Submitting to God's Sovereign Providence

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

Date: 18 April 2021

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] All right, once again, I think I might have done this either last Sunday or the Sunday before last. When trials come, no longer fear, because that is the temptation.

Is to be full of fear, especially of the unknown, when we're suffering, when adversity comes. When we're facing something that is turning our world as it were upside down.
For in the pain, and this is the key for in the pain, our God draws near. Now, one of the things we need to accept as mature Christians is that truth.
We're singing truth there. God uses designs and purposes pain in our lives to draw us near to himself.
To remind us of our need, our weakness. To cause us to look to him, to go outside of ourselves. Because in pain, we're often brought to the end of our own resources.
[0:59] And it's all too common for us to think in terms and even begin to live in terms. When we're not even realizing we're doing it, self-sufficiency. And that is a bane against your growth in Christlikeness.

Because God wants to fire a faith in you that's worth more than gold. He builds our faith through trial and suffering and adversity. And it is there his faithfulness is told.
His faithfulness is told. You see, it's not about you after all, is it? It's about the faithfulness of God working in you. Thank you, brother. Well, the title of my message for this morning is in Ecclesiastes chapter 7.
We are attempting to work our way through this chapter. We have put the brakes on pretty hard here. I think it's taken me several sermons now to work through this. I think this one and maybe one more and we'll be through seven.
And that'll be four, which surprised me. I didn't know I'd do four sermons in this one. Say, Jeff, will it be four sermons through the rest? I don't know. I'll be surprised. We'll just see what the Lord does as we work our way through this book.
[2:07] Submitting to God's sovereign providence. Providence has the idea and theology of God's care for his world. The providence of God involves his protection, his sustaining power, his care, his giving of blessing.

In providence, you see the word provide. So this is submitting to God's sovereign providing for your life, even as he provides the trials and testings and adversities that grow you in Christ's likeness.
We're going to be dealing with verses 8 down through 14. So let me begin reading in verse 1 of Ecclesiastes 7 and just remind you of the ground that we've covered so far.
Solomon says that a good name is better than a good ointment. And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart.
Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad, a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.
[3:27] It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool.

And this, too, is futility. For oppression makes a wise man mad, and a bribe corrupts the heart.
Now, to this point, we've covered those verses together in previous messages.
So, beginning in verse 8 for today. The end of a matter is better than its beginning. Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.
Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools. Do not say, why is it that the former days were better than these?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this. Wisdom, along with an inheritance, is good and an advantage to those who see the sun.
[4:29] For wisdom is protection, just as money is protection. But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. So consider the work of God.

For who is able to straighten what he has bent? In the day of prosperity, 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. Now there is a Latin phrase that I'm going to ask Andrew to throw up here on the screen for you.
It captures the weight of Solomon's warning to us about death in Ecclesiastes 7. The phrase is momento mori. It's a Latin phrase that literally translates, remember you must die.
Now you think, how morbid. That's just not a very good upper for what we're talking about. But it has an upper message. Remember you must die. I want to share with you a portion of a blog that I read this past week as I was feeding my own soul on this particular subject.
[5:44] Listen to what this particular person wrote about. This is a true story and a reflection that he was making for his own life. Cold, driving rain pelted my umbrella as I shrugged my shoulders and held them, hoping to absorb another centimeter of comfort from my wool scarf.

And as I was looking around, I saw the grief on the faces of friends gathering to pay final respects to one who has recently passed from this life into the next. So he's at a funeral.
I considered my mortality. That's why I'm reading this to you. This is what we've been dealing with. Keenly aware that my funeral is soon approaching. The beating heart in my chest is something of the drumbeat in my own funeral procession.
Because when it stops, I'll be at my destination. I inserted myself into the shoes of those in front of me. And I thought of how I'd grieve the loss of parents and siblings or friends.
Then I looked at the husband. And I considered how painful it would be to stand in his shoes, having lost his wife. However morbid this exercise might first appear to you, I think it's wise to linger a while and consider our mortality.
[7:03] And then he quotes Ecclesiastes 7 verse 2. Facing death helps us to embrace and live life. That is the theme of this chapter.

Facing death helps us to embrace and live life. Now, you just about can only get that from the Bible. You know, trust God to turn something as fearful and morbid as our impending death into something to celebrate.
And to make use of for living faithfully to him. That is God. He goes on. But as our graveside service and my personal reflections concluded, I saw something that I'll not soon forget.
About 300 yards away, a taxi pulled up. A man slowly climbed out. He extended his umbrella and began walking at a snail's pace away from the cab.
Undeterred by the relentless rain, the older man methodically marched to his destination. Upon his arrival, he stopped, took off his hat, and stood still in front of this very familiar place to him.
[8:18] A headstone. He stood there for about 10 to 15 minutes and then he put his hat back on. He turned and ever so slowly he trudged back to his taxi.

