What is Life About?

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[0:00] We're in Ecclesiastes 7, and we're going to be working our way from 15 to 18.

But I'm going to read this chapter from 15 down just to give us more of the context. Again, we'll handle verses 19 down through the end of the chapter, God willing, next week.
Verse 15, Solomon says, I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness. There is a wicked man who prolongs his life.
And wickedness. Do not be then excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool.
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 comes forth with both of them.
[1:20] Well, wisdom strengthens a wise man more than 10 rulers who are in a city. Indeed, there's 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. 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 mind to know, to investigate and to seek wisdom in an explanation and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.
And 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.
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.
[2:30] Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices. That's just clear as mud, isn't it? What in the world do you do with all of that?

Right. What a challenge this has been. Well, I want to set the tone for you. I want to ask you a series of questions. I want to put this or capture this in terms of your daily life.
I want you to be able to see the wonderful, raw wisdom of this as it meets and goes right down into who you are each day, no matter what season of life you're in.
So here it goes. How much of your daily life is taken up, do you think? I want a percentage in your mind, rhetorical. Think percentages out of 100 percent. Where would this one be?
How much of your daily life is taken up with adjusting to change? Changes in schedules. In plans you had made or counted on.
[3:33] In what others change, which affects you. That you can't control. But they call and they say, hey, man, I need to change this up.

And so now you're scrambling to figure out how you're going to work that in because you'd already made an allotment for it. How about changes at your job? Or in your role in your job? Or in your role in your job?
Or the way that time changes you in your world? For example, your aging. Or fads or customs. So change can be good, but it can also be very hard.
Very hard. So how much of your daily life is taken up, adjusting to or dealing with change? All right. Now this one. How much of your daily life is concerned with you responding to adversity? What percentage would you put on that? So we're talking here about trials.
[4:33] Time constraints. How about your unmet expectations? And those of others towards you, like the expectations people have toward you and you fall short.

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Or you just drop the ball and it creates adversity. It creates challenge. It creates relational stress. What about adversity from your limitations and the limitations of others, which put you in touch with your weaknesses and theirs?
Do you ever encounter that every day? Those of you who are married need to nod your head. Yes. Every single day I'm dealing with my own limitations, but those of my spouse as well.
It's real. It's raw. Solomon's getting right in touch with that. And how about adversity that comes from financial challenges?
Emotional adversity, relational, spiritual, as you own up to your sins each day. And then, of course, marital. Marital adversity.
[5:40] And also the adversities of your culture and community life. For example, COVID. And the decisions that leaders make that affect your daily life.

And then finally, for the reasons of our little experiment here. How about how much do you deal with a sense of suffering? What percentage would you put on that? So we've got three so far.
Adjusting to change. What percentage in your life every day? Responding to adversity trials every day. And now suffering. Suffering from feelings of sorrow.
Maybe you're carrying around a sorrowful heart for some reason. How about this one? This is something that Americans are particularly dealing with now as I read different blog articles and kind of try to put my finger on the pulse of our society.
This is happening around the world, but I'm just talking about American society. What about this one? Loneliness. Loneliness. People are feeling a sense of loneliness and isolation these days. More so than any other time.
[6:44] Suicide rates are skyrocketing. What about the insecurities that you feel each day? You suffer from insecurities. What about fears?

Anger. A sense of a lack of control in your life or over your life. Suffering from being mistreated. Mistrusted. Misrepresented.
Marginalized. Or maligned by others. It happens. It happens in your job, in your relationships, in different ways. And you suffer for it.
Or maybe, maybe just suffering from your failures and those of others in your life, as I've mentioned. Or from just feeling tired. Possibly even discouraged.
Because you suffer as a broken person living in a broken world full of other broken people. Now, take those three categories and add them up. And what percentage do you get for your daily life?
[7:49] You might say, man, 90% of my daily life is taken up responding to this kind of reality. Every day. And if you said that, I think you'd be normal.

