

God's Wisdom: Turning Trials Into Treasure (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] We have a few families that are going to be out or are out and we'll pray for them. And I just want to mention them to you so that I won't forget toward the end of our service today.

Mona and Pedro were exposed to COVID and so they have elected to self-quarantine. And then I guess if they're able to do it, they have scheduled or slated a trip to Hawaii where Pedro is from to see family and be with them.

For Mona's family as well. Oh, OK. So anyway, they may be gone for six weeks. I know they're going to be gone basically through now in April from what we can gather.

So please pray for them. That's tough. I mean, they just joined the church. The Sunday they joined the church and then after that they're gone for a number of weeks from us. And then Linda, you'll be traveling for most of the month of April.

You'll be gone. So we may be a little bit light over the next few weeks, but the Lord knows and we'll take all of that in stride together. I just want to make sure that we're aware of what's going on in one another's lives and that we're praying for one another and lifting one another up to the Lord.

[1 : 10] We need each other. We gather because the Lord's commanded us to do that. You realize when we're not here on Sunday, we need to have a really, really good reason for that because we're commanded. So your elders are not holding it over you like some legalistic hammer.

We want you to want to be here and to enjoy being here and to realize when you're here, you're fulfilling the mandate of the Lord on your life. Gather. It's important. It's necessary.

It's needed for our growth and for building one another up in the faith. It was very interesting as I began to think about my message for this morning in Ecclesiastes 7.

That's where we'll be again. Very interesting. Yesterday, the men met for our men's breakfast and the subject on the table was transgenderism. There's a lot to say about transgenderism in terms of being a Christian and meeting the issue head on in faith and with confidence and with much grace and kindness.

And we said just a little bit. So we're going to try to get together again very soon. I don't know if it'll be a weekend or an evening or whatever, but we want to gather them in together again.

[2 : 18] And we want to take them into the subject matter further as we dig into Scripture. And what we want to unveil are the roots, the roots of the transgender issue as it bears on our society today.

And I'm not going to preach on that today. That's another subject. I'm working on a message for that. It probably will be two messages to help us think very squarely and biblically about what's happening.

But folks, I was telling the men it's here. Transgenderism is in our lives. It's in our lives in the school system. It's in our lives in the government. It's in our lives even in the church.

And it is dividing the church of the Lord Jesus. We were already divided in evangelicalism over a number of different things. But transgenderism seems to be really showing those divisions in a more marked way.

Even Christians are arguing and fussing over the issue of transgenderism. Did God truly make them male and female?

[3 : 19] Is he in authority? Is he in authority? And is it important for us to honor or even maybe make a big deal out of whether or not you think you're a boy or a girl or you want to stay a boy or a girl?

Whose business is it other than yours if you want to change that up? And what should Christians have to say about it? It's here. And it's alarming. And the research I've been doing over the last couple of weeks has really opened my eyes to just how pervasive this is.

And it is about to come home to our church. It's already part of my life. And it's coming home to our church. I promise you. And I want our men to be ready to face it with much grace.

Now, I say all of that because I recognize that in the world we live in, we're always going to have these things from culture slapping us in the face, as it were.

And we need to be careful that we don't sin in response to our mission field. The people who are struggling with transgenderism are our mission field.

[4 : 24] They're not our enemies. They're the people we want to reach with the hope of Jesus. And help them see who God is as their creator and help them realize they were made in the image of God, which makes them very, very precious.

And so we don't want them to throw that away. To deception. Which is what transgenderism is at its root. It is an ideology based in hell.

That's where it comes from. It's a satanic deception perpetuated on people. And so we recognize that with that kind of an issue and other issues in the world, we are constantly facing the limitations, limitations of being human.

And one of those limitations is we don't know everything like we think we do. And we have a great need for grace and wisdom from God. We need God to tell us how to think about ourselves and about our world.

So the topic on the table this morning is one that none of us can escape. And it's the topic of death. Death. But I want to couch it the way the Bible does, especially in our passage for today.

[5 : 36] So this is a part two, God's wisdom, turning trials into treasure. Turning trials into treasure. And hopefully that title will make more sense to you as we go along in the message.

Let me offer this to you. There are approximately 8 billion people in the world today. Approximately. And in terms of death and deaths in that 8 billion, per year, 56 million people die per year.

Per month, 4.5 million. Per day, 153,000 people die every day. Per hour, 6,400, 6,400 people will die today.

Or in an hour. Over the course of us being in this worship service, about 7,000 people will meet their death worldwide.

That's 106 people a minute. In the time it took me to tell you these stats, over 100 people died. That's two people per second.

[7 : 00] That's sobering. What's the point? We cannot escape death. Death is with us. We all will face death in our own individual life.

It will come to an end on this planet. And then there will be life after death. And the issue on the table in life after death is, where will you be alive after you die here?

Will it be with God or not? And the alternative is not good. We believe in a literal hell. In hell, we understand to be the place that people live apart from God.

