What is Life About? (Part 2)

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[0:00] I'll invite you to turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 7 as we continue to make our way through this wonderful book of Scripture. Written in the time of Solomon, by Solomon, the book of the Old Testament.

The title of my message is What is Life About? And it's part two, continuing on from last Sunday. What is life about? Part two.
Now, we're dealing with Solomon's answer to the question, what is life about? Now, that question doesn't just apply to chapter 7.
That is a question for the entire book of Ecclesiastes. We're just using it right now at something of the halfway point between the beginning and end of this marvelous book.
What is life about? And that question, beloved, takes us back to the beginning of human life here on this planet. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve foolishly heeded Satan's answer to this question.
[1:19] They fell into sinful rebellion as a result. And the results have been devastating the human race ever since. So what I'd like to do is take you very quickly back to Genesis chapter 3.

You can hold your finger there in Ecclesiastes 7. Genesis chapter 3. Here is how that exchange took place between Satan and Eve.
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 said 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 or you will die.
Well, 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.
[2:35] So now, according to Satan, According to Satan, Life is about being like God by not being limited in their knowledge.

That's the key. Life is about being like God, yes, but it's being like God by not being limited in what you know. That's the hook.
We all know Satan was lying. A big lie. I want to read to you Genesis chapter 1. Look at verse 26 with me, if you will.
This is something that God had already established as He was creating the world. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And let them, mankind, 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.
[3:47] So God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them.

You notice how many times in verse 27 it says that? Who created mankind? God. And He created mankind, both men and women, in His image. Then notice in verse 28, God did something very, very impressive and important.
God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over everything, living thing, that moves on the earth.
Then God said that He had given them plants to eat. It shall be food for you. Verse 30, Every beast of the field, birds of the sky, moves on the earth, which I have given every green plant.
And it was so. Then notice verse 31, God saw all that He had made and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning.

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[4:52] The sixth day. What's the point of all of that? Here's the first slide that I want to put up here for you because I want you to see it written down. Adam and Eve were already as like God as God wanted them to be.

It was good. It wasn't just good. It was very good. Adam and Eve being made in the image of Almighty God. Now look, Satan's answer was about convincing Adam and Eve that God's ways were limiting them in their relationship with Him.
They're too limited. Satan was saying, you are missing out on something that will open your eyes to being like God. Now this is something that we struggle with.
This is something that we deal with. It's the issue of, well, can I be happy? Can I be satisfied? Can I be at peace?
Can I have joy? If I don't have all the answers that I want about my life right now in this situation, this particular circumstance, wouldn't it be wonderful if I could just know this and that and the other about this right now in my life?
[6:06] And when that happens, then I'll be. That's what we struggle with. We struggle with that every day at some level or another in our lives because we're not God.

And what I'm going to encourage you in is you need to be okay with that. That's the thing. You're missing out on something that will open your eyes to being like God.
Every person living after Adam and Eve has had their minds corrupted by sin. That was not the case with Adam and Eve before they sinned.
They were the wisest people who've ever lived on the planet other than Jesus. Wiser than even Solomon. And yet, we notice that even in that perfection, God limited their knowledge by keeping them from the knowledge provided through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
There was a limit. If you look at Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, I'm just setting the tone here for you. The Lord God commanded the man, that is, He commanded Adam, saying, 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 you eat from it you will surely die.
[7:36] Genesis 2, 16 and 17. So God limited them by His design so that they did not know all they could know.

Alright? They did not know all they could know. Let me put this next slide up here for you to see this in writing as well. God lovingly limited them.
Satan disastrously deceived them. Now that is what's going on as we read this together. Satan tricked Adam and Eve into thinking and acting contrary to the wisdom that God Himself had given them.
He had said, You surely will die. It's a certainty. Satan was able to pervert a very basic reality about the way God made us.
God made us in His image but with wise limitations. We are not God.
[8:42] God. We never did possess and we were never intended to possess God's full knowledge of everything. Even in our sinless perfection we didn't know everything God knows.

By God's good design then brothers and sisters we didn't need that much knowledge or even that kind of knowledge. Satan just exploited that to his own advantage.
Now I'd like to put this slide up and have you look at this as I read it. The real catastrophe here is how our sin separates us from our source of life.
We all die physically but notice this we all died spiritually in Adam and Eve. It was no longer paradise for Adam and Eve.
They took on a sin nature. That sinful 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 and to try and live as our own God.
[9:57] That is the struggle that you and I had with sin prior to our salvation in Jesus Christ with no hope of overcoming it. In Christ we still battle it but in Christ we have success because He gives us the power over sin that we need.