And I think that's why the book of Ecclesiastes is in the Bible. The book of Ecclesiastes is in the Bible because it's taken the raw reality of life and pointing us to a greater hope.
Who is that hope? Jesus. Jesus. Absolutely. To God. To God. What is my life about?
If you were to focus on that percentage and those things and ask the question, what is my life about? In truth, it might surprise us to realize how much and in how many forms we encounter change and adversity and suffering in our daily life.
Every day. It would surprise us, I think. So the question then that I want to bring us to is this. Is facing off with all of this each day what my life is really about?
[9:01] And that is exactly how so many people feel every day they get up. Oh, I got to go to work today. They get up and they drudge it out and they just can't wait till Friday and the weekend or whatever.

And that's that's it. And they're always thinking in terms of their next event. Being able to do their next thing that they have planned that takes them away from it all.
So life isn't something they're really living. Life is something they're enduring. And Solomon is saying, I got to the end of my life and I look back and I realize that's just not the way God designed us to live.
Even in a broken world. But it can seem like that, can't it? So Solomon helps us take a really honest look at ourselves. In light of what it means to live as a broken person in a broken world among other broken people.
So to get at God's loving counsel for us as we face these things each day of our lives. I want us to take a really careful look. It's why I've slowed down with these proverbs.

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[10:09] I want to take a really careful look at what Solomon is saying to us. I know that there are different approaches to the way guys do sermons.

And sometimes you can take bigger chunks. I've slowed down because I just want to grab these morsels as I've studied because I've never studied Ecclesiastes before now.
Not in this depth, at least. I want us to grab these morsels because they are so applicable to everyday life for each of us. This is just so good.
So careful in what he's telling us. Now, friends, you're going to have to buckle up with me as we review this. A critical element to understanding the aim of Solomon's teaching in this section is allowing the context of verses 13 and 14 to kind of set the tone for how we interpret the overall thrust of 15 through 29.
So if you would read with me or along with me, verses 13 and 14, consider the work of God for who is able to straighten what he has bent in the day of prosperity.
[11:22] Be happy. But in the day of adversity, consider God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him.

Let me throw this first slide up here for you because I want you to fix this in your mind. The Bible always gives us the reality and never lies about or glosses over that reality, particularly during times of adversity.
And in light of our mortality, that is the idea that we are in a transient way here. We are just passing through. Our life is so fast. We need to exactly what scripture says.
Consider the work of God. That is what Solomon is saying to us here in light of the raw reality of how this world works in its brokenness and in your brokenness.
You need to pause and consider the work of God. And that's what life is all about is considering the work of God and where it takes us.
[12:32] So look again at chapter six, verse 12. For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life?

He will spend them like a notice shadow for who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun. Now, that is a question driving at the heart of what life is all about.
It is asking who knows how to define the good life in light of the fleeting, fading, changing, short lived way that this life truly is.
Who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? Futile here doesn't mean necessarily empty.
Here it has the shade of meaning, as you might remember, of transient, fleeting, changing his futile life. It's moving past you at a very rapid pace.
[13:37] You see that for those of us who have children. How fast do they grow up? Right. And one day we're bouncing her on our knee and the next day we're walking her down the aisle.

Don't cry, dad. I'll cry for you. It just tears me up to think about that. But it's true. Your life, according to 612, is like a shadow.
Transient. It's here and then it isn't. So what is he trying to do? Bum us out with that? Is he trying to freak us out with that? Is he trying to guilt us?
No. Here's the point. You cannot know all that you want to know about how your life will go. You can't.
You're not supposed to. And yet there are so many people who spend so many wasted hours and so much wasted money trying to come up with ways to know the future or figure out the plans that are ahead of them or control their environment in such a way where they can dictate what happens when it happens and how much it happens.
[14:49] Only to find out when they get there that it was all a waste of time and money and effort. Right. Because we just can't do that. And we can't know the future, even as a Christian.