Everybody who dies lives again. Everyone has eternal life ahead of them. The issue is, where will you spend your eternity? With God or not with God?

In the place of hell. Now, in Ecclesiastes chapter 7, particularly verses 1 through 14, Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, uses a number of proverbs to give increasing depth to the question he posed back in chapter 6, verse 12.

[8 : 12] For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime? That's a great question. And it's a question that every human being lives and answers as they go through their lives, whether they're consciously answering it or not.

You are answering that question every day of your life. Who knows what's good for me today? And you do what you think is good for you in any given day, don't you?

You wake up and you go about your routine, and you're hoping to do things that bring you pleasure and not pain. Is that right? Sure. None of us go out and chase pain or heartache or hardship or ruin or destruction or trouble.

We don't want that. So we're all constantly dealing with the issue of what's good for me. What do I need to do today to be good to myself? And the world's especially good at trying to be good to itself.

We're all dealing with that question. Well, the Bible gives the clear but unpopular answer to that question. God. God. God most fully knows what is good, better, and best for each individual human being made in his own image.

[9 : 31] God, through Solomon's counsel in the passage we're going to look at this morning, tells us what is good and better as we live through very complex and confusing issues of the changing seasons of life.

The seasons that he mentioned, if you will, way back in chapter 3, where he made this list of a time to give birth, a time to die.

He starts that whole list of what it's like to live through the seasons of life with you're going to be born and every one of you are going to die. It's sobering. Those are the bookends of your existence.

I come into the world in birth. I leave the world in death. And that is a commonality for all people. We're all on level playing ground when it comes to life and death.

We don't know how we'll die. We don't know the day we'll die. But we all know we're going to die. We want to use that for the glory of the Lord.

[10 : 33] Our passage then, I said to you last time, our passage gives us kind of a cold shower of contrasts in a list of proverbs.

And the reason I say cold shower is like, you know, it's sobering. It wakes you up. You get under a cold shower. It takes your breath. As we go through these proverbs, they're just very pointed, candid statements of reality about you're going to die.

And you better do something about that. And you better let it sober you and teach you. And you better face off with it in reality and not run from it. Because there's no escape.

It's coming. So prepare. And I told you last time as well, the first category of God's eternal perspectives, God's heavenly view on these issues, turning trials into treasure, is turning your adversities into adventures.

I want to explain what we're talking about as I move through this. I'm going to rehearse a little bit for you. And we'll probably get through verse 7 today. I've slowed down a bit because I'm dealing with some proverbial issues, some proverbs here.

[11 : 49] And I want you to understand what they are. So adversities realities is the first slide up there. And what I'm talking about here is this. We need to deal with, we need to live in reality.

And not in some alternate idea of what is true and real. Now, why do I say that? Why did I choose adversities realities? Because of this. If you pick one subject among human beings that people struggle with and don't want to face reality about, it is the subject of death.

People just don't want to think about death. They don't want to deal with death in their loved ones, their family. They don't want to deal with death among the people they know. And they certainly don't want to think about the fact that they're going to die one day, and it might be sooner than they realize.

We don't like that. We see shows and movies about people dying. And we think, what a tragedy when a 26-year-old human being dies of a disease or gets killed in a car wreck or however they die.

Boy, what an end to a short life. And we would like to see everybody be born and lived to their 80s, right? And so we say they lived a full life.

[13 : 07] We don't like to think about death. Are you with me? We just don't like to do it. And we have a hard time even talking about it with people. When we go to funerals, it's tough.

It can be really awkward. We're not sure what to say or how to act. It's a somber mood, an atmosphere. Death makes us very, very uncomfortable.

That's what I'm talking about when I put the emphasis on adversities, realities. We face adversities in this life, and we need to deal with these things in realness, genuineness.

Face it off for what it is. My friends, I told you last time, life is filled with limitations. Adversities, trials, tests, tough times.

And people are constantly, because of our nature, pushing against those limitations. We don't like that. Death, then, is our most sobering limitation because we are finite creatures.

[14 : 13] We are on course to meet death. Let me throw this next slide up there for you. This is a quote I shared with you last time, and I want you to see this. Your life, then, won't go on forever.

But death is not just a line you cross when your time is up. Death is an evangelist. He looks us in the eye and asks us to look him right back with a steady gaze and allow him to do his work in us.

Death wants to teach us that the day of our coming death can be a friend to us in advance. The very limitation that death introduces into our life can instruct us about life.

Think of it as death's helping hand. That's from David Gibson in his commentary on Ecclesiastes entitled, Living Life Backward. So Solomon wants to sober us with the reality of death.

We want to see how he does that. Christian, if you are a Christian, you have every reason to look forward to your death as the beginning of your life without sin.

[15 : 25] That is a good and wonderful thing. Because you recognize that in Jesus' death, he purchased for you life beyond death and without sin.

That's not just sobering. It's rejoicing. It's a hallelujah reality for you. Let's read this together in Ecclesiastes chapter 7.

