

Hopelessness and the Skeptic

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[0 : 00] Just me or was that pretty cool? Who needs music? We do.

But it was nice. I thought that God knew we needed to do that today. Just voices to him. That was, I got so caught up I forgot to turn my mic on.

So are we on now? We're good? Okay. I want to say official thank you or hello to Mr. and Mrs. Katz. All right.

Very delighted to see you guys together. Delighted to see the Wright family here. Things are right? Yeah. Very good.

That was weird last week, wasn't it? I always feel bad when we cancel service. It was weird. But it was, I think the Lord's doing as well.

[1 : 06] Take a break. I blame, no, I'm not going to. No blame. The Lord is sovereign. He knows what he's doing.

All right. Take your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 8. Ecclesiastes you will find just to the right of Psalms. Psalms and then Proverbs and then Ecclesiastes.

It is a book attributed to Solomon. Whether or not it's the real Solomon who wrote this book is up for debate. If it is the real Solomon, it is him at the end of his days when he was an apostate and had become a skeptic.

More likely it is a Solomon-like person, perhaps playing a devil's advocate, perhaps truly a skeptic. But the Jewish Old Testament and the Christian New Testament has accepted this book as a true book in the canon of Scripture.

[2 : 19] So though we struggle with it a bit as we go through it, it's not Psalms, it's not Proverbs. But it gives enough for us to find the full truth.

And we have learned that we read the Old Testament through New Testament eyes. Because the Old Testament is looking forward to the fullness of truth in the New.

And so we see it easily here in this book. So I did want to point out the banners, if you haven't seen them. We started with one banner. Solus Christus.

In Christ alone. And we got another banner. Solus Deo Gloria.

These are Latin, right? And the translation below that. For the glory of God alone. Sola, sola, sola. Alone Christ. Glory to God alone.

[3 : 25] Sola gratia. Saved by grace alone. And sola fidei. Through faith alone. There is an order to these. So it starts with, I am saved by grace alone.

Through faith alone. In Christ alone. To the glory of God alone. And there is one more. Anybody know what it is?

There is five solas. Five solas. Oh. Rick has got a sola shirt. Wow. Without cheating.

Anybody know what the fifth one is? We got grace alone. Faith alone. Christ alone. Glory alone. And? Scripture alone. Scripture alone. Very good. Sola Scriptura.

So, I am saved by grace alone. Through faith alone. In Christ alone. To the glory of God alone. Based on the scripture alone.

[4 : 24] And so we are delighted to have those. So, anybody? Hint, hint, hint. Anybody else want to get the last ones? You can enjoy doing that.

So, I am delighted that. I have always wanted to have the solas displayed. And? Dolinda found these. So, there we go. And different people are helping purchase these.

So, it is great. Okay. Ecclesiastes 8. We are going to look at the whole chapter today. So, if you are able to stand.

And if you would like to, please stand as I read. From scripture. Ecclesiastes chapter 8. Who is like the wise?

And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine. And the hardness of his face is changed.

[5 : 21] I say, keep the king's command. Because of God's oath to him. Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause.

For he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme. And who can say to him, what are you doing? Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing.

And the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. For there is a time and a way for everything. Although man's trouble lies heavy on him.

For he does not know what is to be. For who can tell him what will be? Or how it will be? No man has power to retain the spirit.

Or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war. Nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.

[6 : 24] All this I observed. While applying my heart to all that is done under the sun. When man had power over man to his hurt.

Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place. And were praised in the city where they had done such things.

This also is vanity. Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily. The heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life. Yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God.

Because they fear before him. But it will not be well with the wicked. Neither will he prolong his days like a shadow. Because he does not fear before God.

[7 : 30] There is a vanity that takes place on earth. That there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. And there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous.

I said this also is vanity. I commend joy. For man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful.

For this will go well with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth.

How neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep. Then I saw all the work of God. That man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun.

However much man may toil in seeking. He will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know. He cannot find it out.

[8 : 45] So it reads. Let us pray for some guidance. Father we thank you for your word. We trust your word.

And Father we trust Lord how your spirit leads us and how directs us. And how the rest of scripture interprets scripture. And so help us today to make sense of this Solomon.

This skeptic. This cynic. Who claims to be wise. And know more than other wise men. We pray Lord that we might see through your eyes.