Now, notice how chapter six, verse 12 ends. For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow for who?
A question. Who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun? Now, notice how verse 14 ends the verse right before our passage for today so that man will not discover anything that will be after him.
Very similar concepts. Here's the point. You cannot discover God's future plans for your life. Christian, you can't.

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And that is where God's wisdom comes to your aid. If you look again at verse 13, consider the work of God who is able to straighten what God has bent.
[15:56] Because you can't know these kinds of things, I'll throw the next slide up here for you. So consider the work of God and accept that God's work to straighten, that is to bring good into your life, and God's work to bend, right, to bring adversity into your life, are in his caring control.

So consider, remember, own that you'll never fully grasp, change, or be able to predict or control how God works in your life. Now, let me just pause there and say, does all of that just sound like, why are we even going over this?
That is so obvious. What Christian really lives trying to control the future? Hmm?
I wonder if there are any in here. I wonder if there's one standing in the pulpit. You know, you don't have to be in the world very long as an adult Christian to figure out that people really, really struggle with this.
And when adversity and suffering and change hits, it can hit in a way that really, really feels like it's turning things upside down for you. I didn't see this one coming. It can really get at your heart.
[17:21] And so what is he saying here? Consider, remember, own. You will never, folks, please hear this and be encouraged and let it fill your heart. You will never fully grasp, change, be able to predict or control how God works in your life, and you're not supposed to.

So you're off the hook. Stop trying to play God. Just be you and let God be God. Verse 14. Look at verse 14 again.
This is all preparation here. This is prep work for our passage. In the day of prosperity, be happy. In the day of adversity, consider. God has made the one as well as the other.
So in the moment, the day or in the season of God blessing you with prosperity, consider the work of God.
Be happy and enjoy it. You see that? God says, enjoy it. If things are going your way and, you know, things are just kind of trucking along and you're thinking, man, don't think this.
[18:27] This is what I've done. Don't think, okay, when's the next shoe going to drop? When's disaster going to hit? It's just any minute now. I need to brace. He says, no, no. Enjoy it.

Take it in stride. Bring every drop of that enjoyment out of it that you can. Why? Because disaster is coming. And it'll get here. Stop worrying about it.
Right? Enjoy the ride while you can. That's the blessing of the Lord. Likewise, then. Likewise, God's wisdom teaches you that in the moment, day or season of God bringing adversity into your life, consider.
Consider that in his wise plan for your life, God has made one as well as the other. They are both within the plan of God and in the careful, careful way of God ordering your life.
Both prosperity and adversity come into your life directly from God's hand. So adversity, trials, trouble and testing do at times come as a result of evil people doing evil things to you, toward you, your family, whatever.
[19:45] But, folks, what I'm saying to you is you need to see adversity and trial and those kinds of sufferings as coming into your life from the hand of God. They will never pass through another person's life into your life except they come from the hand of God.

You need to think about who's behind it. Now, I'll just say this because I'm not preaching this sermon today. That doesn't mean that God creates evil.
God is not making these people sin against you. I can't explain to all of us how all of the details of that work. But we believe in a sovereign God doing a sovereign good thing in our lives.
So even sin in the life of other people is used by the Lord for our good and for his glory. And only a big old God can pull that off. And that's OK with me.
I hope it's OK with you. Your only alternative is to bucket and be miserable. That's what I'm trying to say. Solomon is telling us not to do. He's not saying consider evil.
[20:48] Consider evil in your life and spend some time trying to figure that bad boy out so that you can cut it off and keep it away from you. Try to control your. He's not saying that he's saying consider the work of God and realize you'll never fully grasp that work.

But allow for it to be that God has adversity and prosperity in his hand and both are in his plan for you. That's what he's telling us.
Another way to say this, friends, is this. This is no willy nilly way with God. There's no willy nilly with the Lord. Your suffering isn't arbitrary.