A good name then 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, but the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

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.

[16 : 45] And this too is futility. For oppression makes a wise man mad and a bribe corrupts the heart. We'll just stop there.

There are other proverbs going down into verse 14, but that's that's pretty much what we're going to try to live with today in the way of the teaching of Solomon.

Now, I want to draw your attention then to verse one and remember, perhaps, if you were here from last Sunday, the first half of verse one contrasts a superficial life with a good name.

That is the depth and purpose of an honorable life is contrasted with a shallow life. And I want to draw your attention to what he says here and how he does it.

A good name is, notice, better than, better than, a good ointment. And then in the second part of the verse, and the day of one's death is better than, the day of one's birth.

[17 : 51] Better than emphasizes this contrast going on in these verses between a perfumed lifestyle, if you will, a perfumed lifestyle, which is shallow, but can appear good or smell good, right?

But it's covering up something that's stinky. It's contrasting that with a truly proper life, which reflects God's values, character, and goodness.

So we have a life that is being lived honorably, that is, to God's glory. An honorable life isn't the life of a man who pays his taxes and doesn't cheat on his wife.

That's fine. That's good. That's some integrity. An honorable life here is a life lived for God. Contrasted with a life not lived for God.

And so here we have a shallow life that's perfumed. I might smell good, but on the inside, not so good because I'm not living for the Lord. And we have that better than contrast going on.

[18 : 57] this could also refer, and we don't lose any meaning here if the emphasis is more what I'm about to tell you. This might refer to the custom of anointing or perfuming a deceased person's body.

Right? So in that case, a good or honorable reputation is better than a sweet-smelling corpse. right?

You with me? So following your death, are we going to see and look back on a life that was lived honorably to the honor of the Lord, to the glory of the Lord?

Or are we going to see a life that was perfumed up but pretty stinky in reality? And what Solomon is saying is, look, there's a way to allow death.

To sober you in that question and help you think about the value of the life you live day to day to day. So let it do that. Don't run from that reality.

[20 : 05] Let it instruct your heart. Let it be something that carries you along in giving priority to the things that God values. Are you giving your life to what God values?

If you are, you're living an honorable life. And upon your death, a good reputation will sit for you, sit well. It won't just be something perfumed, shallow.

Something that kind of smelled good and maybe looked good but not really. Now in the second half of verse 1, Solomon emphasizes the issue of death for every person, the idea that you will one day attend your own funeral.

Right? And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. His point is more the issue that your death is a better teacher and revealer about the real you than your birth.

When you're born, nobody really knows what kind of life you're going to have. But when you die, everybody gets to look back on who you were and what you really did. And then they say this is what was important to him.

[21 : 11] Now I hesitate to pick on any hobbies or anything like that and make you feel like maybe something that you really enjoy or do in your life is a bad thing.

That's not what I want to do at all. Right? I have interest too. And we're supposed to enjoy life in the Lord here. And there are lots of things we can do to do that. But you and I both know people who spend a great deal of money and a great deal of time on their hobby or the thing that they like most.

And all of that's going to stay here. And when they die, they have a garage full of all the stuff that goes along with it. Or they have a whole history of life spending hours and hours and hours and thousands and thousands of dollars perhaps in that.

And where is it all sitting? Wherever they left it when they died, because it's not going with them. And the question we want to ask is how much of my life is being poured into what God values?

that's what matters most. That's what matters most, my friends. If you're a Christian, death is about a new beginning and fulfillment.

[22 : 24] It's about gaining a life free from death, free from suffering, pain, sorrow, and the changing, perplexing, vexing, rotten ways of this life. I heard somebody say not long ago, the older we get, the more our agedness should make us long for heaven.

I'm just going to be very transparent with you. I woke up this morning after carrying that two-year-old around for the last two and a half days on the right side because I'm right-handed and the left side of my back was seized up.

I was walking through the bedroom and I went up and I walked in it and I'm like, and I can't even take a deep breath. So we have a percussive massager.

You know, it goes pounds. I said, get it out, get it out. So I'm over like this and she's bop, bop, bop, bop, bop, bopping down my back. So I could do this this morning.

The older I get, the more I recognize that age is making me long for heaven when I'll throw off this body of death and get my new body fit for eternity.

[23 : 30] Right? Verse two, 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.

That's the point. The living should take it to heart. Look with me in your Bible, if you will, at this running treatise that he does with what's going on in this passage.

In verse one, you see better than a good ointment. The end of verse one better than the day of one's birth.

In verse two, better to go than to go. Look at verse three. Sorrow is better than verse four.

The mind of the wise is contrasted with the mind of fools. Verse five. It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for you to listen to the song of fools.

[24 : 28] And on and on it goes down through the passage better than contrast. We need to take heed to what God is telling us. Here's the point. There is one sense in which every human being is making up their mind every single day about what is best in life.

