both prosperity and calamity.

Do you see the has made, the work of God, the has made, and then the result of that making. God has appointed everything as appropriate for its time.

[16:45] He handles the timing of the details of your life. The details of the world. It was no accident that COVID-19 hit the world when it did.

That's God. It's no accident when a real life tsunami hits a nation, a country, and all this catastrophic stuff. That's God standing behind the details of his world.

Then in chapter 7, verse 29, Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright. God made men upright.

That was his good and gracious work before the fall. So now, we're New Testament Christians, now we can enjoy that same blessing of being upright, seen as righteous, in the sight of Almighty God, by the blessing of faith in relationship to his son, Jesus Christ.

And then in chapter 11, verse 5, we are rehearsing this idea of creator that Solomon has given us. And the reason we're doing that is because we want to remember the creator as Solomon has presented him to us.

[18:05] So in chapter 11, verse 5, Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who does what?

Makes all things. Makes all things. So God the creator has made everything appropriate in its time. God the creator has made both prosperity and calamity, so you cannot say the calamities of your life or the calamities of the world have nothing to do with God.

That is not true. We may not understand all that goes on behind the scenes as God works those works in the world and in your life, but that doesn't mean he's not there.

And that's important. If you disconnect God, especially from the hard stuff, the calamitous stuff, the adverse stuff, where are you left?

[19:13] Then there's no meaning in any of that happening. It's just random stuff. There's no God behind it. There's no purpose. I don't want to live like that.

And then God made men upright and it's God who makes all things. God reveals what he wants us to know about him and God, this is amazing, God draws near for us to know him and to love him. If it weren't for God condescending, initiating, and drawing near, we would never be able to reach God, would we? Never. Very important.

And with all of that said, though, I reemphasize to us, we cannot fully comprehend all there is to know about God and his ways. What we can know and be certain of is what he's revealed to us in his word about himself.

That's how we know, particularly in his son, Jesus. Now, following on that, I want to put these up here for you. These are the ways that we are then told to remember.

[20:24] Now, we've already covered, here's the creator and here's what we're supposed to think about this creator based on what Solomon has told us about him. So now, what is involved in remembering?

All right? Now, let's put that up here. Remember who formed you. Remember who formed you. This is amazing and wonderful to think about. Every single human being is an embodied soul, is formed in God's image.

Every human being has that value, no matter where they're from or what color they are or anything else about them. Nothing can take away the value of every human being in the sight of Almighty God and in our sight because God made them, gave them a soul, and made them in his image. And that gives them eternal worth. Nothing can, even sin can't rob them of that. Sin might mar the image of God in us, but it doesn't take it away.

That's the inherent, essential value of every person. And then, remember where you came from. Remember where you came from. And I reminded you that in chapter 3, verses 19 and 20, Solomon says this, the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same.

[21:49] And I'm asking myself, what are you talking about? How is the fate of the animal kingdom and us the same? Well, as one dies, so dies the other. There it is. Death.

Everything that breathes air on this planet is going to die. Everything. Indeed, they all have the same breath and there's no advantage for man over the beast.

All is vanity as it concerns death. All go to the same place. Death. All came from the same place.

Dust. And all will return to the dust. He's going to say that again in chapter 12, verse 7. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

I can't tell you how many people I've encountered that tell me they are absolutely terrified of the idea of being put in a coffin and put in the ground. Now that may sound irrational to us, but if you don't have the hope of heaven, think about that.

[22 : 56] Think about how terrifying that darkness would be to you. Darkness is scary. It's scary. But it shouldn't be for a Christian because Jesus is the light and has overcome the darkness for us.

And we will live in the light. We were created from the earth and will return to it. And then finally, remember why you were here. Remember why you were here.

God made you and gifted you your life or you wouldn't be here. So your life is a gift from the Lord as well as every breath you take.

So you owe God everything. You owe God everything. Do you live like it? You see, this is Solomon's challenge. You owe God everything. Do you live like it?

And he's saying to these young people, don't do what I did and live your life like you don't owe God everything because you do. I don't think Solomon would mind me paraphrasing him like that too much.

[24 : 02] I think I'm catching the gist of it anyway. You owe him everything. So Solomon says, remember this creator God who loves us and makes himself known to us.