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In your sorrows, in your hardships, friend, you are not alone. Your suffering, sorrows and changing circumstances all combine to serve God's purposes for you.
Only Christians can say that with any degree of confidence. But according to the end of verse 14, while you must consider this as a work of God, you will still not discover.
[22:00] You will still not be able to fully know how, why or even when God will work any of these things in your life. So don't waste one minute's breath worrying about that or trying to control that or trying to foresee that.

Solomon said that's the foolishness. That I want you to stay away from. Here's the next slide that I want you to see. From verse 15 to the end of the chapter, Solomon is building on this reality about your life.
Number one, God is in careful control of your life. Number two, by his wisdom, God brings both prosperity and adversity to your life.
And number three, you can never work out the full measure of God's ways in doing any of this.
Now, the reason I've done all of that is because as we read this together this morning through the passage, and I said the joking way clears mud, right?
I'm trying to give you some kind of contextual clarity about how to think about this next few verses. Where do I put all of this? How do I couch it? This is going to help us.
[23:13] Through Solomon's writing, then God provides us with three critical insights into his wisdom. Regarding what life is about as we live in God's seasons of prosperity and adversity.

Did you hear what I said? As we live in God's seasons of prosperity and adversity. Three insights. We're only going to deal with one this morning. We'll do the other two, God willing, next week.
So one of these first critical insights into God's wisdom as he deals with adversity and prosperity in your life is this. We put that slide up.
Life is not about excesses. It's about fearing God. So you've seen movies. You've seen books and articles.
You've seen advertisements. Oh boy, the marketing industry eats this topic up. And it's the topic of excess extremes. And we're encouraged.
[24:14] Go to the extreme. We're encouraged. Go out there and grab, you know, everything. And the marketing schemes tell us that's the way to live your life.

Live your life on the edge. That kind of thing. Solomon says life is not about extremes. Life is not about excesses. It's about fearing God.
Which in many cases sounds a lot more boring than living on the edge. But I'll tell you what, if you're a Christian and you're living to fear the Lord, you are living on as edgy a place as you can be.
I promise you. This is verses 15 through 18. I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness.
And there's a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous. Do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool.
[25:16] 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 comes forth with both of them.

What are we talking about? You cannot excess your way through life and glorify God. You can't. That's a false philosophy. To say that you can live on the extreme and live in the excesses of your heart and also bring glory to God. That is not the Christian life.
By the way, glorifying God is the answer to the question. What is life about? Life is about glorifying God. In a nutshell. What what more of life is about, if you will, in the everyday reality of it is how do we do that?
What does that look like step by step, especially when we suffer, when we're under trial, when we have to deal with so much change? When facing adversity, sorrow, suffering or the inequities of life, this approach to life finds you bouncing from one extreme to the other.
[26:33] This excess idea that Solomon is engaging here. So Solomon kind of engages in a little bit of hyperbole, right? To make his point.

He's he's overstating the reality to make his point. He really hasn't seen everything. You know this saying? If you talk to people before and say, oh, blah, blah, blah, blah.
And I've done it. And let me tell you, I've seen it all. That's what he's doing. I've seen it all. That's what he's saying. But when it comes to the issue of God working, that is straightening and bending

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prosperity and adversity in the lives of the righteous and the wicked in Solomon's own fleeting transitory life.
He's saying, I've seen it all. I've lived a full big old life as king, and I have seen it all in the way of that. What's the point?
The point is this. He's saying, listen to me. I know what I'm talking about here. He really hasn't seen everything, but he really knows his subject matter.
[27:43] He said, I've applied my heart to this. I have studied this out. I have seen this over the course of a full life. Let me tell you. And that's what he's laying before us, and that's why we've slowed down.

It's like I just want to sit at Solomon's feet and just say, OK, next, next. Give me another one. Let me soak it up. People living in right standing with God, people seeking to do what is right.
They still suffer sorrows. They still die. While living like that. And then there is the perplexing reality of the wicked who live long and prosper in their wickedness.
So like it or not, that's the reality. How do we account for this going on? He's saying this. This is perplexing. I've applied my mind to this.
I'm trying to figure this out. And what Solomon's answer to how do we account for this? The righteous live righteously and obey the Lord and they die. Even in the midst of doing that.
[28:50] And then you have the wicked who could care less about the Lord and they hate God and they're doing nothing for the Lord. And they prosper in their life and their life is prolonged while the good person dies. Come on.