Now, I remain to this day struck by this scene I had the fortunate opportunity to witness. While mourning with friends, I saw another grieving husband coming to honor his wife.
This tiered telescope of love and grief pressed upon me, reminding me how deep and precious love is. Especially between a husband and a wife.
He still loved her. And he still feels her absence. His life without her was never the same. I remember reading C.S. Lewis's A Grief Observed.
Lewis talked about a loved one's death like an amputation. People who love sincerely don't just get over it. They are forever changed. And here's what Lewis writes.
[9:21] To say the patient is getting over it after an operation for appendicitis is one thing. After he's had his leg cut off is quite another. After that operation, either the wounded stump heals or the man dies.

If it heals, the fierce continuous pain will stop. Presently, he'll get back his strength. He'll be able to stump about on his wooden leg. He's got over it.
But he will probably have recurrent pains in the stump all of his life. Perhaps pretty bad ones. He'll always be a one-legged man. There'll be hardly any moment when he forgets it. Bathing, dressing, sitting down, getting up again.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Even lying in bed will all be different. His whole way of life will be changed. All sorts of pleasures and activities that he once took for granted will have to be simply written off.
I'm being told that it's the small things in life that remind you of the people you miss the most and that you cherish the most. Their laughter.
[10:20] Something that they would say to you when they would get up in the morning. A little thing that they would do with you. To lose a loved one is to lose a piece of ourselves.

And I suppose this should be expected in marriage when two become one flesh, according to Genesis 2.24. Loving deeply brings immeasurable joy, but also an acute void when the cruel sword of death makes its cut.
Now, I share this story, he says, hoping that this image would arrest your mind and heart like it has my own. Consider your relationships and how blessed you are to have them.
Think of how good it is to love and be loved and double down on your relationships, especially with those closest to you. Think of this man, rain or shine, he showed up.
Excuses may accommodate self-love, but they are little resistance to a genuine love for others. So show up today and love well, rain or shine.
[11:20] Love while you are still able to love. For in due time, you'll be at a funeral, either of someone dear to you or even perhaps your own.

That is the message of this book. Love well while you can and love in the Lord. That's a good message, isn't it?
It's a good reminder that our lives are fleeting. And that we don't know if any of us will leave here today and have another hour of breath for life. We don't know. We take it for granted many times. Passages like this jerk us back into reality and help us take careful measure of the opportunities and privileges that we have to love one another well. And that's what I want to put before you to be able to think and live like that.
We need God's perspective on all of life, don't we? We need God's power to live it to his glory and honor. So as the passage says, consider along with me this perspective on death.
[12:24] Will you put that one up there for me, Andrew? Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his godly ones. Psalm 116 verse 15.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his godly ones. I have used this many a time in a funeral. I have used this many times at bedsides in hospitals and other places to comfort those who are dying in the Lord.
Christians never die alone. Never. Even when COVID restrictions keep family and friends from their bedside.
And I have recently had to deal with this as a pastor. Even in my own life, this came home to me personally over the last year. As many of you know, my father died this past year.
And COVID protocols prevented my mom and family from being with my dad as he drew his last breath in the hospital and died. But I'm comforted by God's perspective on the death of a believer.
[13:29] As a Christian who trusted in Jesus Christ to forgive him of his sins, my own dad died in the company of almighty God. Now being able to tell my mom that.

And my sister that. And my little niece that. As they all went to the hospital after the fact. And they were there alone. Say that he did not die alone.
He died in the company of almighty God. Friends, God has each dying believer firmly and faithfully, faithfully fixed in his sight. God's gentle, sure hand guides them into his presence.
How do I know this? The apostle Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. That's 2 Corinthians 5.8. In Philippians chapter 1 verse 23.
Paul said in a similar way. As a Christian trusting in Jesus alone for your salvation. To depart this life is to be with Christ.
[14:33] So as a believer, you depart this life. And you are with Jesus. It's not the same as the second coming. When you will get your glorified body and be brought into heaven.

But you are with Jesus. I don't understand all of the aspects of that. I'm just comforted by the fact that if I die before the second coming. Then God is going to bring me into his presence and comfort me in Christ.
Until I get my fit for heaven body. Where I'll live for eternity. And then I want you to see this slide. If you are a Christian. God sees your death as a precious thing in your relationship with him.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Because Jesus Christ died in your place. To free you from the penalty and power of your sins. And because God raised him from the dead. Never to die again.
Trusting in Jesus alone means. That your death is God's portal to your permanent peace. Now how comforting is that? That is a promise from your God.
[15:36] Your physical death is a portal to your permanent peace. So in verses 1 through 14 of the chapter we're looking at.

Ecclesiastes chapter 7. Solomon concentrates in. On contrasting. God's wisdom for life. With man's wisdom for life.
And he does this through the subjects of death. Adversity. Trials. Suffering. Sorrow. All of the things that bring pain into our lives. Better than in verse 8.
Corresponds to the same idea in verse 1. If you'll look at verse 8 with me. The end of a matter is better than its beginning. Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.
Now look over at verse 1. A good name is. How did the chapter begin? Better than a good ointment. And the day of one's death is better than. So once again this theme of better than.
[16:40] Is being put forward as a contrast. Between God's wisdom and human wisdom. God's wisdom is a better than. What is better than?