He's not a God we want to run from. He's not a God like the God of the pagans that we have to sacrifice our children to and cut ourselves and offer terrible sacrifices to and constantly come and try to placate and convince.

Please like us. Please like us. We'll try to do better next time. That's not our God. That's not our God. Dr. Barak pointed out a very important critical aspect of this remembering because we can we can get this messed up with how we think about remembering something.

How do we remember the Lord as our creator? He says it's a spiritual action and here's the quote that I want to put up here for you. It's a spiritual action allowing the objects of remembrance to shape one's perspective in the present.

So what is the object we're being told to have is our remembrance our creator God. So the question on the table is is our creator God the way Solomon's presenting him shaping our perspectives in the present?

[25 : 28] Is God shaping your perspective in the present? About what Jeff? About your life. Everything. Nothing escapes that.

But then I really also like this and I wanted to pass this on to you and not just hoard these little kernels to myself. Walt Kaiser said this put this quote up there for you to remember our creator calls for and here it is decisive action.

This is what we're being called to by Solomon. Based on the mental recollection of and the reflection on all that God is doing and has done for us.

Do you see the is doing and has done is creative work? So God is creator. We're still reflecting on that reality that God is initiating in your life.

God is working in your life. Look, the God of the universe, the God of the universe knows who you are and he's working in your life. You!

[26 : 38] Why you? Why me? But he is. But he is. And that work won't stop until he brings you to glory and you stand with him.

Having received your rewards from him. I'm like, Lord, you're going to reward us? We should be rewarding God. Have you heard people say, we'll take our crowns off and cast them at his feet? Oh, how appropriate. You're going to give me? My reward is your son. I don't need a mansion in heaven. Just being with you ought to be enough, right? That's the heart of someone who's recognizing and realizing what this wonderful, great creator God has done in giving us his son. So that we're not scared of dying and being put in a hole because we know that's not where we're going to stay. We're going to die and in that moment we are with the Lord.

hope, hope, hope. Beautiful hope. Remember our creator calls for decisive action based on the mental recollection of and reflection on all that God is doing and has done for us.

[27 : 50] It must result in an action appropriate to that recollection. Yes, that translates this way. Your life needs to look like you've got saved. saved.

So it goes beyond calling something to mind. It's not just you remembering, oh yeah, God, gotcha. I remember. When our hearts, here's what robs it though.

By the way, this is all verse one. Remember also your creator. That's what we're working on right now. OK, we're just fleshing that out according to what Solomon has said in the book.

When our hearts focus on the hurts, when our hearts focus on the harms and the harsh realities of life, and there's plenty of that, we can find ourselves living as if we don't have a good creator doing a good and gracious work in and with our lives.

we remember what we remember and focus on is what's happening now that's hard and harsh and unfair and unjust and that kind of thing. It just hurts, hurts so bad and so deeply.

[29 : 08] If we're not careful focusing on that, we stop remembering this wonderful creator who is doing and has done this awesome work, this beautiful work of transformation in his son.

in me. And we ought to be super protective and jealous of anything getting in the way of that.

We don't want to let anything grab that and take it from us. So, this matter of what our hearts are focused on throughout life is the issue of remembering.

When you think of remembering God, you need to think in terms of what is my heart focused on.

Am I remembering and reflecting on how hard life is and how bad life can be and how mean people can be and how the unknowns of life are so scary?

Or am I remembering this creator God who holds my life in his hands and determines my future?

So, here's verse one again.

[30 : 29] Remember also your creator. Everything I've just said is right there. Remember also your creator. In the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near, when you will say, I have no delight in them.

before I mentioned to you, before gives us a time reference because what it does is he says, you need to do this before. Before what? What are we talking about?

He's separating your prime of life from your aged life, your latter years. So, before is a time reference separating prime of life from the years that you will say, I have no delight in them.

it's hard to find delight in your body falling apart. It's hard to find delight when you have to depend on everybody else to do for you.

It's hard to find delight in sitting around remembering how things used to be because you can't make any new things happen. This is where Solomon is. And it's sobering him.

[31 : 41] He's writing about it in the power of the Holy Spirit. it's food for us. It's food for our souls to remember and reflect on this.

So, this is a call to action, isn't it? This is a call to action as you still have your youthful vigor in the prime of your life.