Solomon's answer to that is 16 and 17. Do not be excessively righteous. Do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? And don't be excessively wicked and don't be a fool.
Why should you die before your time? What's he saying? Don't go to excess in trying to live righteously or in trying to live wickedly while counting on either approach to change God's plan.
And that's what we do. I'll be a good girl and that'll please God and maybe God will bless me and things will all be great. And then things aren't great.
And you're like, what? Well, then I'm not going to be a good girl. I'm going to be a bad girl if that's the way it's going to be. And that's what he's saying in verse 17. No, no, no, no, no. Now, don't go be wicked as a knee jerk because God didn't do your plan.
[29:54] So now I'm going to be bad. Don't do that because that would be foolish. Why should you die before your time? See, there's consequence to that. If you knee jerk in the other direction and say, fine, you're not going to bless me for being good.

This thing isn't going to work out like this. What's it worth? So I'll just do what I want to do. And if it has a little bit of bad in it, well. Solomon says, why should you die before your time?
What? That got my attention. What are you talking about? He's just simply saying in either case, it would be an illusion, an illusion for you to think you are in control.
Because you're not. Remember, consider the work of God. Solomon is not saying that prolonging life is in the control of the wicked.
Look at it with me again. Look what it says in verse 15 at the end, because it could sound this way. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness. There's a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness.
[31:09] Hmm. Well, what is he talking about in all of this? He's not saying that the wicked can prolong their life like they're in control of it. That goes against scripture. That goes against scripture.

The issue for Solomon is that God is in control of this. God then decides who lives, who dies.
God controls the details of how and when. Where. Even why. You die. God is in control of all of that.
Now, you might ask, because there are some students of the Bible in here. You might ask this question. You might say, but Jeff, now, wait a minute. Doesn't the Bible say somewhere that righteous living brings a long life?
And doesn't the Bible teach that while wicked living can shorten your life, that both of those realities are true? If you live righteous, it'll prolong your life.
[32:07] If you live wicked, it'll shorten your life. OK, now here's the answer. The Bible does teach that righteous living can prolong your life. It does.

While wicked living can also ruin or shorten your life. Can I show you a few places where that's the reality? Proverbs 10.

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Proverbs chapter 10, verse 27. The fear of the Lord prolongs life. That's exactly what we're talking about here.
Living in the fear of the Lord in a righteous life. The fear of the Lord prolongs life. But the years of the wicked will be what? Short or shorten.
OK, so it's in the Bible. I won't stop there. Let me give you a couple of other ideas where this is kind of also fleshed out a little bit. If you look at verse 29 in chapter 10.
[33:10] The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the upright. But here's the word ruin to the workers of iniquity. And that's exactly what our passage is dealing with.

Don't ruin yourself. Don't be excessively wicked and ruin yourself. The Bible speaks about that.
How about Proverbs 12. Verse 21.
Verse 21. No harm befalls the righteous. But the wicked are filled with trouble. Now, it's not literally true that no harm will ever befall a person who's living for the Lord.
This is the idea here. You have to take this in principle form. This is the idea here that as people live for the Lord, the Lord has them securely in his hand.
So this is the kind of fall or trouble that would absolutely bring you to ruin. You might stumble, but you will not fall headlong.
[34:08] It won't be a disaster kind of thing. The Lord holds on to you in that. But the wicked are filled with. Trouble. Says the word of God.