And there is another sense where we need God to tell us what's best in life. And we need it every day. Every day you need to get up and allow the Lord to tell you how to spend your life.

I recognize we're all going to get up and we have things we need to do. We're going to go to work. We're going to take care of the kids. We're going to and we realize those are good things that God's given us to do.

If you have children, it is absolutely certain that God's will is for you to take care of those kids and love those children in the Lord. No doubt about it. If you're married, you need to serve and minister to your spouse.

No doubt about it. If you're a guy, especially you've been called to provide for your family. So you need to go to work and earn your bread. No doubt about it. But all of those things need to be done in the priority of heaven.

[25 : 37] That is according to God's will. Much grace in you recognizing that I need God to give me the strength to do all of that pleasing to him.

So you need to be a pleasing parent to God. You need to be a pleasing spouse to your husband or wife. You need to be a God pleasing employee.

You with me? Right on down the line, living for the glory of the Lord. And Solomon says, let the fact that you know the end, you may not know the day of your death, but you know death is coming.

Let death cause you to look back and say, now, am I living my life marching toward that day, knowing that when that day comes, I'll give an account to the Lord and I'm going to leave a legacy.

And the legacy God wants you to leave isn't necessarily. I wrote all these books. I accomplished all these things. I wowed the world. No, I was faithful.

[26 : 42] I was faithful as a mom. I was faithful as a grandmother. I was faithful as a church member. I was faithful to my sphere of influence.

I was faithful to my God. Death sobers us in that reality. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting.

That is the end of every man and the living takes it to heart. The house of mourning is better than the house of feasting or the house of pleasure. Why? The house of mourning is a place where someone has died.

And so we're dealing with funeral here. Funeral and death should teach us the value of a life well lived. Why? Because it is just a matter of time before we all face death in terms of the death of others or ourselves.

So death is the end. And here's what he means. Death is certain. Certain. It is a certain conclusion of every person's earthly life.

[27 : 48] So the wise, the wise person will take to heart the lessons of death that it can teach us. Now the house of feasting can teach us as well.

Yes, it can. And it has its meaningful place in a good life. It can be fun to go to a party. A healthy moral expression of fun. Yes, that can be great.

But my friends, listen, in this context, feasting here is an expression of frivolity. How do we know that? Because of the contrast. God is giving us contrasts.

And so he says, what is the contrast with the house of mourning where people are sobered? Where people have it kind of pushed into their face that they are finite people and it sobers us.

It it arrests us. It causes us to stop from our frenetic pace and our hectic pace and kind of take stock. Oh, that person in that coffin, that's real.

[28 : 47] That's going to be me one day. See, that's why he's saying it's bad. That's better than the house of feasting where everybody shows up for pleasure and frivolity. And it's all shallow and it's all about trying to deny reality and escape for a little while.

Get away from real. Now, he said, nope. You go to a funeral, you'd be better off. It'll teach you more than that. That's the point of what he's trying to say here in verse two, particularly.

Wise person takes it to heart. Then in verse three. Sorrow is better than laughter for when a face is sad, a heart may be happy.

Now, that doesn't sound right on the face of it. It just doesn't. But here's what he means. It's true because of the context of truth that this is set in.

Remember, context is king. And so we're dealing here with a with a context of thought that we want to mine and allow the scriptures to teach us not reading in our ideas, but drawing out the idea that is set here by the original author Solomon through the power of the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 05] Context of truth makes this true. You can express sadness over a sense of loss, which death brings into your life. And yet you and I both know that your heart can have a sense of peace.

Right. You can face death as a Christian, the death of someone else, even a loved one, someone very close to you, and you can know a certain peace and steadiness in your soul.

You don't come unhinged. This is especially challenging when the person's an unbeliever, right? It's hard. I have preached funerals for unbelievers in my family.

So I'm looking at an entire chapel full of my family members and extended family members, and they're expecting me to comfort them.

And knowing what I know about this certain family member who died without Christ, I cannot reassure them that so and so is in heaven. And, you know, he's singing with the angels now.

[31 : 12] I can't. I'm not going to lie. That's challenging. It's sobering. It's real. We all we all face it. The sadness we experience with death and loss penetrate very, very deeply into our souls, and they can find in our souls the hope and peace and joy of knowing Jesus.

Now, the alternative to that is when people put on a game face and they try to fake their way through the hard realities of death and loss and deep sorrow. That's why, again, I say adversities realities.

You will either try and run from the reality that this life is full of trials and hardships, or you will embrace them and face them in the wisdom of God and let them be your teachers about what's valuable in life.

Your choice. This is why verse four, the mind of the wise is in the house of mourning while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

This is why verse four is true of anyone weighing up the wisdom of God about what is better and best concerning God's view of life and death.

[32 : 26] I told you last time you might remember that it is so much of God's heart of wisdom for helping us turn our limitations, liabilities and adversities into treasures fit for heaven for us to understand this.