Let me take you back to Ecclesiastes and show you in verse 9 just a little brief snippet of this truth from Scripture about our sin nature.
We'll get to this God willing maybe not too long from now. We'll see how long it takes me to get into chapter 9. But chapter 9 verse 3 this is an evil in all that is done under the sun that there is one fate for all men.

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Furthermore the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.
How dreary how droll how awful yes without the Lord Jesus Christ forgiveness of sins that we have through Him that is the fate of every single human being.
[11:11] We are lost in our trespasses dead in our sins in terms of our spiritual life. Now so it goes brothers and sisters through human history as mankind has sinfully labored apart from God and His wisdom to try and understand the world and man's place in it.

We laud what we call brilliant men through the ages who have said some incredible things in their search for their place in the world and the meaning of the universe.
Now I can illustrate this just a little bit further before we jump into our text for today by giving you an example from some Greek philosophers because and here's why I'm doing this.
These men are credited with laying the foundations for how Western civilization reasons. So we're standing in many ways on the shoulders of these philosophers.
The earliest Greek philosophers let me just throw out some names you might remember from some of your courses that you've taken. Thales Anaximenes Anaximander all of these men labored to define the nature of being.
[12:26] what is nature of being because they thought this was the key to unlocking a complete knowledge of the universe.

Now stay with me. You may not be on a search for the complete knowledge of the universe. You're just trying to get through today and you're just trying to figure out what in the world the Lord wants you to do with that or this and it's very basic.
If I could just know that I get it but hang in there. Plato Aristotle Socrates Parmenides Democritus Epicurus built on this same foundation as did the philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries into modern times.
They all thought in one way or another that the path to the nature of being was discovering the basic ingredients the most necessary components or elements holding all of life together and making life possible.
Christian what holds all of life together and makes life possible according to scripture? It's a name Jesus Christ right now they missed that and that is what all of these brilliant men quote unquote had in common men.
[13:46] They all sought this wisdom apart from God without God. I find that absolutely fascinating that through history not a single one of these men made an attempt to even mix Christianity with it.

they just left it out and sought this on their own. They thought that if they could find and I'm going to throw this up here for you this slide the ultimate constituents of the universe is what they called it. The fundamental building blocks of what makes everything what it is. If they could just determine those ingredients they would then be in a position to explain here this friends from Ecclesiastes they could then maybe explain change.
That's what they wanted to know. What is at the heart of everything that makes everything what it is and what is it that makes change what it is in our lives.
They wanted to figure out change. They wanted to be able to control and manipulate and understand these different things that come in and out of our lives.
[14:58] that's what they were after. Then maybe they would have the key to ultimate knowledge.

Again you and I maybe aren't on a search for ultimate knowledge. We just like to know if the Lord would have us do this or that. Still this is the foundation that operates especially in Western civilization.
Theologian and author John Frame responds to all of this saying this. Put this slide up here for you because this is a pretty pretty long one. But just listen to this.
God does make knowledge available to human beings but to gain knowledge we must begin by listening to him. Proverbs 1 7.
We can come to know the world when our thinking is based on God's revelation found in the creation to be sure but also in the Bible. then this is my emphasis then we must know our limits.
[16:03] 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's humility. That comes from Jesus Christ. Christ. That puts you in your place. And in your place you rejoice and give him the glory in your life.

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And you say thank God put me in my place. I'm fine with that. You be God and I'll be who I am giving you the glory. That's not what these other men were after.
And I love this quote from John Frame. We must know our limits. That's Ecclesiastes. Solomon spent a lifetime in this revelry and in this search.
And do you remember? I'm going to go ahead and just take you there. Go to 12 because this is how this is all going to end if God gives us all breath to life to get to the end of this book. Look how it all ends.
[17:13] In verse 13 of chapter 12, the conclusion when all has been heard is this. Fear God and keep his commandments because this applies to every person for God will bring every act to judgment everything which is hidden whether it's good or evil.

That's where we're headed. That's the sum of all things. Now I think I'm in a position where we can read our text for today. Let's read in Ecclesiastes 7 beginning in verse 15.
Now just as a word to those who are visiting, I covered all of this chapter prior to this up to verse 19. So our text actually for today will be 19 down through the end of the chapter verse 29.
But let's start in 15. I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness. There's a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous. Do not be overly wise. Boy, that's a good word. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool.
[18:24] Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other for the one who fears God. This is a common refrain through this book.