And then finally, in Proverbs 19. Chapter three. The foolishness of man. Here it is again. Ruins his way.
And his heart rages against the Lord. So those are several passages of scripture that tell us that living a righteous life can prolong your life.
And keep you out of the kind of troubles that haunt and stress and wear people down. While living a wicked life and engaging in those kinds of disobedient ways.
Will fill your life with trouble and weigh you down. And begin to sap your life from you. You see that, right? Have you ever seen people caught up in the throes of sin?
[35:08] And in the cycle of sin. And they start to get gaunt. And they look horrible. And they don't eat right. They're not sleeping well. They look like they have the weight of the world on them.

Right? You've seen this in people's lives. This is what he's talking about. In this particular section.
So is there some kind of contradiction here about what's said in Proverbs and what Solomon is saying here?
Well, ask this question and it'll relieve any issue about contradiction. Ask this. Who is in control of how long your life is? Who?
God. God. God. One way or the other. Whether you live a wicked life or whether you live a righteous life. God. Is in. Control. And so one commentator.
Dr. Barak points out. That because God is in control of when you die. Quote. The length of a person's life. Does not depend upon his or her spirituality.
[36:08] Okay, friends. The length of your life doesn't depend upon your spirituality. It depends upon God's plan. God is ultimately in control.

So while God can choose to extend a person's life. So while God can choose to extend a person's life who is obeying his word. That same person. That same person still might die sooner and younger than a wicked person.
And vice versa. Okay. So Solomon is simply pointing out that we cannot know how the Lord will handle the length of our lives.
Whether we are obedient to him or not. We just can't know that. He has seen. Solomon has seen the exceptions to the general principles that we looked at in Proverbs just a minute ago.
So here's what he's saying. The righteous die young in their righteousness. He's also seen the wicked live a long life in spite of their wickedness.
[37:17] So what is this reality? And how does it relate to my life? That that happens. This reality is the reality of God standing behind the plans of men's lives.

And it relates to our lives this way. It relates to our lives by forcing us to deal with the reality that we are not in control. And we are weak.
And we need to serve a strong God. We need to learn to trust and walk in the wisdom of God. And so what does Solomon say?

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I want you to leave today with this resounding in your mind. Consider the work of God. Consider the work of God. He points you to God. And he says consider the work of God in your life.
Are you in a time of adversity and suffering? Consider the work of God. That God made adversity to teach you. To train your heart in righteousness.
[38:18] To conform you. Are you in a time of wonderful prosperity and bliss and everything smells like roses? Consider the work of God. He made the one as well as the other.

Enjoy it. Ring every drop of it out. And buckle up. God's blessing in this life for righteous living and his judgments in this life for wicked living may or may not correspond to your expectations.
You good with that? Because if you're not. You're going to be miserable. When you look across the way and you see that wicked person prospering.
And he got this and he got that. And this happened. And then and then and then and his family and another and look at over here and I'm trying to do the right thing. And then. That's a surprise. And I'm trying to look at it. Along. And what's up with that?
And Solomon said, you can do that if you want to and just make yourself miserable or you can consider the work of God. your choice one leads to enjoying life and not just enduring it and the other leads to wickedness here's another slide I'll have just a couple more for you here's another slide I want you to see this written down what God plans to do or not to do with each person is a knowledge which is beyond us in this life so here it is when God acts in a person's life don't allow what God chooses to do with you or with others to here's the word ruin you the idea of ruin here doesn't simply mean destroy it probably has more of a connotation like this to conflict you to confuse you to discourage you you see that's what it does when we look with envy or jealousy on someone else's life and think boy they're not even trying to live for God and yet doesn't that discourage you it puts your eyes on the wrong thing it conflicts your heart then you start going well what's fair about that now you're in conflict Solomon say don't do that you have taken yourself to a place that you're not qualified to be in what do we say it's above our pay grade it's above your pay grade don't go there it's a dark place you can't know the answers that you want and it's just going to mess you up neither of these things are going to work out for you so now Solomon pulls all of this together in verse 18 it is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other now to me when that when you first read that that sounds like that's right this is licensed to be greedy grab one thing and hold on to it whether it works out for you or not don't let go while you grab something else and hold on to it and just hold on to them and ride it out well that can't be because the Lord doesn't tell us where it's okay for us to be greedy and hoard and just consume it is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other for here comes the key the one who fears God comes forth with both of them what's he saying grasp the good of God's gift and don't let go of the truth that's what he's been dealing with is truth so here's the question do you trust God to care for you do you trust God to care for you well then grasp the good of prosperity and hold on to it and then when adversity comes consider the work of God and latch on to that work that God's doing in your life and hold on to both of them because they're both from God's hand so hold on to both don't trash adversity don't run away from it don't try to shorten it move through it by trusting the Lord that's why I'm asking you right now this is Solomon's big moment right here in this passage do you trust God to care for you he's bringing all of us to that point of really taking a look at ourselves because the fear of the Lord in this context means living with a humble trust in God's care for you that's what this means in this context the fear of the Lord has everything to do with your sense of security do you trust God to take care of you or are you full of anxiety and fear and worry are you constantly contemplating the next bad thing
[43:20] that's going to happen or the things that aren't happening and what if Solomon is saying you're going to make yourself so miserable because you're in a territory where you cannot know all those answers you just can't nobody can you're walking around in God's space man get out of that that kind of fear that kind of fear towards God is the critical factor in helping you live out the blessings of an enjoyable and an obedient life in your walk with the Lord so verse 18 sounds and seems so straightforward until you try and live it each day hold on to prosperity hold on to adversity and in the fear of the Lord you'll be able to manage both then that sounds so straightforward now ah now that's not mud anymore that's as clear as day and it's right there where'd that come from that came from knowing the context of the passage but what I'm saying to you is that sounds straightforward is hard to live it it's simply impossible without Jesus but that's why the Lord takes us through trials and tests that's why he uses change and adversity and suffering in our lives here's my