Emphasizes God's perspectives. It emphasizes God's truth for living your life. In his wisdom. And then experiencing the fullness of life.
That only God can provide. You want to live a full life. You want to have a full measure of the knowledge of God. You want to enjoy to the fullest. The things of life that God provides.
Then there is a better than perspective. That you have to adopt and nurture. And that better than perspective. Is God's wisdom.
Especially as it relates to adversity. Trials. Suffering. And your coming death. Need God to help us with this. Look. The alternative perspectives.
[17:38] The alternative perspectives. Center around foolishness. That's what God calls it now. That's not me. Throwing names out here at people. God says. An alternative perspective.

Other than his. Is foolishness. Man's perspective. Chosen over God's. Is foolishness to God. It's a choice. Which leads to a futile.
Or empty life. That's what he says. You've heard throughout Ecclesiastes. If you've read this book. He continues to use words like. Empty. Or futile. Or vanity. All of those words.
Have the idea. Or connote the idea. That to live apart from God's wisdom. Is to sabotage your life. It's to waste your life. But it's there as a choice.
You can make it. And many many people do. Even Christians. All it takes for you. Is to do. Is to shift into neutral. As a Christian. And live in your own strength.
[18:36] Wisdom and power. That's it. That's all it takes. Your natural bent. And I'll tell you. That just. That just can feel. So smooth. At times.

But now what happens. Now stay with me. What happens. Adversity hits. Like a bus. Trials come. Sorrow. Sadness.
Pain. The reality of life. Slams into you. Now. How much does your self-sufficiency help you? How much does your wisdom help you? How much do your resources.
Carry you. Through the event. Most people find. That they have to find something else to cope. Because their coping strategies are running out. You see.
That's. That's the pattern. Of how so many people live life. Christians can slide into that as well. And Solomon is warning here. Don't do this. Don't allow yourself.
[19:31] To live. This way. Because God's way. Is the better way. Better than. Way. Of facing death. Adversities. Sorrows.

God's way brings. Blessing. To our lives. Instead of the emptiness. Of what man offers. But now friends. Here's the thing. There are dangers. Dangers.
Working against. This sense of blessing. In your life. And these dangers. Are magnified. When you are in pain. When you are tested.
Or tried. Over some situation. Or circumstance. In your life. Are you with me on that? Do you. You follow me. About how. Pain. Adversity. Trials. Testing.
Difficult situations. Exacerbate the reality. Of fear. The unknown. They. They bring up. Your insecurities. They highlight.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[20:26] Your weaknesses. And in many cases. They. Push you. Into greater efforts. To manipulate. And control. The situation. And that is exactly.

The wrong thing. To do. This is the warning. So if you want. To experience. The wisdom of God. In your life. And the full life. That comes. That his wisdom. Can bring. Even through.
And especially. Through. Pain and suffering. In your life. You need to understand. These dangers. Our passage. Offers us. Wise warnings. Against following. Foolish.
Man-centered. Perspectives. And allowing. Those perspectives. To negatively. Influence. Our responses. To life's adversities. And sorrows. So if we're not.
Careful. To follow the Lord. And to live in his wisdom. Especially in these. Times of sorrow. And suffering. And loss. We can be drawn. Into a life. Rob. Rob. Rob. Of the joys. God. Offers us.
[21:21] Here's the first. Wise warning. That I want to offer you. Number one. Patience. Better than. Pride. Patience. Better than.

Pride. Is the idea. And that's in verse eight. The end. The end of a matter. Is better than. It's beginning. Patience of spirit. Is better than. Hottiness.
Of spirit. Now what are we talking about? If we understand. That the end. Of a matter. That's being brought up here. If we understand that.
As being. An outcome. The end of a matter. The outcome. Of a matter. Is better than. It's beginning. We might better grasp the point.
Here it is. Trials. And suffering. And sorrow. Are hard. Human realities. But. They are realities. Nonetheless. Right. We all have to deal with them. But.
[22:19] As God brings you. To the end. Or the outcome. Of those seasons. That he designs. For you. As you benefit. From his desired results.

In your life. It is a better experience. For you. Than at the beginning. Let me remind you. If you go back. To chapter three. Just let your eyes. Peruse chapter three.
With me real quickly. Here at the beginning. Do you remember. What we talked about. Way back then. These are the seasons. Of life. There is a time. To do this. And a time. To do that.
There's a time. To do this. And a time. To do that. Right. So God. Is constantly. Moving you. Through. These different. Seasons of life. It's part of what. Being human is. Now in the time.
Of adversity. We are being told. That the outcome. Is better than the beginning. It's very easy. To see that. When you think of surgery. You go in.
[23:15] And you have surgery. And then you get out of surgery. And the pain. Drugs wear off. Now what? You're at the beginning. Of the healing stage. But when the outcome.