The one who fears God comes forth with both of them. Now, I've covered all of that in previous messages. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.
Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good, who never sins. Also, do not take seriously all 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. I tested all this with wisdom and I said 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 own mind to know, to investigate, to seek wisdom and an explanation and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.
[19:24] You know what? Here's what I discovered. More bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains, one who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her.

Oh, my goodness, is he saying this is all the fault of a woman? Knew it. Behold, I have discovered this, says the preacher, adding one thing to another to find an explanation, which I am 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, God made men, that is mankind, upright, but they have sought out many devices.
This is one of those times where you study this out and you just want to turn the page and say, I just don't think we'll deal with that. Let's go on to this other. We can't do that. Last week, I pointed out to you that from verse 15 to the end of the chapter, Solomon is building on this reality about your life. Let's put this one up there. This was from last week. God is in careful control of your life. Number two, by his wisdom, he brings both prosperity and adversity to your life.
[20:38] And number three, you can never work out the full measure of God's ways in doing any of this in your life. That was all part of last week's message. So through Solomon's writing, God provides us with three critical insights into his wisdom for today.

regarding what life is about as we live in his seasons of prosperity and adversity. Again, I want to set the tone. We're talking about Solomon giving us counsel concerning what it is as God works in our lives, each of our lives, with prosperity and adversity.
There's a constant refrain of that back and forth. There are times in your life where you feel like everything's clicking along and doing pretty well. There are other times when you just think the wheels are coming off. So what is God doing in all of that or is God in any of it?
And Solomon's clear answer is God is in every bit of it in all of the details and you'll never be able to figure out all of that. So then what? That's what we're dealing with.

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The first critical insight into this wisdom of how God works in prosperity and adversity in your life I gave to you last week. It's this. Life is not about excesses.
[21:50] It's about fearing God. God. That was the first point from last week. Now you'll get the other two God willing as we move through the message today. Number two, life is not about excuses.

It's about faithfulness to God. Life is not about excuses. It's about faithfulness to God beginning in verse 19 and going down through verse 22.
Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.
Also, do not take seriously all 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.
So friends, you can't excuse your way through life and glorify God. So when facing limitations, your weaknesses as a human being, when you are facing adversity, sorrow, suffering, the inequalities of life that we all have to deal with, this approach finds you excusing sin in your life.
[23:06] Not necessarily other people's lives, but in yours. So two primary thoughts seem to carry this section and serve to maybe tie it, is the best way I can say, tie it to the verses before and after.

Verse 19, wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. Here's the first primary thought. Wisdom in the fear of the Lord.
Now this is important because he's just given us that in verse 18. The one who fears God, that's the character we're dealing with here. Wisdom in the fear of the Lord means this.
It means trusting God with your life and obeying God in your life. That is better than the combined worldly wisdom of even ten seasoned leaders in a city.
So at this time in history, leaders in a city were very, very, very important. And people would seek these men out in certain places, usually at the front gate of the city.
[24:11] They would sit and then they would draw on the wisdom of these learned people. And he's multiplying this and giving the number ten and saying, listen, fearing the Lord and learning to trust God and obey God is greater than the combined wisdom of ten of these learned sages.

And then in verse 20, 21, 22, there's not a righteous man. We all sin.
Don't take too seriously all the words that you hear spoken at you. You've also need to realize now you've cursed others and you've demeaned others in your life many times.
even those who are wise and righteous still sin. There you go. You see, these men that I've rehearsed in my introduction believed you could get to a certain point where knowledge would free you from all the limitations of this life.
Friend, even as a Christian, you still sin and you still battle sin. Excuses and denials do not change this reality about life under the sun, right?
[25:30] Look at this slide with me. This is how one guy sum this up, Dr. Barak. That particular flaw in the human character prevents anyone from being able to depend on their own wisdom and righteousness to provide them with the enjoyment of God's good gifts.