And recognize that this is not hopeless. But you have given us hope. Even under the sun. We pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. Please be seated. So you all know the story of Joseph.

[9 : 50] Right? Joseph and the coat of many colors. Right? There's been plays after this story. Joseph you remember was daddy's favorite. Because he was actually the son born of the wife he really loved.

And so this is Joseph. So he was daddy's favorite. He was also daddy's informer. So while the other brothers are out doing the work in the field.

Little Joseph in his multicolored coat would go out there and spy on the brothers. And tell daddy whether they're working or not. So. And then. Then Joseph was the dreamer too.

Right? He had these dreams about all the other brothers bowing down to him. Well that didn't sit well with the brothers. Along with the tattling. And the you know daddy's favorite.

And so what did the brothers do? Oh. Well the first vote was to kill him. Right? I think that was Simeon and Levi.

[10 : 54] They're kind of bloodthirsty guys. But Reuben. First born. Had responsibility. He overruled that. But the second vote was let's sell him.

And then let's take his multicolored coat. And kill a lamb. And get the blood all mixed up in it. And tell daddy that he was eaten by a lion. Something like that.
That's real. Daddy will love that. Right? This is daddy's favorite. We're getting rid of him. Got rid of him. Shipped him off to Egypt. Where then he became a slave. Served a man very well.
Potiphar. Right? For a while. Was very successful. God was with him. And then Mrs. Potiphar came along. And had other ideas. And Joseph escaped from her.
With integrity. But she twisted the story. To make it look bad for him. So what does he do? He ends up in prison. So some years go by in prison.
[11 : 57] And he has some success even there. That the jailer trusted him. He's wise. He's a good manager. He even interpreted some dreams. For a couple of other fellow prisoners. Who were from the palace.

And asked them to remember him. When they got to the palace. And their dreams came true. Well for one. He lost his head. But for the other guy. That survived. You know.
Tell the king. You know. That I told your dream. It came true. And a couple more years go by. He's forgotten. And finally the day comes.
When Pharaoh himself has a dream. And no one can interpret. And then. The other fellow prisoner. Remember. Oh. There was this guy back in prison. Thirteen years of Joseph's life.
Go by. Where he is unjustly treated. Now. Granted. As a brother. He's a bit of a brat.
[12 : 55] Right. He's proud. He's. You know. He's a jerk. But I'm not sure he deserved to be sold into slavery. And suffer indignity.

And humiliation. And forgotten. Forgetting. Thirteen. Years. Unjust. So for thirteen years. I can imagine. That Joseph felt a bit.
Not only powerless. Because even though he was doing right things. Others were determining his destiny. And then. Powerlessness.
Would lead to hopelessness. He's doing the right things. And yet. Things go worse. And things get worse. Until one day.
And then he figures out. All of this evil. That went on. Was truly intended by my brothers. They were wicked. But God was in this thing the whole time.
[13 : 58] And God brought good out of it. And so. What we see is a story. That begins with hopelessness. It begins with powerlessness. It begins with a person experiencing.

And we can tell many stories from the Bible. That begin like that. That look hopeless. That look. Power. That they're just overwhelmed. So.
I see in this chapter 8. A couple of themes. I see the theme of powerlessness. That there are things that are beyond our control. There are things that are beyond our understanding.
So there's a powerlessness. And that can. That can then lead to a hopelessness. If there's nothing I can do to change my situation. Then it's hopeless.
And that's where this writer. I believe is going. So hopelessness. I looked up. How do you describe hopelessness? Hopelessness is a feeling.
[14 : 56] Is feeling that you or your actions. Have no influence or impact on others or the world. You feel powerless. So we have tragedies that happen.

We've just had more shootings again. That seems so senseless. And we all debate. What's the solution to that? What do we do? Nobody knows quite how to fix it. We got ideas.
And we know there's things that should be done. And yet it still keeps happening. And so we feel a bit powerless. And especially if I just think of me. Who am I? What can I do?
Then hopelessness can also be feeling a lack of strength. Or authority to make decisions. Or to affect change. I'm held hostage to what others decide.
And do. That was Joseph's experience. He couldn't change his situation. Mrs. Potiphar changed it for him. So.
[15 : 56] And then there's another kind of hopelessness. It comes from the lack of resources. Or skills to achieve your goals. Or to improve yourself. Or to overcome your addiction.