Happens. Right. When you get to the point. Where you are. Fixed from the surgery. And things have healed up. And now you're experiencing. The good. Of what the surgery.
Was designed for. The outcome. Made the other. Worthwhile. At least you hope so. I think about my parents. My mom and dad.
Getting knee replacements. And my dad. Getting hip replacements. And all. I watched them. Suffer through that. Lands in. My dad had a hip replacement. And said. I'll never do another one. And then he was back.
In the hospital. Months later. Getting the second one done. It hurt. But once he was able. To get around. And it stopped. The pain.
[24:08] Down his leg. And down his back. And into his leg. He said. Yeah. Well maybe. That's the way it works. The danger. Here. In this passage.

These verses. Is pride. The pride. Of your heart. The pride. Of your heart. Fostering. Impatience. Ah.
Impatience. Impatience. Over the timing. The duration. The intensity. Of the trial. That God has purposed. For you. So cultivating. And exercising. A patient.
Spirit. During suffering. Is an expression. Of. Godly. Humility. Look at it. With me again. The end of a matter. Is better than its beginning.
And now look. What he's. Advocating here. Patience. Of spirit. Then. Is better. Than haughtiness. Of spirit. Why? Because you're in it. You're not.
[25:04] At the end. Yet. You haven't. Experienced. The benefits. Of the outcome. Yet. You're in the midst. And so. Patience. Of spirit. Rather than. A prideful spirit.

That says this. I'm done with this. I'm so over this. When is this going to end? I'm tired of this. Yeah. Yeah. I'm doing me.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Not you. You do you. I'll do me. Yeah. Amen. Brother. Michael said. I'm too old for this. But you know. What we're doing. We're basically.
Telling the God. Of the universe. What's best for us. And that he's getting it wrong. Now. What do we call that? You spoil brat. Prideful thing.
Yes. So patience of spirit. Listen folks. God. Builds humility. Through suffering. And sorrow. Whether we like it or not. He builds humility.
[26:01] So that you can grow. In a spirit. Of patient. Peace. With the Lord's. Process. Of sanctifying. The Lord's. Process.

But there is a very. Very critical. Key. To being able. To adopt. This kind of. Patient spirit. In your life. As God takes you. Through one trial.
And testing. Into another. And I'm going. To show you. This very. Very critical. Key. At the end. Of my message. So hang on.
I want you. To consider. If you would. Proverbs. 15. 33. Andrew's going to put it here. On the screen. Proverbs. 15. 33. The fear.
Of the Lord. Now here it is. Folks. Not the fear. Of the trial. Not the fear. Of the unknown. Not the fear. Of God.
[26:56] Using trials. To show you. You're weak. And that your resources. Are very limited. Or that you are. Less mature. Than you thought.

You were. Emotionally. Mentally. Spiritually. That. Those insecurities. Are real. As we suffer. The fear. Of the Lord. Is what?
The instruction. For. Wisdom. God is teaching. You to fear him. That is. To reverence him. To be in awe. Of him. As he works.
In this process. And before. Honor. Comes. What? Church. Church. So what is God. Building into your life? Humility. Humility.
To suffer. Well. In the Lord. One commentator. Michael Eaton. Called. Impatience.
[27:51] A proud. Irritation. With God. And his management. Of your life. When you and I. Are impatient. With the things. Of our lives. When we are impatient.

In trial. And suffering. When we are impatient. With the timing. The duration. And the intensity. Of adversity. In our lives. And really. What we are dealing with.
Is a proud. Irritation. With God. And his management. Of our lives. Peter. Seems. Supremely. Qualified. To tell us about. Godly. Endurance. Under extreme. Suffering. So if you'll hold your finger. In Ecclesiastes. And fly. Back to the back. Of the Bible. To first. Peter. We read from it.
This morning. First. Peter. Chapter. Four. Verse. Nineteen. To begin with. First. Peter. Four. Nineteen.
[28:47] And then we're going to do. First. Peter. Five. Six. Through. Ten. Verse. Nineteen. Reads. Therefore. Those. Also. Who suffer.

According. To the will of God. Shall. Entrust. Their souls. To a faithful creator. In doing what is right. And that's what's at stake. Are you trusting your soul.
To a faithful creator. Who is doing a good work. In what is right. In your heart. Will you do that. In times of adversity. And then.
If you drop down. In chapter five. To verse six. Therefore. Humble yourselves. Under the mighty hand. Of God. That he may. Exalt you. At the proper time.
Casting all your anxiety. On him. Because. God. Cares for you. Friend. Be of sober spirit. Beyond the alert. Your adversary.
[29:42] The devil. Prows around. Like a roaring lion. Seeking someone. To devour. But now notice. Resist him. Firm. In your faith. Knowing that the same.