The fact that you and I still sin is the one flaw in our character that prevents that. And we need to come to terms with it. That's Dr. Barak. So one of the chief ways we excuse our sin in our lives is by doing what?
Blaming others. Yes? Blame shifting. Or we could do it this way. Well, I know that I, but, but, but, but, but, but. And we aim that thing at somebody else or some other people, perhaps.
Solomon uses our speech to challenge that self-righteousness in ourselves. He's going to use the example of speech in verse 21.
Do not take seriously all the words which are spoken so that you'll not hear your servant cursing you in the history of this particular context. People have and will wrong you in their speech.
[26:42] In this case, it's a servant. You know how servants get around and they like to talk about the master, the big man, right? On gossip. That's the example. Here the idea is people have and will wrong you in their speech.

It's just part of life, folks. We tend to focus on these wrongs. We tend to allow these wrongs to fester in our hearts. And then these things begin to justify us in our sinful attitudes and actions toward others.
I've said things like this. Yeah, well, if they come to me first. If they admit theirs first or whatever, and you throw all these ungodly, unbiblical, self-righteous standards on the situation, you self-favor

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and you end up in a bitter, bitter way toward these people.
Verse 22. For you also have realized you likewise have many times cursed others. Here's the jerk that you need to bring you back into maybe more of a balanced center position about the self-righteousness you're struggling with.
Just consider that you also are guilty of sinful speech and be humbled. Humbled by the fact that even in your attempts at wisdom and righteous living, you still manage to sin against others every single day.
[28:06] Are you conscious of your speech? Are you conscious of the way that the the attitude of your face, the look on your face, the tone of your voice and the actual words that you use, how those combine to affect the people around you?

Particularly people who have been nasty toward you and considerate towards you, rude towards you as a Christian living a life for Jesus.
Does that put you in a position where you can give that same rudeness back? That same meanness, that same tone, that same attitude? Oh, yeah. Well, and then you.
And then you walk off and then it's not long before you're in your car and you're singing Jesus songs. Oh. OK, so I don't want to metal. So where is the hope then for anyone in this life under the sun to be helped against the onslaught of sin?
The hope is in verse 18. It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other. For that explanation, you'll have to listen to last week for the one who fears God comes forth with them both.
[29:26] If you also look at chapter five, verse seven, I'm not going to go to all the places he says this, but just look at that. That's way back in the early context of the book for in many dreams and in many words, there is emptiness.

See now the dreams and the many words that reflects man's philosophical wisdom. It all comes to emptiness in the sight of God. Rather, fear God.
Right? Fear God is the beginning of wisdom. That's what the scripture says over and over and over. Let me read it to you. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.
Fools despise God's wisdom and instruction. That's the sum of it. The sobering truth is that Solomon wants each of us to come to terms with our own sinfulness.
The reason is this so that we will be far less likely to focus on the sin of others and then be unforgiving toward them. You have this in your family?
[30:30] Do you have this at the workplace? Something's been said and or done and people just won't let it go? And they just feel so justified and hanging on to it?

Solomon is not saying that wrongs don't happen to us. He's not saying that injustices and inequalities are unreal in the world that we live in today.
He's not saying that. He's saying no it happens when you when you hear your servant doing this speaking against you like this. You've got to realize you've done the same thing.
Don't hold it against them. Don't hang on to that grudge and make yourself bitter. We can make excuses. We can point out the wrong we've suffered from other people.
We can talk about and dwell on and lay down at night and think about how unfair and unjust life is. We can do that. Or we can consider the work of God in our own lives.
[31:37] And seek to live faithfully to him. That's previous messages through chapter seven. That's the theme of what I've preached for several messages now here.

Consider the work of God and seek to be faithful to God. Are we more about the failures of others? Or about being faithful to God as we live in his wisdom and ways?
Who's driving the train of your life? Your own jealousies, your own envy, your own bitterness, your own self-righteousness? Or are you humbling yourself before the Lord and seeking him and his wisdom as he works in your life?
That brings us to the issue of what we're, hear me, focusing on. Focusing on. So number three, point number three here in this little outline I've been following.
Life is not about explanations. It's about focusing on God. So you can't explain your way through life and glorify God.
[32:46] Oh boy, there are a lot of philosophers that would hate to hear me say that. When facing adversity, sorrow, limitation, suffering, and the injustices of life, this approach would find you spinning reality in your own favor.

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That's this point. You're spinning your reality in your own favor. This is what I talked about a moment ago when I used the phrase or little term self-favoring. So in verses 23 through 25, look at this.
I tested all this with wisdom. I said, I'll be wise. It was far from me. What has been as remote and exceedingly mysterious?
He's just talking about what's happened. Well, I can even see what has happened is remote and exceedingly mysterious. I can't even figure out what's happened. I mean, who can discover it?
I directed my mind to know. Look, look, look at, look at all of these words that tell us his, his focus, his, his energy. I directed my mind to know, to investigate, to seek.
[33:54] Wisdom and an explanation to know. The evil of folly and the foolishness of madness. Solomon's once again rehearsing the reality that God's wisdom for life cannot be discovered, folks.