To overcome your failures. And I can't fix myself. Because I'm facing my own physical or financial restraints.
And so there again. I can feel powerless. And I can feel hopeless. Nothing I can do. What do I do? I resign. I give up. What is the answer?
And the answer in chapter 11 of Ecclesiastes. Sounds to me like the answer of a skeptic. A cynic.

A pessimist. Well you know. Apply wisdom. Be wise. You know. But it only goes so far. Fear God. Yeah.

[16:51] Fear God. But there's so much you don't know. So. What are you going to do? What are you going to do? This does not sound. If it is Solomon.

It is Solomon in his last days. When he has abandoned the Lord. Right? And has forsaken the Lord. And probably has lost his faith.

And now no longer believes what he wrote in Proverbs. No longer believes what his father wrote in the Psalms. He still holds to wisdom.

He knows there is a God who is sovereign. That's about as far as he goes. Maybe I got him wrong. But that's what he sounds like.

And so today I want to answer the skeptic. And especially the skeptic who says it is all hopeless. And I think this is a very relevant message to our day.

[17:50] Because we know there are lots and lots of people in this world that feel hopeless. Powerless. And are absolutely skeptical of any hope.

Is that the only answer we have? Well. From the story of Joseph we already have a hint. But no. No there is something else.

It's not all hopeless. To those that know. The God. Of this universe. So again. He is going to address some real world issues. We have been doing that all the way through the book of Ecclesiastes.

That is its theme. Wrestling with the hard questions of life. Right. He's not shy about asking the hard questions. And he detests an easy Sunday school answer.

He wants a real answer. So this book is so relevant to our culture. And even if it's not relevant to you. Because your faith is strong.

[18:53] And your hope is strong. It's relevant to those who are around you. It is relevant to the people that you rub shoulders with. It is relevant to your neighbors. And therefore it's relevant to you.

How do I answer them? They're asking those real questions. So he's raised these questions before. In the first part of this chapter.

He deals with a king. Kings and oppression. So he talked about that back in chapter 4. And chapter 5. Here he's talking about a king. That you know.

Hey what are you going to say? Are you going to ask him when he does something you disagree with? What are you doing king? No. He's king.

He might say. Okay you're done. So you're powerless. Hopeless. That relates to us in the sense of government. Well we don't have a king. But. Some would say our government has become king like.

[19:54] Totalitarian. Unchangeable. We have a system that is supposed to promote change. How's that going?

So is it hopeless? Some people feel it's hopeless. Hopeless. It should be better than this. What has gone wrong?

So then secondly. He's dealing with injustice again. Down in verse 10 and 14. He's going to bring up these injustices. These wrongs. He's brought that up before.

In chapter 13. Chapter 13. Chapter 3. Chapter 4. And chapter 7. That no one gets what they deserve. That the evil goes unpunished. The wicked prosper.

And the righteous suffer. This is not right. And so he's brought this issue up before. But remember. We're in the second half of Ecclesiastes now.

[20:52] First half. He brings up the questions. And says. It's all vanity. All vanity. It's all pointless. All empty. There's no fruitfulness. There's nothing fulfilling in life. Right? Best you can do. Is eat, drink, and be happy.

Then here. Now in the second half. He's trying to answer. So he's readdressing those issues. And now he's giving advice. So this time his advice.

In regard to the king. Is okay. Be wise before the king. Don't be stupid. He's king. And you're not. And then in terms of injustice. His answer is.

One. Those who fear God. Are okay in the end. And two. Just be joyful when you can. That's his carpe diem. He's been saying that all along.

You know. The best you can do. Eat, drink, and be merry. For tomorrow you die. Even Paul agreed with that. Right? Yeah. Paul said.

[21 : 47] If there's no resurrection. Then the best thing we have. Is eat, drink, and be merry. For tomorrow you die. And if that's reality. Which most of the world believes. Is reality. There's no resurrection. There's no life after death.

Then today we eat, drink, and be merry. Because this is all we got. And that seems to be this particular author's view. Unlike the real Solomon.

Who believed in eternal life. And life after death. Unlike King David. Who believed in eternal life. And life after death. As well as. As well as Abraham. And Isaac.

And Jacob. And Moses. And everyone else. Believed in resurrection. It's not just a New Testament concept. This man I believe has rejected that.