Yes, it might feel good in the moment for you to run to the house of pleasure and try to laugh life off. But in the end, that's very shallow and very empty and it will leave you feeling that way eventually.

So what do you do? Well, if you're not wise, you go find and chase more frivolity, more laughter, and you just keep having to go back to that and try to fill it again and only to find it drain right out of you.

That is not the case with following God. When you follow the Lord, you find in the Lord something that is grounding. It gives you a sense of substance.

The Lord is worthy of your trust. And he's saying when you when you trust yourself and chase after these issues of the world that try to draw our attention away from what is coming, we do a great disservice to ourselves.

[33 : 39] And those around us, because the testimony of your life becomes live life to the full and get all you can because this is all there is. Oh, that's horrible. But when people see you living your life for a greater issue, a greater reality, and you're able to tell them that that reality is the reality of heaven.

That's a game changer. That's a game changer. It defines a life. Verse five carries the tone of warning.

It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of few fools. Can we all agree that having someone correct you or rebuke you is just not that pleasant?

Is that a good way to say it? We can all agree. But this is a tone of warning. When you're in the midst of the sadness and sense of loss that death brings, your feelings might not correspond to death being a better teacher for your soul.

Right? Let me say it this way. When you're in the midst of a situation where death is prevalent, it probably doesn't feel good. Now, if you go by those feelings, you can get yourself into all kinds of trouble.

[34 : 57] Now, I'm sad to say this, but I'm going to tell you the truth. As a pastor for almost 30 years, I've seen a lot of stuff in people.

I've seen them at their best and at their absolute worst. I used to think, man, I could never be a police officer, Jeremy, because police officers officers just see people at their worst.

I mean, most of the time when you call a police officer, you you got you need help. You're in a you're in a situation or whatever. Man, then I got into ministry and started doing ministry.

And I thought, land in. Lord, can I be a cop? And they don't have it easy. I'm not saying that at all. But boy, you just see so much.

Folks, I've shown up at weddings and funerals where people have been drunk out of their minds. They could barely stand. I saw two people married one time.

[35 : 55] Fortunately, I wasn't the officiator. A pastor friend of mine was officiating. And the two people were so drunk they could barely give their vows. I have seen you would I would just bore you to tears with story after story of what I've seen people do and heard them say at funerals to each other and how they've acted.

It can bring out the absolute worst in us. You know why? We are scared to death of death. We just don't even know how to handle it. But the Lord tells us.

The Lord tells us it's better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools. What's the context? Song. Song. We typically think of song is a good thing.

Song here is tied to the house of feasting or pleasure. And I just got through telling you the house of feasting or pleasure here is the house of frivolity. It's a shallow way of looking at life as it pertains to death.

So song echoes the idea of frivolity. Shallowness. It's an attempt to duck and deny reality. Song has has that idea.

[37 : 11] Song can can. It can lull. That's what he needs. But God's wisdom is better than the false and shallow song of what people will tell you who reject God and his wisdom about this particular difficult area.

The raw realities of life in a broken world. You have all kinds of people who want to sing a song of do your own thing. Don't think about that.

And we have all of these trite ways of trying to comfort one another or daddy's singing with the angels now. I don't know why I keep saying that one.

And well. Maybe. Depends. Did daddy love Jesus? Or we say things like this.

Mom is in heaven now and she's cooking for the angels. And that's just not true. We say these things.

[38 : 17] And people people tell you things. They will tell you all manner of things that you just think where in the world you've been watching too much Hallmark. And you've not enough Bible.

We mean well. We do. We mean well. I think we do. But meaning well and speaking the truth in love can be two very very different things.

And we do have a Lord to please in what we say. So he says this. A fool. A fool is someone who turns away from God and his wisdom in favor of their own views and values in this life.

In fact look at verse 6. Verse 6 drives home the point for you concerning the laughter of the fool. Trying to laugh off the reality of death and adversity is like crackling of thorn bushes under a pot.

This too is futility. What does he mean by that? Well. As he speaks this. Someone laughing off like crackling of thorn bushes under a pot.

[39 : 24] This too is futility. I was raised on a farm. So I have done a lot of land clearing where you go out. You take bush hooks and chainsaws and axes and you clear land.

Man I have done that since I was probably about six years old. And invariably what happens is now in Georgia where I come from briars are real.

I mean briars get as big around as your finger. And they can grow 30, 40 feet long. And they wind up trees. And I'm talking herp briars man. Thorns right. Big green thick briars.

They get all over everything. And we get in hedgerows. And they wrap around pecan trees in our orchards and things. And so we go clear all that out. And we pile them up in big piles. And I was always amazed and got to the point where I would do this.

The briars would put on a show when we set it ablaze. All the wood and all the other stuff that we threw in there. Right. All the rotten trees and stuff. But the briars.

[40 : 26] So I would get my grandfather to let me take all the briars and roll them up in a big old ball. And then I'd roll them up and put them on the pile in a certain way. Because when the fire hit the briars.