Because it is divinely revealed by God and limited to what God wants you to know at any given time. Again, I ask you, friends, are you good with that?
Because whether you're good with it or not, that's the way God works. You're not going to change his mind in that regard. God's wisdom and goodness will always limit you.
In what, you know, if you've ever heard somebody say, boy, I just wish I could know ahead of time, but up, up, up, up, up, up, up. And you think to yourself, oh, no, you don't. It would scare you to death or it would puff you up so much with pride, you'd be useless.
Maybe both. Solomon is reminding us of the limits. He's reminding us that the depths of the workings and the will of God in applying prosperity, adversity, limitations to our lives are beyond our searching out.
[35:11] It's not worth even the effort for the search. So don't make it. In verse 23, I tested it all. I'll be wise. It was far from me.

Solomon joins the long line of Greek and many other Western philosophers searching out ultimate questions for ultimate answers. Look, Solomon applied all of his great wisdom and resources to discover this.
And then he candidly admits, what does he say? It was far from me. That's exactly what it means. It was distant, far removed, displaced from me.
In other words, he's saying it was never it was never my lot to know these things. These things are being in all my effort.
These things are being kept far from me. So all the effort that I'm expending, I don't get any closer. They stay just as far away as when I began.
[36:14] And that's why he says it's futile. It's a it's an empty pursuit. Remember the search for what constitutes being.

That our philosophers wanted to track down from the introduction. Solomon is talking about this search for that which is that which is. I know that sounds like that which is or that which is come into being.
They'd sit around and talk about this. Philosophize about it. They're wanting to know what is at the very heart of what makes life what it is.
What is it exactly that Solomon is wrestling with finding? Michael Eaton explains in this particular quote that we'll put up for you.
He is wrestling with this. It is all that exists as God controls and decrees it. That is beyond Solomon's comprehension. Could you put your name in there?
[37:23] Could I just do this? It is all that God all that exists as God controls and decrees it. That is beyond Jeff's comprehension. Is Jeff good with that?

Is Jeff living in that reality with joy and peace before the Lord? Is it OK that God doesn't tell Jeff everything even about Jeff's own life?
Is that OK? Well, if it's not, Jeff's in a bad way. Verse 24.
What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it? So this work of God, folks, that we're supposed to consider, this work of God in people's lives is remote and mysterious. Who can discover it? Now, here is the soundness of the wise warnings we dealt with back in verses 8 through 14. All right.
[38:22] Let me throw this up here for you. If you spend your life searching out and being bitter about what you can't know and can't control, you'll waste your life and miss the blessing of enjoying God's good gifts to you throughout your life.

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You'll cheat yourself of true joy. Now, friends, admit it with me. How many Christians do you know struggling with this? Maybe you've struggled with it at different times in your life.
What I want to ask you, is it OK? Is it OK with you? Because it is with God that God doesn't tell you everything you want to know when you want to know it in the way you want to know it.
Is that OK? Because it's not going to change. You'll know what God wants you to know when he wants you to know it in the way he wants you to know it. What we have to deal with is that that what we consider a vacuum, that in between time.
Where I'm thinking that I want to know this, need to know this, should know this, and it's not being made known to me. Now, what do I do? That's what I'm talking about, because that's what Solomon's talking about.
[39:31] He's saying this is reality. This is the way it is. Now, what will you do with it? And this can apply to so many different things in our lives.

So many areas of our relationships with people, our jobs, our finances, our health, or the lack thereof, in all of that.
It comes to test us. I don't want you to cheat yourself of true joy and neither does Solomon, because Solomon lived this life.
Solomon cheated himself of true joy. And it wasn't until the very end of his life that he looked back and applied this wisdom. He wrote this book and he said, don't make that same mistake.
In verse 25 then, I directed my mind to know, to investigate, and to seek wisdom and an explanation, and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.
[40:33] And I think to myself, dude, why did you do that? Why did you want to know that? Well, Solomon confesses his driving desire to obtain an explanation for the deep-seated nature of folly, of living your life in your own wisdom while spurning God's wisdom.