Okay. So. He's a skeptic. Just. So what's his answer? What are his solutions. To this powerlessness. This hopelessness.

[22 : 46] Under the sun. He's going to address two kinds of powerlessness. In verses one through nine. He's going to address something. Those things we can't control. Whether it's a king.

Whether it's the future. Whether it's those events. That are. That we cannot alter. He's going to talk about those uncontrollable things.

And then in the second half. In verses 10 to 17. He's going to talk about. The inexplicable things. That we can't control. Like. Like. Wickedness and righteousness being flip flopped.

Like the righteous suffering. And the evil flourishing. That kind of stuff. He's going to talk about.

That's inexplicable. It's not. It should not be like that. Right. So he's going to talk about those.

Things that we are powerless to control. The uncontrollable. And the inexplicable. How do you want to define that? So in regard to the first one. Verses 1 through 9.

[23 : 44] When we face the uncontrollable. Wisdom guards our way. That's his answer. And it is.

A good. Answer. He will say it's not enough. But biblically. It is actually the right. Answer.

When facing the uncontrollable. Where we are powerless. Where we cannot ourselves. Effect the change. Wisdom guards our way. Wisdom recognizes.

God is ultimately in control. And I will trust him. So he's going to give three examples. Of powerlessness. Verses 1 through 5. The example of a king. Power unchallengeable.

He is a king. He is a ruler. With absolute power. What can you do? Right. So he talks about verse 2. Keeping the king's command. What do you do? Well keep his command.

[24 : 42] Because of God's oath to him. In other words. God is in this. God is the one who sets kings in their place. God is the one who removes kings. So whatever king you have.

Is a king there by God's ordinance. So therefore obey him. Now that's the New Testament.

Conclusion as well. Even if your king is Nero by the way.

We're going to find that out in Romans 13. Keep the king's command. Verse 3. Don't be hasty to go from his presence. So don't be stupid. Now you're in the presence of a king. Do not be hasty to leave from his presence.

In other words. You're angry with a decision he made. Or you disagree with something he said. Do not take your stand in an evil cause. What does he mean by that? What's an evil cause? For he.

The king. Does whatever he pleases. So an evil cause. Apparently would mean. To take a stand.

Against whatever the king has said. For he does whatever he pleases.

[25 : 43] So if you stand against the king. You're probably a dead person. Right? Most kings won't tolerate that kind of thing. Whoever.

Again. For the word of the king is supreme. Verse 4. Who can say to him. What are you doing? So if you're going to disagree with him. Don't say it out loud. To him. Be wise.

Whoever keeps a command. Will know no evil thing. So if you do what the king says. You won't suffer. And the wise heart.

Will know the proper time. In the just way. The wise person will know. There might be a better time.

To talk some sense. To the king. There might be another way. To do it.

Instead of in my anger. So people like Joseph. People like Daniel. Were very careful. With the king. Right?

[26 : 39] People like Daniel. And his friends. There were times. They disagreed with the king. And they were willing. To lose their life for it. Right? Who is David's three friends.

Hat rack. Haystack. And under the bed we go. Right? They were willing. They said. We will not bow down to your image. And if you kill us. You kill us. But our God's greater. And God preserved them. Right? Daniel himself. Stop praying to your God. Daniel. Daniel did not stop praying. And where did he go? Lion's den. What happened? Tame lions. Until you know. They threw the other guys in. So there are times. To take the stand. Peter and John. Preaching. Stop preaching. In the name of Jesus. Can't do it. Kill us if you want. We'll obey God rather than men. So there are times. Yes. When it's in conflict. With what God says. But there are other times. [27 : 35] So. So. Daniel. When he was a young man. Brought into the. King. The court of another king. They changed his name. He lived with that.

It was the name of a false God. But he lived. He didn't. Rebel against that. Diet though. They wanted him to eat some food. Sacrifice to idols. And so Daniel. What did he do? Did he rebel? No. He asked for some. A permission to do. Just test us for 10 days. See if we're okay. If we're okay then. If we're not okay. Then we'll submit. So he was wise. So you see what I'm saying. There are times to stand. And recognize what you're standing. So. What's the. What's the wise course? Be wise. Submit. And you won't experience. Evil. There will be a time. Verse 6. There will be a time. In a way for everything. Right. So wait for God's time. To make a change. So. [28 : 35] There's his answer. There's a second kind of power. That's unknowable. A powerlessness in regard to the future. Verse 6 and 7. He's bringing this up now. He says.