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final slide as I come to a close we need God to get us beyond self-reliance self-sufficiency personal insecurity and the fear of man so that God can bring or lovingly bring us to consider his work in our lives

I think now listen carefully folks as I close on one hand prosperity can put you in a place where you're glossing over the Lord and your relationship with the Lord's and you're walking in your self-sufficiency and everything's okay and the temptation is to almost forget about the Lord everything's just kind of rocking along right and that's not good in the other hand when adversity hits it's you can get so consumed by the problem and your own suffering that it really drives you into yourself and you become all about fixing or alleviating and so again it's not about the Lord so Solomon says in either case as you hold on fear the Lord consider the work of God consider the work of God because he's going to lovingly bring us to consider his work in our lives to change us so the question on the table is what is your life about this is your life as a beloved child of God and it's about glorifying God it's about living out God's character in your life so consider the work of God God is using prosperity adversity and even your mortality to make you more like Jesus and to better fit you for your eternity in heaven that's what's going on and that is much bigger than any problem you're going to have and much better than any prosperity you'll ever know here amen let's pray together our father God in heaven we thank you for your word even as we prayed before this message that you would open our eyes to understand and to see clearly into scripture this is a hard work

Lord getting into this and wading through these tough phrases and sayings and old old language to mine the treasures of your wisdom and certainly it's worth it Lord so we pray that you would help us to come to terms with the everyday reality of our weaknesses we do live a large percentage of our day facing off with change and adversity and suffering and sorrows and with the ideas that people bring and that we constantly come up against so please as Peter said help us to face these things with gentleness and reverence toward you help us to be winsome and careful in how we speak and respond help us to do business within our own business within our own hearts today for those of us who are worriers God help us in our growth to trust you help us to lean on our Christian friends and Christian family for prayer and for practical ways that we can be built up in our faith and trust for those of us who like to run out and try to get ahead of everything and control stuff and figure stuff out and I pray that you'd calm us down help us to trust you Lord maybe in a little different way but nevertheless to trust you help us to apply these truths to our lives not just so that we can have an enjoyable life but so that we can please you in that enjoyable life so that the world will look in and see that you have calmed and quieted our souls you are fitting us for heaven and that's just where we want to be we pray all of this for your glory in Christ's name amen

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