I'm sorry, I look at Doug and Tara, I look at some of you guys and I think, man, Doug, I wish I could go back and be in my 40s again. Right? Oh, please.

I can't. I gotta deal with what I have now. How many of you who got out of Doug's boat the day we went over there and boated together, how many of you who did that got up the next day and felt it?

Be honest. Right? There was a reef said even the day after that. That's when I really feel right.

Douglas didn't get out in the water.

[32 : 47] He was very kind and served us and drove the boat, but I'm willing to bet if you'd gotten out in the water and did your thing, you wouldn't have been sore the next day. See? Oh, youth, the vigor of the prime of life.

Right? Grab it while you can. He says do this before the evil days come. Wow, that's the evil days. What's he talking about? Days that you will take little or no delight in.

What are those days? Well, listen, if God grants you many years, you're going to lose that youthful vigor. It's going to drain from you over time and you will begin to experience serious bodily decline.

So what we have here is a metaphor. The evil days isn't a reference to moral evil. It doesn't fit the context. It's not a reference to moral evil or evil done to you in life.

Before the evil days come and you get old and everybody gets mean to you. Well, I didn't have to get old for that to happen. Right? No, what he's talking about here, it points to the days of decline from youthfulness to old age.

[33 : 59] So there's a contrast. It's meant to sober us and drive us into a faithful commitment of spiritual action before God. It's okay to reflect on this before you get there.

It's okay to think about these things and use these things as markers and motivators to help guide your life, to help you measure what you're doing in your life right now.

You've got to have something to look at and some standard, and he's giving us that right now. He's saying, don't waste your youthful vigor, but he's telling you where to put it, what to invest it in, and that's very interesting to me.

He says, do all of this before. This is your commitment to spiritual action before the Lord before. Before what? Look at verse 2. Here it is again. Before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain.

[35 : 07] What is this? Some veiled reference to the apocalypse? No. This is your own personal apocalypse called old age. Old age. This is the picture of aging and, boy, I'm really painting it bad, I know, but he's doing it, not me.

This is the picture of aging and death as the clouds of old age come in and make things increasingly dreary and dim and dank. No, he's saying before the debilitating issues of old age make it harder and harder for you to follow through in vigorous spiritual action on behalf of the Lord.

There's going to come a day when you're just not going to have the zeal and the physical ability to serve the Lord that way anymore. If he grants you many years, that's coming. that's coming.

So that helps frame the passage for us. Now look at verses three through six and tell me now, based on what we've just laid the ground for, the foundation for, what in the world are we supposed to do with these next verses?

Look at this. In the day that the watchmen of the house tremble and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few and those who look through windows grow dim.

[36 : 25] The doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low and one will arise at the sound of the bird and all the daughters of song will sing softly.

Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and terrors on the road. The almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the capybar is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street.

Remember him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed. The pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed.

There you go. You got it? Clear as day. It wasn't for me. I had to really work at this. Well, that's what frames the passage.

All of this. This is Solomon's progression. His progression of this time of bodily decline and limitations impeding our service to the Lord.

[37 : 28] I'm going to show you. There are several. Now, this is the caveat, though. I want to make sure I put this out here to you. There are several plausible but varied interpretations of this section of the book, three through six.

The comparison begins with a Hebrew household, a very common metaphor, analogy, just to a common Hebrew household, is how it starts in verse three.

Every, this is important, every single commentator I read agreed that any interpretation that we make of this section of Scripture should not be pressed too hard.

So I'm going to offer you what I understand to be the most likely interpretation and where I land, but I leave it open for you if you do further study to say, I think it might lean more toward this.

Now, I'm not trying to be willy-nilly about what the word says. I do believe there's a right interpretation for each passage of Scripture. It's just that as we come to this, it's enigmatic at best, and we're really trying hard to look into the context and draw out what Solomon's giving us.

[38 : 39] Okay, that's what we're dealing with. That's what I think we're dealing with. So the one interpretation that I've been most familiar with and landed on takes these verses as a way of poetically depicting Solomon's point that the realities of your approaching old age and death bring you closer and closer to God's judgment on your life.

So in other words, let the signs of old age be signposts that you're approaching the day of standing before your God and make the most of it.

Don't wince, complain, and get bitter about old age and the decline that you're experiencing. Let it spur you on, as it were, to continued faithfulness to God, realizing that your days are drawing to a close, and you'll give an account.