That's what the Bible defines folly or foolishness as. The fool is someone who spurns God's wisdom and tries to live his life in his own wisdom. That's foolishness and folly defined by the book of Proverbs.
And what did he discover as he applied every bit of his resources to this particular exploration for an explanation? What did he discover?
Verses 26 through 28. I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One is pleasing to God, will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her.
What in the world? Well, Solomon isn't woman bashing. All right? I was a little tongue-in-cheek earlier about that, but that's not what's happening here. He seems to be using the dangers of what he would define as a seductress, and he's using it figuratively.
[41:53] So this is the seductress. This is the woman who uses her feminine ways and wiles to seduce people into what she wants. She's a manipulator and a controller.

She's an evil, conniving person. He seems to be using this figuratively. In other words, this is a woman who snares men for her own selfish purposes, and it's represented here by foolish living.
So foolish living is like a seductress. Foolish living promises a lot, delivers nothing, and in the end, leaves you a spent carcass. Hence, similar to being in the clutches of a seductress, to be ensnared by foolishness is more bitter than death because it creates so much suffering in your life.
Be better to die and get it over with than to do this slow death of suffering under the foolishness of your own heart. The wise and righteous person, male or female, can escape the worst of this kind of slow death, but the sinful person living apart from God and his wisdom will be captured and consumed by, quote, her.
Foolishness. Her is foolishness. He's gone a little figurative here. I'm going to show you this later as we move through. Solomon has a very high view of women.
[43:16] Now, some people and many commentators talked about the fact that Solomon had 1,000 concubines, wives, right? I don't understand that. I don't even want to talk about it. I don't know what that is.

Just pride, I guess, in his life. But here's the thing. All of those women were idolaters. They weren't godly women. How do we know that?
Because the Bible says that those women did what with his heart? Led it astray. That's not what a godly woman does. A godly woman doesn't lead a man's heart away from God.

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A godly woman encourages a man's heart to be loyal to God. But Solomon's idolatrous wives and concubines led him away from the Lord. And the Lord told him, don't take all those wives.
And he did it anyway. That's how we know. So I look at this and I read this and many commentators made a big old deal on it and I think, yeah, but I think he's going figurative on us.
[44:17] And there were a number of conservative scholars who had that opinion. I think he's going figurative. But I'm not discounting the fact that he might be thinking on his own life and thinking about all those women and saying, oh boy, you better not go that route.

In other words, giving your heart over to people, not just women, to people who have this foolish outlook on life. This I'm going to do it my own way apart from God way of living and approaching man or woman.
And that's very dangerous. So the Bible is replete with these warnings and admonitions against don't run with this crowd. Don't allow yourself to be corrupted by this kind of and then fill in the blank.
And it's all life being lived apart from the Lord. The wise person will escape this. The person who isn't wise and who is foolish will be captured and consumed by it.
Verse 28. I'm still seeking, but I've not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but now see, keep the context in mind.
[45:24] I found one man among a thousand, but I've not found a woman among all these. Well, again, if he's looking in the thousand of women that he has as his wives and concubines, he's not going to find a single one because they don't love the Lord.

But I think, again, that this is him trying to drive the point home. In other words, I have found one man among a thousand.
That, I think, probably means finding true wisdom among men or women is rare, very rare. It's a work of God because it means being, hear me, focused on God and his will for your life and not being consumed with your own agenda.
Now, does that narrow the field for you? How many people do you know live like that? The only people that you know living like that are people who are saved in Christ, living under the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, right?
People who don't love the Lord that way don't live that way. They live the way of their own agenda. He says then to drive it further home, but I have not found a woman among all these.
[46:36] And I think that means I have not found godly wisdom among even one person who is living apart from God, male or female. In other words, if we put the context in the idea of foolishness, I just can't find anybody who's living in their own agenda who is serving in the wisdom of God.

I can't find a single one. Among people who love the Lord, living for the Lord, I might find one. It's very rare. Truly, truly.
I think that's why he's using this in this figurative way. I think this, friends, I want to explain a little more. This best fits the context, I think, and the language of the chapter where both wisdom and folly have been contrasted and warned about throughout.
For those of you who've been here, I'm asking you to draw on previous messages where you've seen me highlight this contrast back and forth through this chapter particularly between wisdom and folly.
There's no reason for me to believe that's changed at the end of the chapter. I think that's exactly what's going on. For those of you who haven't been here, my apologies. I'm doing the best I can to sum it up.
[47:53] So adding up all that Solomon has found to this point about God's wisdom in deciding the timing, duration, intensity, assigning prosperity and adversity to someone's life, what does he find when he adds it all up?