Experiences of. Suffering. Are being. Accomplished by your brothers. Who are in the world. After you have. Suffered for a little while.
The God of all grace. Who called you. To his eternal glory. In Christ. Will himself. Perfect. Confirm. Strengthen. And establish you.
Now folks. I don't know of a better passage. That. That calls on you. To look with. Persevering. Hope. And endurance. Toward the future. Of your calling.
In Christ. To be glorified. To be taken. Into the comfort. Of Jesus. So that the suffering. You're going through. Right now. Will seem like. A little suffering. For a little while.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[30:36] Compared to the eternal glory. That waits for you. Say Jeff. That's pie in the sky stuff. No friend. That's Bible. That's the normal. Christian life. And God has given us.

These precious promises. To order our thinking. During times of trial. And suffering. And hardship. So I'm going to ask you. If you haven't already.
And you're not in one. Right now. To think of a time. In your life. When it was a dark time. It was hard. Or think of a trial. That maybe you're going through. Right now. Where. If you had to write it. You'd write it. And script it. A little bit differently. Than it's happening right now. That God give me that pen. And I'll write in this chapter. And you don't want that. You don't even want that.
Have you ever tried to do that? I have. In my pride. Not literally. But in my pride. Not good.
[31:32] Number two. Wise warning number two. Verse nine. Agreement. Better than. Anger. Agreement. Better than.

Anger. Do not be eager. In your heart. To be angry. For anger resides. In the bosom. Of fools. Very straightforward. Now what we're talking about here.
Is the slow burn. Of exasperation. Over the anguishes. Of life. This is a slow burn. Of anger. This is a seething anger. This is an anger.
Under the surface. Kind of thing. And this is the opposite. Of the patient endurance. We just talked about. In verse eight. Another commentator. Dr. Barak.
Points out. That impatience. And brooding. Anger. Work against. The benefits. Of what time. Can do. To improve. A situation. Do you understand. Friends. That God. Works.
[32:27] In time. He's not bound. By it. We are. God is eternal. We're temporal. Right. But God. Works in time. And you are living.

In time. And so. As you experience. Trials. For God. They're nothing. In terms of the time. The duration. But God. Condescends. To understand. That you're living.
In a sense of time. And your timing. For trials. To end. Would probably be. Much shorter. Than the Lord's. But God. Is working. In those trials.
Over time. To produce. An outcome. And so. Time. Is an ally. Of the Lord. God almighty. In your life. But you won't think that.
Will you? In the moment of pain. What do you want pain. To do? Amen. What does God want it to do? Produce Christ's likeness. Which goal is better?
[33:24] God's. And we say it like that. God's. Well Jeff. What do you mean? Are we supposed to jump up and down?

Because we're hurting? No. We're supposed to have a peace. And a patient endurance in our heart. Because we know God is doing something very good. And it's supposed to comfort us. Impatience and anger about things. Not going your way. Destroy godly perspective. Oppression. Injustice. Sorrow.
Suffering. Any number of life's hardships. Challenge our trust in God's goodness. Did you hear that? That's what Satan prowls around like a roaring lion.
Wanting to do to you during trial and suffering. He wants to cause you to doubt the goodness of God in your life. God. If God was good. I wouldn't be hurting like this. If God was good.
[34:21] I wouldn't have lost. Fill in the blank. Doubt the goodness of God. And you're in a dark, dark, bad place. Come out of that quickly.

And hopefully you'll have friends around you who can help you do that. The idea here is that you can be eager to be mad when you're wronged.
Oh, we love a self-righteous cause, don't we? Right? When we are wronged, we want to trumpet that best of cases. I'm wronged, but I'm right.
You wronged me, but I'm right. And so we feel justified in feeling angry. We want to plead our case. We want to prove our case.
So, you carry your anger as a platform for keeping yourself in the center of how you live your life. Your anger helps keep you at the center of you living your life the way you want to live it.
[35:24] After all, you were wrong. You're justified. And you have a case to prove. But this approach to life's adversities and injustices brings you great harm because this anger is the anger of a fool.

That's what God says. It's the anger of someone who doesn't look to God and to his purposes in suffering. They just want it to stop. Especially when we feel like it's unjust.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

So, when I speak here in this wise warning about agreement being better than anger, here's what I mean. Agreement means that you humbly agree with God's wisdom as you see and understand it in the Bible.
So, you go to passages like 1 Peter and you read it and you realize, I'm in a trial and a testing of the Lord. This suffering has an outcome and a purpose created by the Lord.
And God calls on me to trust a good and sovereign king himself over my life as he works that outcome in my life to conform me to Jesus Christ. Like that.
[36:37] Do you agree with that or not? And you say, well, I can agree with it and still not like it. All right. Well, we're going to deal with that. Right now. Right now. What I mean here is this.

You receive God's ways and you order your life and your heart by what you know of the Lord. You with me? Receiving it into your heart means that you order your life, your heart, your understandings by what you know of the Lord.
Friend, did you hear me say of the Lord? Not necessarily what you know of the situation, because there may be many unknowns in the situation.
But what isn't unknown is what scripture tells you about the character of your God. Just open it and start reading. And you'll see his love, his faithfulness, his goodness, that he keeps his promises, that he cares for his people, that he's patient, that he's full of loving kindness.
Right. I want to take you real quickly to a passage that speaks exactly to this in the New Testament, because I don't want you to go away thinking agreement better than anger means, OK, I can just agree with God and still have a bad heart attitude about it.
[38:02] No, you know better than that. Now, I'm going to reinforce it with scripture. James. Right back there by Peter. James. And I'm going to put you in chapter one.