So, live your life wisely as a gift from God. Don't waste your prime of life chasing the things that fade and amount to futility.

futility. I'm going to say it again. Don't waste your prime of life chasing the things that fade and amount to futility. Now, I've chosen my view of what I believe is the best summary of this progression, and I'm simply going to read an extended quotation of this.

[40 : 13] I'm not going to put it up on the screen. I just want to read it. It comes from Walt Kaiser's commentary, his little commentary, coping with change. And I want to read from Walt.

I rarely do this in this manner, but this time I think it warrants it. Here is how he speaks of this. I'm going to go back up and tell you what he said about verse 2 as it sets the stage for what he's going to say next.

The general idea of what is happening in verse 2 can still be proclaimed even if it's difficult to understand. One mental and eternal internal infirmity after another begins at the sunset of life hampering our effectiveness in serving our creator.

Consequently we would be well advised to get moving which is remembering while those evil days have not yet overtaken us.

In the next four verses verses 3 through 6 we have a list of bodily infirmities. these may be seen most easily in the following list of phrases.

[41 : 26] Here it is. Ready? In verse 1 or in verse 3 and your translation may read a little bit differently but I think it will be clear enough for you to follow along. The keepers of the house tremble.

Mine has watchmen of the house tremble. The keepers of the house tremble. The meaning the arms and hands tremble in old age with palsy and feebleness.

Heroic men are bent. The second half of verse 3 meaning the legs are bent in feebleness and the knees totter. 3C the latter part of 3 grinders cease because they are few.

The teeth lose their ability to chew food and they start falling out and getting replaced. Nobody is saying amen.

Those looking through the windows grow dim. The eyes begin to lose their sight and the pupils become dilated and more contracted and you get cataracts.

[42 : 38] I went to an eye appointment a year ago in September early September and the guy said did you know that cataracts are forming and I said you know night vision is not what it used to be he said that's cataracts brother I went back just this week and saw him and I said I need an update and I told him what was going on and he said yep it's worse especially in your right eye and I said when I read you'll see me do when I read sometimes the words leave they cloud over and I have to blink and move my head to get it back I said what do I do he said this happens to everybody and I said yeah but what do I do how will I know when I'm supposed to go get it taken care of he said oh you'll know that's what he told me oh you'll know what I I can't see right yeah and he said no you'll know and he said when you have it done when it gets to the point where you have to have it done you will feel like you have gotten a new life when they put that lens in and you

I said will I wake up and be able to see when I wake up and he goes oh yeah absolutely folks I haven't been able to wake up and see anything since I was 11 years old if I don't reach for my glasses when I wake up in the morning I can't see anything it's just all blur I won't know how to act if I wake up and open my eyes and look around and everything's in focus the eyes begin to lose their sight doors on the street are closed now this is very interesting the lips swinging or folding doors the jaws are called the doors of his face in Job 41 14 the lips begin to shrink and fall into the mouth for lack of teeth so a street is cleft when we consider it to be between two rows of houses sound of the grinding mill fades in toothless old age only soft foods can be eaten thus no noise is made for no hard bread or corn or anything can be chewed one rises up at the sound of a bird the least amount of morning noise terminates your sleep all the daughters of the song are brought low the qualities that is the daughters that make up the power to compose and enjoy music and song elude him in his old age afraid of heights and of terrors in the road he's developed paths that were once familiar have you ever had older people they're afraid of fall they're afraid of getting in contexts or situations where they might fall and hit the ground why break their hips break their bones and then be in the high there's an amen thank you brother and then they're in the hospital for weeks at a time here's an interesting one the almond tree blossoms that's a metaphor for your hair turning white with age the grasshopper drags himself along that's the halting gate of the elderly as they walk along with their canes the capybary is useless so let me

I'm going to rephrase this one for the situation in the room your ability and intimacy and desire fades and you find it more and more difficult to be involved with that you with me so capybary was a

help in that time and they're saying that ain't even helping oh old age a person goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets this phrase can be understood very naturally and literally the silver cord is severed that might refer to the spinal marrow connecting the brain and the nerves and it's pale and becomes weakened the golden bowl is broken this may be a reference to the brain because of its shape and color the bowl the brain kept in the bowl of the skull the pitcher is shattered at the spring the failing heart a pitcher like receptacle is pierced or broken and all of life supporting blood flows out heart attacks strokes and then finally the wheel is shattered at the well the system of veins and arteries that carried the blood around continually like a water wheel breaks down when the heart breaks are you significantly discouraged and depressed yeah we're still alive verse 7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it vanity of vanities says the preacher all is vanity so verse 7 this reality of returning to the dust awaits all of us