Rob you know this. You heard this. What would happen? When that fire hit those briars. It just would sizzle and pop and throw sparks all over the place.

It was a show man. It only lasted a few seconds. But boy was it powerful. Now do you get the point? You see. Briars popped and fizzed and hissed the loudest but came to nothing.

Lots of sound. No substance. They burned just the same as anything else in the burn pile. But they burned really fast. They produced intense but temporary heat.

And they could never be used productively for like cooking with. You don't want that kind of stuff to cook with. You wouldn't put briars in a pot belly stove to get the stove hot.

[41 : 30] Because the briars burn so fast and then they're gone. They're nothing but ash. You want wood that will burn more slowly. Especially green wood after you've gotten it real hot. Make those embers and coals.

See. That's what it's like. For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot. That is pop fizz. Quick. No substance. So is the laughter of the fool.

And this too is futility. Oh yeah. Laugh it up. It doesn't last. It won't help. And it comes to nothing. And it'll leave you feeling that way.

Death. Death. Death. Is a powerfully. Powerfully. Influential force. And the wisdom of fools. Tries to blunt that reality.

They do it with the trivial. The trite. And the temporal. Rather than. Allowing death to train. And teach them. About what's valuable in life.

[42 : 31] In other words. Listening to wise people. About these kinds of hard things. Means we might often be corrected. Against believing and acting on error. We might even be rebuked.

If we prove stubborn about obeying the truth. But that is better than listening to fools. So again. It comes back to this. You need to be careful who you listen to. Especially about the subject of death.

And how death is supposed to relate. To what you value in life. You'll hear all kinds of. Views on this. Let the scriptures inform your heart.

And let those. Those truths from scripture. Draw your heart to Jesus. To God. And warm your heart. That God has given death to you.

As a gift. An instructor. An evangelist. To help you weigh the motives of your heart. And value what God values. Before you die. That way when you come to death.

[43 : 29] Your death can be an honorable life. Lived. And people will know that. And see that. I'm saying to you. This is a gift from the Lord.

Now whether you receive it. Take it. And use it. Is up to you. That's what we're dealing with. In all of this. You might need to be rebuked. And corrected.

In these contexts. The reason he's saying this. Is because death can do some funky stuff. With your head. And your heart. When people are in. A tough spot.

Whoo. We can be vulnerable. To all kinds of things. That'll just take the pressure off. All right. And then verse seven. Oppression makes a wise man mad.

And a bribe corrupts the heart. As with verse six. Verse seven begins with the word. Four. Four. In my translation. Verse six begins with four.

[44 : 28] Verse seven begins with four. So these are connecting words. To the context. It connects and carries the thought. Or the main idea. Of listening to the wise man.

That you see in verse five. Listening and heeding the warnings from the wise. Contained in verses six and seven. In listening to the wise man.

About the issues of death. You still have to realize. That the hardships. The persecutions. The injustices of life. And especially death. Can tax the wisdom.

Resolve and commitment. Of even the wisest. And most faithful Christians. I'm just simply saying. And pointing out to you. Solomon is very practical here. He's saying. I get it. Death is hard.

And death can bring out. The vulnerabilities. And insecurities. That we all have. As we live life. Can you imagine. What it might do to you.

[45 : 25] To lose your spouse. Overnight. Do you think that would be hard? Do you think that would leave you. Vulnerable? Do you think that would play into insecurities?

What if. What if it was your. Your husband. Ladies. And you just lost your source of provision. And income. Now in my case. Suzanne be just fine.

She'd be a rich woman. Because I have some good life insurance. I kid her all the time about that. I said baby. The best thing can happen to you. Is I go be with Jesus. You'd be rich.

You'd get you a beamer. You'd go do your thing. Death can bring out the worst. In the way of our fears.

That's what we're seeing here. The oppression. Oppression makes a wise man mad. Death. The issues like this. They can tax even the most. Resolved and committed Christian person.

[46 : 26] Christians are often persecuted. Through ridicule. Through censorship. They can even be kind of.

Pushed off or. Made to feel like they're naive or stupid. When it comes to acting on God's wisdom. About the weightier issues of life. If we're not joining in the trite sayings.

If we're not joining in the conversation. About mama sitting around in heaven. Cooking dumplings for Jesus. And we're then we're we're stupid. We're not on page.

We're being ridiculous. Or we're being hard. Or something like that. That oppression. And worse. You get worse. I've seen worse.

That oppression can be disheartening. It can be discouraging. Even debilitating. Fools. Mock God. And they mock God's people. If you've ever been to a secular funeral.

[47 : 24] And I have. In that case. In my case. That I'm thinking of now. There's a lot of alcohol involved. I'm not. I'm not automatically. Anti-alcohol. Or anything like that.

But to excess. These people were just. Kind of drowning. The reality of what they were facing. And it was ugly. And hard. To see that. Because I knew.

They were going to wake up. The next morning. And you know what. Death was still going. To be waiting for them. And alcohol. Did not change that. Not one bit.