We're going to come back to Ecclesiastes, James, chapter one. We'll just do verse 21. James is speaking here in terms of these people being quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger in verse 19, verse 20 for the anger of man doesn't achieve the righteousness of God.
So see, we're on topic. Now, look, verse 21. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. That's your responsibility.
That's your responsibility. Putting that aside in humility, receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. The idea of receive is to take in.
That is to grow in. So this is ownership. This isn't just simple agreement. This is ownership. When he uses the word implanted, that means to be rooted in.
[39:24] When you implant, it means to be rooted in. So this is humility. Meekness and selfless receptivity.

You are selflessly receiving into your heart the truth of the Lord that you might grow in a humble attitude towards suffering.
And notice up in the upper context, the anger of man doesn't achieve the righteousness of God. But this humble work of the Lord in your heart does. And that's the contrast.
So, my friends, this means this. That you don't need to know why God does all that he does in your life.
When it comes to pain and sorrow and adversity. We want to, but you don't need to know why for these truths to take root in your heart. You will experience the seasons of change and of the unknown throughout your life.
[40:30] It means you are developing a settled peace about God being God in your life. And you are not God. And that's okay. So to agree with God is to let God be God in your life.

Even when you don't have all the answers. And even when things aren't going the way you had asked or prayed or expected or anticipated. Number three. Wise warning number three. Contentment better than control in verse 10. So do not say why is it that the former days were better than these. For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.
This is very straightforward. Derek Kidner refers to this as putting a golden haze around the past. Don't do that.
We do do this. We get into trouble. We get into adversity. We get into hardship. We don't like where we are in life. And so what do we do? We look back. And we put a golden haze around the way things used to be.
[41:33] Oh if it could just be like this again. How did I get here? That's what we do. So you say is that wrong to think about happy times? Listen. Reflecting on the joys of your past isn't wrong in

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

itself.

Okay. I do that. You do that. But the attitude that's being dealt with here is pining for the past because you don't like the present.
You don't like the way God's managing things right now. You don't like the way your life is. You say Jeff are you sure that's what's being said here?
Well let's read it again. Do not say. Is that enough right there to let you know that this is something you shouldn't be doing? Do not say this.
Friends. Don't have this attitude. Why is it that the former days were better than these? And if there's any doubt left let's go to the second half. For it isn't from wisdom that you're asking about this.
[42:35] So don't fool yourself. Don't try and convince yourself this is okay. It's not. We are not called to live in the past. To reflect on the past as a way of controlling the uncontrollable.

And we do that. It's a coping strategy. It's not a way of living faithfully before the Lord. Looking back and longing for what was.
This prevents you from being all in in the now. It's a way of controlling what we don't like and what is actually not in our control. I don't like the present.
I can't seem to mold it to my own way. So I reminisce about the good old days as a way of coping with my disappointment. Over the way things are.
Let me give you a couple quick definitions here. Andrew's going to throw the first one up. Godly contentment. That's what I'm talking about. Contentment better than you trying to control, cope, and manipulate everything when you don't like the way it is.
[43:42] You argue against management. Godly contentment is inner satisfaction in God alone. Whatever the circumstances. That's a good, concise little definition.

And then the second definition. This is from Jeremiah Burroughs, a Puritan. Contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every situation.
God, you dispose this. That is, you order this any way you want. My life is your life to be done with whatever you want. We say that.
We pray that. But then you better buckle up. Number four. Wise warning number four. I only have five of them. God's provision better than self's protection.
Wisdom along with an inheritance is good and an advantage to those who see the sun. Wisdom is protection just as money is protection. But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.
[44:49] What are we dealing with here? Well, obviously, an inheritance. He's speaking in very raw and practical terms. An inheritance. An inheritance is God's blessing.

Whether people acknowledge that or not. That is a blessing from the Lord that you would receive an inheritance of any kind. Now, whether or not it remains and continues to be a blessing has everything to do with whether or not it is used wisely.
That is in a godly way. Have you heard the stories about people who won the lottery and it ruined their lives? Or they came into an inheritance of money and it ruined their lives?
So it's not just that the inheritance is a blessing in and of itself. It has to be used wisely to go on being a blessing. To be used in the Lord. But knowledge, knowledge, if it is applied wisely, can also be a blessing enjoyed according to the provision of God.
So both money and wisdom can offer what he's calling here protection to you. It can be very beneficial for living an enjoyable life.
[45:56] Both money, money and wisdom. The literal rendering of protection here in Hebrew means shadow.