Solomon meant it to convict his readers into sober minded action to God and then in verse 8 that's very truthful it's just he's just being very raw in his honesty but it's also it's also the tragedy you want to avoid as the legacy or the sum of your life vanity of vanity you don't want to look back on your life and think vanity of vanities what a breath what a waste because you chased the world you justified your worldliness to yourself you spent your life striving after wind which is what vanity means in this verse it means breath or vapor something quickly fading a puff that your life you look back on your life and all it amounts to is a puff so what does he say remember your creator you were a mere breath away from the end of your life and you don't know when that will be so for people in the prime of life here's the counsel it's hard it's hard to receive this counsel when you're in the prime of life because you see it as being something so far off you think time is on my side

I have a lot of things that I want to do and that need doing and I'm going to do my thing that works against it that is not God's way to view your prime of life so Solomon says to the younger prime of life folk fear the Lord fear the Lord concertededly shape your prime of life with wise grateful humble responses to God as he gifts you with life by his amazing grace that's pretty clear for the older and aging it's a sobering take on what you've created for yourself at the latter stages of life you're there now you can't get it back and so you're looking back the prime has passed and now you have to live with what you've made don't you wish you could get to that point in your mind as a young person which is what he's encouraging oh if we could take that experience for those of us who are there and inculcate it somehow in the younger people and say you just don't understand what that feels like you don't know what it feels like to come to that place in your life and look back and think man [50 : 42] I was not very focused that and that and that they weren't very much about God at all those kinds of things so take whatever wise measures you need to take to be defined hear me not by other people not by life's harsh realities but by your creator and remember him remember his goodness and his grace to you now what about the judgment that awaits people what about the judgment that awaits people that he's talking about here now I want to say a word about this before we close please listen carefully to me I want to encourage you as a Christian I'm preaching to Christians to believers on the whole here as a Christian the Lord will not condemn you Jesus took your condemnation for you as he bled and died on the cross there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Jesus Romans 8 1 there is therefore now no none no condemnation but the Lord will judge a Christian's deeds and words and reward you based on your faithfulness to him and obedience to his truth now just want to take a few more minutes and show you this before I read a passage and we close out 2nd Corinthians 5:10 2nd Corinthians this is important for me as your pastor that you go away with this 2nd Corinthians 5:10 in the context here Paul is speaking about this very thing that as Christians we're going to face judgment before the Lord but not condemnation there's a difference in the way Christians are going to be dealt with and so he says for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be notice the wording recompensed for his deeds in the body that is in this life according to what he has done whether good or bad now when you read good or bad you need to think eternal or temporal that's the context are the deeds that I'm doing in this life right now worthy of eternity or are they only worthy of here you say what does that mean good question first

Corinthians chapter three will shed a little bit more insight on this for us first Corinthians chapter three contextually beginning in verse eleven for no man can lay a foundation in his life other than the one which is laid which is Christ Jesus that is the foundation worthy of building a life on if you're

not building a life on the foundation of Christ you're not building a life verse twelve now having said that if any man builds on that foundation Jesus with gold silver precious stones wood hay straw each man's work will become evident for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire judgment and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work if any man's work which he has built on it remains he will receive a reward reward the foundation for building on life is Jesus Christ the gold silver and precious stones those are the things that are of value to God those are eternally valuable things the wood hay and straw are worthless things not necessarily evil but they're not worthy of heaven they are things that you do in your own striving they are temporal things and then there are eternal things each man's work will become evident and he says toward the end of verse 13 they will test the quality of each man's work that is whether they're worthy of eternity or not in other words did God see that as worthy in Christ or not if it's worthy in Christ it will be counted for you by the Lord and you'll be rewarded for it which again that's amazing that's just amazing that that

God is looking at my life like that that's what we mean by building treasure in heaven eternal verities eternal truths and and and then in verse 14 if any man's work which he has built on it remains he will receive a reward and that reward there is eternal eternal all of this is about eternity so this is not judgment for sin for christians but life lived in words and deeds verse 15 if any man's work is burned up He will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved yet as through fire.