That's verse 29. Behold, then. Here's the big reveal. Behold, I have found only this. See, he limits. He narrows. He focuses now. God made men upright, upright, but they have sought out many devices.
Is this now man bashing? That's to be fair. Is this man bashing? Because he only mentions men. Look at it again. I found only this, that God made men upright, but they...
So if we're going to assign woman bashing to the early part, we're going to have to assign man bashing, so at least he's fair. But that's not what's happening. That's not what's happening.

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God made both men and women. The word that's used here is a word for mankind. God made both men and women upright, Adam and Eve, before the fall.
[49:09] But they both have sought out many devices. The Hebrew word for devices could also be translated schemes, and your Bible may have that.

One or two translations did. The word for upright can be straight, right, or level. God made mankind straight, right, or level.
But they have sought out many schemes in their agendas. See? Contextually, the idea is that though God originally made mankind wise for right living, that is, right living in the sight of God, from the beginning, people have found all kinds of wicked ways to express their rebellion against the wisdom and ways of God.
And here's how Dr. Barak explained it. One of the commentators that I consult put this up there for you. God 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 have all walked the path of folly. People pervert the right way of God.
[50:21] Folks, that's why we need a Savior. This is the preaching of the gospel. This is the bad news of why Jesus came and died and rose again to free us from this very thing.

What thing is that, Jeff? Us. Ourselves. The pride of our own hearts. The pride of living in our own wisdom and by our own agendas.
So it's not about explanations in life. You could get all the explanations you want and you know what? That's not going to change your heart. That's not going to slay your pride.
That's not going to deal with the deep-seated depravity of your life. All those philosophical explanations and all the deep knowledge of the, that's not going to change your heart.
There's a greater power than that that God's given for that work. It's not about explanations as if God owes you an explanation for all that He does in your life.
[51:28] It's really not even about answers. You could get all the answers and that's not going to change your heart. It's about focus.

It's about keeping our hearts tuned to God's wisdom and His Word so that we can know the wise and the wonderful way of hope for our wandering wayward hearts.
I want to end by presenting you with and sir from Scripture that God gives us in Jesus Christ.
Let's throw this up there for them, Josiah. This is Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 through 3. God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and in many ways in these last days, that's the days we are living in, He has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature. Notice, and He upholds all things by the word of His power.
[52:45] When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. and then this, chapter 7, verse 25.

Therefore, because He has sat down at the right hand of God the Father, He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
Friend, that is the work, the life, the message, the heart of Jesus Christ. If you've not trusted Jesus Christ to forgive you for your sins, then that is the work that you need to do today before Almighty God.
And there's nothing more important for you to take care of than that. Say, Jeff, what does it mean? It means that you come before God in a state of humility and confess to Him, I do live my own agenda.
I do want my own way. I do seek after what's best for me. Will you forgive me of my sins? Will you make me your child?
[53:57] Will you give me the hope of heaven? Will you bring me to your heart and let me live for you and know you? If you pray that prayer in sincerity from your heart, God will forgive you for your sins once for all.

He will guarantee you the hope of heaven. And He will give you the joy and the peace that you've been seeking in all these other ways and can never find. You'll only find it in Jesus.
Amen? You'll only find it in Jesus. You say, Jeff, is Solomon preaching Jesus here? I think he's preaching Jesus and he doesn't know it. He's preaching Messiah.

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He's preaching the hope of God who is Jesus Christ, the Son. Let's pray together. Father God in heaven, we thank you for the message and the hope that we have as you have given us the gospel of hope in Jesus Christ, your Son.
We thank you that no matter where we turn in Scripture, we find the truth of Jesus saves, Jesus saves, and only Jesus saves. We thank you for the message of the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon clearly tells us that after living a life chasing all the things of the world, he came to the conclusion that being in awe of you and living life for you is the only true life worth living now and for eternity.
[55:28] And so we pray evermore, Father, to give us this wisdom. Give us the wisdom of the hope of heaven in Jesus Christ who is your Son, the Beloved, who holds all things together, the radiance and perfect nature of the Father.

We thank you that we can look to you and know you and not follow the whims and the so-called wisdom of men. We have something more sure. We have the Scriptures to lead and guide our lives. Thank you for your goodness and your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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