Protection, I don't know what your translation says instead of protection. But literally, it's shadow. And the best way maybe to think about this as I pondered it and pondered it is shade.
Think shade. Like protection from the sun. People might stand in the shadow of a building to get out of the sun. Think about where we are. The context of this passage.
So that's the idea here. But let me ask you this. Can money or knowledge keep you from dying? Nope.
They're on the same ground there. Money and wisdom, no matter how much you have of each, will not prevent your death. You're going to die. But knowledge is better than money.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[46:57] Why? Because you need godly wisdom to guide you in the godly use of money. Switch it around. Money in itself can't tell you how best to live your life.

It can actually trip you up. Only God's wisdom can help you in those matters. So the point is this. Don't squander what God provides.
I think one of the reasons he may have gone to this in the passage contextually is because people often think, if I could just come into a lot of money. You ever thought that?
If I could just get and fill in the blank. If I could just have this, it would sort this out. But day after day, the this doesn't come.
Gee, I wonder if the Lord wants me to have that. We just get so crazy over this stuff. But we just keep praying for it or filling in the blank.
[48:00] All the while, the Lord is telling us clearly in Scripture to trust him, exalt him, to walk in faithfulness. To endure the trial with faithfulness.

Finally, number five. Wise warning number five, Andrew. God's will better than your want. God's will better than your want.
Consider the work of God. That's a good thing to do. Consider the work of God for who is able to straighten what he has bent. In the day of prosperity, be happy.
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.
This is bringing it all to a point before he goes into 15 and really drives all this home in the latter part of the chapter. So we're being asked to do what in verse 13?
[49:06] What's the very first part? To do what? Consider the work of God. All right. So we need to do that. The work of God is enduring and unbreakable on any level.

And I'm glad for that. If you want to be even more glad, read Romans 8, 28 through 33. Nothing can break the power of God.
Yes. Right in there. Read that passage and you'll see. Boy, I'm so glad God's work can't be broken in my life. And that it'll endure. Right? His purposes in your life will stand.
Whether you cooperate or not. Now, I'm glad for that. I'm glad God loves me through my pride and my stubbornness. And he takes me through those times with a father's love.
So, folks, it is a foolish exercise to waste your life in a spirit of prideful rebellion and complaining against the work of God in your life.
[50:10] But that is the danger. That if you do not need God's instruction on this, you're going to remain spiritually immature and you're going to remain at risk for the devil's schemes.

That's why I took you to the passage in Peter. And I showed you. You need to suffer well in the Lord or you put yourself at risk for Satan's schemes. He'll come in and poke his finger all in those insecurities and fears.
All in those desires to manipulate and control and fill in the blank yourself. Satan will exploit that.
So, I'm saying here in this passage, consider the work of God.
Be careful. Be careful. If you don't heed these warnings, if you don't spiritually tune your heart to God's process of growth through suffering, you'll order your life by your wants and not by God's will.
Now, do you want to live your life in the Lord kicking and screaming and being drug along? Or do you want your life in the Lord with joy and peace? And a sense of humility in your life, your choice.
[51:28] Well, back in verse 8, I promised to tell you the critical key to being able to adopt a growing spirit of patience in times of trial and testing, right?

Well, this couple verses give us the key. Let's read it again. Consider the work of God for who is able to straighten what he's bent. That's the first part.
In the day of prosperity, be happy. In the day of adversity, consider. Now, we're being told to consider again. You see that? See the repetition?
God has made the one as well as the other. There's a tremendous activity going on here. The key is the hope you can have in God's goodness.
As he brings you to greater Christ likeness, to greater capacity to enjoy life through his wisdom.
Consider the work of God. Another way of saying that is something I've heard other people say to me, and so I'm borrowing it.
[52:32] God is up to something good. Consider the work of God. All of the work of God, all of the time in your life, is a work where God is up to something good.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

He is working conformity to Christ in your life, and he's bringing glory to himself in the process. Win-win. So what I'm talking about in trial and suffering is a faith response.
Not a faltering response. A faith response. I have told you time and time again, dear friends, I want to help train you in this lifelong process of learning to respond to the trials of life by not responding to the trials themselves as much as to the Lord.
What I mean by that is simply that you take the heart of the Lord into consideration as you're experiencing these difficulties. And you put at the forefront of your mind, I want to respond in this situation in a God-pleasing way.
I want to honor and please the Lord in this. It takes you out of the middle of the perspective of getting all swamped by the emotions and the stuff that's coming at you.
[53:49] It helps clear your mind and draw a good, solid beam of focus up to heaven, as it were. And orient your mind around whatever I say or do and how I respond in this situation to the people in my life, to the circumstances in my life.

Right now, it needs to be one that honors and pleases the Lord. Now you begin to sort out the emotions. You begin to sort out the difficulties, right? The truth will help you do that.
This is where the church shines as we come around each other, as we do book studies together, that help clarify these issues for us as matters of our heart, the attitudes of our life toward the Lord, toward suffering.
So what I'm talking about here, that God's will is better than your want, you may want it to be different. Right? This is the enduring belief that God is up to something good.
The straight things, that is, the good things, and the crooked things, the hard things, are both His design process for your good. Now, did you hear me say that?
[55:05] Both the straight and the crooked, both the good and the hard, are part of God's design process for your growth. Right? Right. But, in order for you to live this out, you've got to do two things.