So expect. That if you choose. To follow God. In his wisdom. You will suffer. Under the sinful. Self-exalting reactions. Of those around you. Sometimes.

It will come from Christians. Speaking. And behaving. More from the wisdom. Of the world. Than the wisdom. Of the Lord. Concerning these subjects. It's going to happen. It hasn't happened.

[48 : 18] To you already. And so. Solomon is saying. That kind of. Pressure. From the world. That can. Make even.

A strong. Christian. Buckle. When you hit. These hard. Issues of life. It can. It can. Test your resolve. That's what he means.

By it can. It can even drive. A good person. Mad. Can really mess. With your head. And your heart. I want to give you. An example. Of what I'm talking about.

From scripture. Will you turn. To second. Thessalonians. Real quickly. With me. Back toward. Into the new. Testament. Second. Thessalonians. It's before.

First Timothy. And second. Timothy. And Titus. Chapter three. And look at what it says here.

[49 : 20] But as for you brothers. Do not grow weary. Of doing. Good. Now the context. Of that little verse. Actually deals with something.

Very very difficult. And potentially disheartening. In the life of the church. And that is this. Dealing with unruly. Undisciplined. And disobedient.

Christians. Christians. Nonetheless. But Christians. Who've made up their mind. To live more. By their view. On certain issue. Or issues. And not be obedient.

To the word of the Lord. This is a very real. Thing. That has been with the church. For a long. Long time. And Paul. Says here. Don't grow weary. Of doing good.

In that context. And around. Those particular. Individuals. Paul actually prayed. That the Thessalonians. Would remain. Steadfast in Christ.

[50 : 17] Look over in verse. Five. Of chapter three. May the Lord. Direct your hearts. Into the love of God. And into the what. Steadfastness of Jesus.

May God. Direct you. Into love. And steadfastness. Because I know. This is hard. It's hard. To be around people. Especially other Christians. Who are not sharing.

In the view. Of the Lord. That's so hard. You need. To not grow weary. In doing good. And I'm encouraging you.

In this subject matter. Stay faithful. To God. And his truth. And when you're in. Those hard contexts. Where there are not. Other people. That are speaking. Truth and love.

Into the situation. They're pulling. From hallmark. Or whatever. You're in a tough spot. Don't grow weary. Don't. Don't let that.

[51 : 12] Discourage you. Don't let it. Drive you. Into. Despondency. Or. Or make you feel. All isolated. Don't grow weary.

In doing good. In those. Context. Paul. Paul. Paul. Exhorted. These people. To be faithful. In living. God. Honoring. Good. Lives. Under the trials.

Of oppression. That they were. Encounting. And they were. Encountering. This. Now listen to me. They were. Encountering. This. Because of. Their unpopular. Obedience. To Jesus. The first.

Funeral. Our first. Wedding. No. Funeral. The first. Funeral. That I ever. Did. By myself. Was a funeral. For a. Three month. Old.

Infant. That died. Three days old. Before that. Three. Three days. Three days. Out of the womb. Gone.

[52 : 08] They tried. Premium. My nurse. Is asking me. About this. So if you're. Listening on tape. I'm. Clarifying here. For my nurse. Yes. So. The.

That was the first one. I did by myself. The first funeral. That I ever did. Was. Co-efficiated. I did it with. The senior pastor. Of the church. I was the family. Life minister. Counselor.

And I had been involved. In the people's lives. A man. Lost his. Wife. Overnight. Greg. She had a kidney disease. And she died.

Of heart failure. In the night. From the kidney disease. And they were young. He woke up. With her coughing. And she fell out of the bed. And bled out. Right there in front of him.

And he couldn't stop. He couldn't do anything about it. And she had a heart attack. From him. He called me. At 2. 30 in the morning. I'm dead asleep. Crying. Jeff. Jeff.

[53 : 01] She just died. She just died. And I'm trying to get awake. Next thing I know. I'm. Emergency room. Anyway. We co-officiated. Some relatives.

For that family. Came into town. Make a long story short. I had never done a funeral. Before. That was my first one. So I'm looking to my. Senior pastor.

To help me. This is my first staff position. In ministry. Out of seminary. When we got. To the grave side. We noticed. That there was a woman. An older woman. With her.

Older. Husband. Aged. Husband. And she was. Fighting mad. Fighting mad. And she was making a scene. And it. Seemed to me.

The scene was being aimed at me. And. My fellow pastor. Because she kept staring us down. Like she could cut our throats. And now here we are.

[53 : 53] With all these people. We're trying to get through this funeral. For this family. And this woman. Is shouting. And making a scene. And saying things. We came to realize. And find out.

She got. Offended. And mad. Because. During the funeral. At the church. We didn't read a list. Of those people. Who survived her. And mentioned her name. And it offended her.

Because she didn't hear her name. Called out. As surviving. This person. We didn't do that. We didn't read a list. For anybody. And she was offended.