[56 : 26] You with me? So you're not losing your salvation as a Christian in the judgment of God. You're being judged according to how you live for Jesus in this life. And those things that are worthy of the Lord in Christ as you live them here will be rewarded.

The other is going to be considered wood, hay, and stubble, and it'll be burned. And it won't count for eternity. I like that because it helps me understand I am not just living for here.

What I do here counts. It counts for when I'm gone from here. Oh, that's pretty cool. All right, now I want to throw some questions up here and read a verse.

I know we're pressing on, but this is how I want to close this up. I won't be preaching next Sunday. I got to get this out. You don't want me to suffer while I'm gone with this inside of me.

All right, let's throw this one up there. As a Christian, what focused efforts are you making to invest your time and resources in doing the highest good in your service to Jesus Christ?

[57 : 38] This is about Jesus. This is not primarily about our rewards. It's about Jesus. God doesn't discount our rewards and our doings, but we're to do them in Jesus.

Your eternal rewards depend on this. All right, the next question. How are you showing your gratitude to God for his gift of your life?

How are you showing it? Is your Christian life a series of efforts to earn God's favor? Please don't live like that, beloved. Don't live thinking you have to earn his favor.

God gave you all the favor that you can possibly have with him when he gave you his son, Jesus. In Jesus, you have all the favor with God you can possibly have, even in your sin.

Your sin does not remove God's favor toward you because he loves you in his son. Let me read from Colossians as we close out.

[58 : 48] This is I promise you I do this. Read this out and close this out. Colossians, we saw this in our Thursday night Bible study, and it just resonated with me that we could use this for our time this morning.

Colossians 1, beginning in verse 9, where Paul is praying on behalf of these believers. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask, and here's what he's going to ask, that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Now catch this in verse 10. Here's the purpose that we're praying that for you. So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing this spiritual fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Now let me put up this. Is this the final question that I'll do before I do my series? Yes, if someone followed you around for one average week of your life, would it be obvious to them that you are living to please Jesus in every aspect of your life?

Please don't let that be legalistic to you. I'm not trying to guilt you and make you feel like, boy, if I ever sin, I'm missing the mark of... We all sin.

[60 : 11] But do you run to God in confession and ask for forgiveness and then live in repentance? See, that's the thing. The issue isn't do you sin, it's what do you do with it?

Do you bring it to your father and trust him to love you through it? I do. And then I want to ask you these final two questions.

Am I allowing my sin to degrade Jesus in my life? Am I allowing my sin to degrade Jesus in my life?

Is your sin... Are you allowing your sin to get in the way of people seeing Jesus in you?

Don't allow that. Fight it. Strive against it. And then finally, is my lack of living my life as God's gift, is that getting in the way of giving Jesus Christ my wholehearted worship in all that I say and do?

All I did with these questions was try to help you make some application for the point that Solomon's making about don't waste the prime of your life. And if the prime of your life has jetted by, look back on your life and allow that to say to you now, well, God, whatever years, months, or days, or moments remain, let me live to you in the highest devotion I can possibly bring.

[61 : 33] Let me just learn to love you and grow with you. And God, if you give me strength, let me just serve you with all the strength that I have remaining. Make the most of who you are in the Lord Jesus and don't allow your sins or even the sins of others or of the world to rob you of one single minute of living in the joy of Christ.

But it will. Don't let it. Let's pray. Well, Father, we have sat under the word of the Lord and we pray that if we have come under conviction, we will bring that to you and find in you a God of much grace and forgiveness and tenderness and gentleness with us.

It's true that you hate our sin, God. It's also true that you love us so much that you gave your son to die for us, to be raised again, that we might have a righteous life before you.

Purchased for us by that sacrifice and suffering. And so we run to the cross. We run to the empty tomb where our hope is found.

And we thank you, God, that even in our failures and weaknesses and sins, we find in our Lord Jesus Christ the hope for living a life that pleases you.

[62 : 52] So help us to live in that hope who is Jesus himself, our God and our King and our brother and our Lord. He is our Savior and it's in his name that we pray.

Amen.