So let me throw this at you real quickly here. Two things. You ready? Here's the first one, Andrew. Remember, this is His process done His way.
Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's so hard to remember. And then when I do, I can have an attitude about it. Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're sovereign, it's got to be your way, whatever. Oh, no.
Lord, forgive me. And then number two, you need to strive in this process with humility and according to His power. This is not a sit and rest on your hands kind of experience.
That's not the Christian life. We are told to strive in holiness. So we're remembering that this is God's process and it's going to be done His way.
[56:14] Thank the Lord. It's not mine or yours. And number two, we're going to strive together with the Lord in this process in humility, not pride.

And according to His grace, that is His power. Now, what does that mean? It means this. You are working out what God is working in. God is working His will in your life, His character in your life to conform you to the character of Christ.
Now, you strive to see that worked out in your responses to life. That's all you can control, folks. God is working all of that in through the spiritual dynamic of the Holy Spirit's power.
Now, you are called to work that out. You want more on that. Look at Philippians chapter 2. Look at Colossians 1 and 2. And you'll see how Paul speaks of striving in the power of the Lord.
I think it's more toward the end of Colossians 1 and right at the beginning of Colossians 2. He speaks about that. He also speaks about it in Ephesians 4 and 5 in pleasing the Lord.
[57:28] So love and obey the Lord so that He can change your heart to desire what is most valuable and pleasing to Him.

And that's what you want. Now, can you pray that prayer with me? Can you pray the prayer, God, change my heart to desire what is valuable and pleasing to you? Give me the wisdom to see it and the understanding to apply it in my life.
He ends this way, so that man may not discover anything that will be after him. Now, this seems an odd saying to end this little section. At least it did to me. But let's take it contextually.
It seems to simply mean no matter what measures you might go to, you can't know your future. And you cannot control what you leave behind.
Try as you might. Only God can and will control all that happens to you with what you leave behind in your life. So that man will not discover anything that will be after him.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[58:40] You can't know that. You can't know that. You're going to leave it all here. I think what he's possibly saying here, just bear with me on this one.

Maybe what he's trying to tell us is this whole idea of trying to control and manipulate everything is just a waste of your life. So stop it. Alonzo said vanity.
It's all vanity. It's all vanity. Are you going to try to live controlling and coping? Are you going to try to live honoring the Lord, especially through suffering and adversity?
So death, impending loss, suffering, sorrows of life. What they can do in the Lord is they can help you mine the love and Christ-like character that the Lord is working into your heart.
You can mine it like a miner. Because suffering drives you deep. Pain and loss drive you deep.
[59:45] And what you can find is the love that God's working into your heart there for people.
False perspectives on death, adversity, sorrow, suffering, they work against God doing this in your heart.

False perspectives draw you into yourself and aim your love at worldly pursuits. God's perspectives teach you to deny yourself and to aim your love at relationships with him and with others.
I think that was a slide. Can we throw that one up here? What's that last slide? Is it there? Did I have two more?
I am motoring. Ah, yes. He who gives attention to the word will find good and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord. That kind of sums it up, doesn't it?
And then this is what I just shared with you. Let's throw that paragraph up there. There you go. I wanted you to see this and take it in. This is how we'll end. So suffering and sorrow have some critical lessons to teach you.
[61:03] But only if you'll look on these realities in the wisdom of the Lord and learn from them.
And that requires humility. Humility.

Is God God or not? Let's pray together, my friends. Father, your word is so rich and deep and true.
And I confess and recognize and acknowledge even now that my little feeble attempts are just that.
So we trust the Holy Spirit whose truth it is to bring it into our hearts and to open our minds. To order our lives by this as you graciously work in us and patiently endure with us.
You are such a kind and gentle and merciful father. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving us when we're at our worst. Thank you for loving us, God.
[62:05] As a father. Loving a son and a daughter. Thank you for giving us your truth and calling us to a full life. A life lived in your wisdom.

Thank you for the truth and wisdom of your heart that you have shared with us through scripture.
And made it possible for us to understand through the ministry of the Holy Spirit as our teacher, our counselor, our guide.
Most of all, we thank you for Jesus Christ. We thank you for the forgiveness of sins that he's brought to us as we have learned to trust him and look to him.
As you have justified us and made us righteous in your sight. We have believed on you by the gift of faith. We thank you so much, God, for your work in our lives and in our hearts.
Help us, Father. Father, especially as we endure the pain of this world. To look at those circumstances and measure them according to your wisdom. That we might bring to you a heart of wisdom.
[63:05] Measuring our days carefully. And looking to you. It's in Jesus' name that we pray and for his glory. Amen. God be the glory. Micah, come.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host