What do you do? What do you say? She came up. And read us. The riot act. In front of everybody. At the end of that experience. And we just stood there. And took it. This stuff.

Makes people crazy. When they're not. Grounded in Jesus. When they're not. Thinking about. The realities. Of living for Christ. In the realities.

[54 : 52] Of the adversities. Of life. And it'll make you do. Some crazy. Crazy stuff. So. With this kind of pressure. Testing our convictions.

You and I. Here's the point folks. We need to be careful. About it. Wearing and tearing away. At our resolve. To persevere. In doing good to others. And being faithful to God. That's the point. So.

How do we do that? By walking. In the spirit. By putting on. The Lord Jesus. By making no provision. For the flesh. In regards to its lust. If that woman. Had been a Christian.

She needed to make. No provision. For her pride. She needed to put on. The Lord Jesus. Think about other people. And swallow hard. God. Right? It's easy to say that.

Now. Let me offer you. This slide. Josiah. Will you throw up. That next slide. For us. Set apart Christ. As Lord. In your hearts. Always being ready.

[55 : 47] To make a defense. To everyone. Who asks you. To give an account. For the hope. That is in you. But do it. With gentleness. And reverence. Guys. Remember that. From yesterday. As we talked about. Encountering. Transgender people.

We don't want to sin. By making those people. The enemy. It's their ideology. And their belief system. That's the problem. Same thing here. With gentleness.

And reverence. Keep a good conscience. So that in the thing. In which you are being slandered. Those who revile. Those who revile. And they will. Your good behavior.

In Christ. Will be put to shame. First Peter three. And then the next slide. Josiah. When we apply. God's wisdom. To our view.

Of death. As our teacher. Instructing our hearts. In the value. Of living life. For God's glory. And pleasure. And all things. We can expect. That others. Will not understand.

[56 : 41] Our hope. That we'll need. To patiently. Endure the oppression. That will likely. Come our way. So similar. To the potential. Negative effects. It's mentioned. In the first half.

Of seven. In the second half. Of the verse. A bribe. Draws. An otherwise. Godly person. Away from his convictions. It tempts his conscience. To wrongdoing. And corrupts his heart.

Now here's the point. Don't be bribed away. From God's wisdom. That death. Can be your teacher. For a living. A good life. In God's sight. That's true. So don't be bribed.

Away from it. Don't run from death. Don't run from the reality. That life is hard. And from the hardships. A bribe is effective.

Because it always promises. An easier. And better way. Than if you don't take the bribe. The bribe will help you. Get what you want most. And no one has to know.

[57 : 37] Compromise. But here's the problem. God says that bribes. Bribes of any kind. At any time. For any reason. In any season of life.

Is a fast track. To corrupting. Your own heart. Folks. Bottom line. Don't let your hearts. And souls.

And minds. Be bribed away. From the truth. That God offers us. In a theology. Of death. And funerals. Let it be the teacher.

Of your soul. As you and I. Try to navigate. All of this harsh. And confounding. Reality. That death brings. That death brings. Under the sun. I think we do. A great blessing.

To our souls. To take this to heart. Because Solomon himself. Wrote what I'm about. To show you. So this is from. The book of Proverbs. Solomon. Also the author. And look at what he wrote.

[58 : 30] Back in Proverbs. Josiah. Would you throw Proverbs 4. Up there for us. Look at what it says. My son. Give attention. To my words. That'd be the words. Of the Lord. Incline your ear.

To my sayings. Don't let them depart. From your sight. Keep them in the midst. Of your heart. They are life. Life to those. Who find them. And health to their body. So watch over your heart.

With all diligence. Because from your heart. Flow. The springs of life. It's what you believe. And hold to. That defines who you are.

And how you live. So let God. Use death. To instruct you. In the values of heaven. That you can value now. And order your life by.

God willing. Next time. We'll delve into the. Parts of. The passage. From verse 8. Down to about 14. And we'll deal with. Wisdom's realities. Realities. We've talked about.

[59 : 26] Adversity's realities. Now wisdom's realities. And how they work together. Right. God bless you. Got hot in here. Didn't it? Okay. So next Sunday. We're turning that thing down.

To 64. And I'm freezing you out. Keep you awake. No. Let's pray together. Before Micah. Comes to lead us again. Father.

You are most kind. And gracious. As you teach us. Your word. And instruct us. In the realities of life. We are so thankful. That the Bible. Is so practical. And that you were wise enough.

And loving enough. And kind enough. And condescending enough. That you would give us. The truth of scripture. That bears on the. The most mundane. And real aspects. Of living life.

Here on this broken. Planet. So thank you. That even in death. We can receive. The instruction of heaven. About how to live a life. That pleases you.

[60 : 21] How to live a life. That counts. For something. Beyond ourselves. And is a blessing. To other people. But most importantly. Is a blessing. To you. We thank you.

For your goodness. And grace. In Jesus precious name. Amen. Amen.