No one knows what will be. Who can tell them what will be? Who can know the future? Who knows? And then there's certain things like. There's certain power we don't have. Verse 8. No one has power to retain the spirit. No one. Now spirit. That word could either be wind. You can't control the wind. Or it could mean. Rule. It could mean the human spirit. Right. The spirit that God breathed into us. So I can't retain it. Someday. I will expire. Right. Which he then talks about the next phrase. You can't control the day of death. I don't have any control over when God takes my spirit away. When God says that's it. I don't control that. Verse 8.

[29 : 32] So. And then other things. There's no discharge from war. So if you're engaged in a battle. In the middle of a battle.

When you're engaged. You can't say. Time now. I need a break. Doesn't work that way. You're in the battle.

You're engaged. Okay. We're going to sub. Hey. Hold up. We're going to sub Jimmy for. It doesn't happen like that.

Unless you're on. Some other kind of. Untrue battle. So. So. There's no way out. And then with wickedness.

Wickedness is not controlled by wickedness. Wickedness can't be overcome by wickedness. That's what he says.

[30 : 29] Right. The end of verse. Eight there. There is no. Just search for more. Nor will wickedness deliver those. Who are given to it. If you are given. To wickedness.

That wickedness. Will not deliver you from that. Addiction to wickedness. Just. The way it is. Verse nine.

Final conclusion. So. So. We have the power. Listeners. Before a king. We have the powerlessness. In regard to the future.

And then. We have the powerlessness. In regard to uncontrollable events. Like death. Battle.

Wickedness. And then in verse nine. He comes back to the theme of oppression.

Which is interesting. All this I observed. While applying my heart. To all that is done under the sun. So. This is what I have observed. In the world. This is the way it is.

[31 : 24] And then he adds. When man had power. Over man. To his herd. So. I think in relation. To the king. He is talking about. He talked about kings. Who oppressed before.

Kings who were foolish. And don't listen. And then there is the kings. Who. Profit from oppression. Right. They are really in it. For themselves.

Not for the benefit. Of the people. They profit through oppression. And here he brings up oppression. Again in verse nine. When man had power. Over man. To his herd.

So the powerful. Abuse. And oppress. Other. People. To their. Hurt. Oppression.

So. Can you control that? Now we fight abuse. We try to fight abuse. We. And that's right. We should fight abuse. We fight abuse. Against.

[32 : 22] Lots of evils. Against. Orphans. Against widows. Against. Right. Those who are trapped. It is right for us. But can we control all of it? No.

We. We do the best we can. We do what God gives us. The ability to do. But it's going to keep going on. And so that's frustrating.

And it can appear hopeless. So this is the skeptic. He says this is the way it is. Yeah. Apply your wisdom. Do be wise. Because it's better than being foolish.

But at the end of the day. The wisdom will only get you so far. It won't answer all the questions. It won't solve everything. So that's where he is. So. Are we powerless?

And let's talk about just government. Okay. That'll be fun. Are we powerless under government? Now according to the.

[33 : 18] Declaration of Independence. And rights. No. How's it going? We do affect change.

We do vote some out. And others in. Barely. Lately. And change. Occurs. But is it helpful change? Isn't it change good for all? No. It's never. That way. We're at a point now of. How's it going? Is this what our forefathers envisioned?

Not what they envisioned. But they experienced it right from the get go. Because they were. They agreed into the concepts. Disagreed in the methods. From the get go. Good idea.

Yeah. So. Are we powerless under government? Is it. Is change hopeless? Now many would say yes.

[34 : 16] We're stuck. This is what we get. This is what we get. And if we really want to change. We can vote people out. Right? How are we doing with that? We just vote them back in.

Not everybody. Most people don't even vote anymore. Because they've given up. Right? Am I talking reality here? Just my imagination.

It's how people feel. So what's the biblical answer? What does. So this guy says. You know. Be wise. But you can't change anything. Is that what the rest of the Bible says?

Let's look. Let's see what the New Testament says. What does Paul say? Paul by the way. And when he wrote Romans 13. Who was king. When Paul was. Writing Romans 13.

About the 60's AD. About 30 years after Christ died. Nero. Nero. He was a good guy. Wasn't he? No.

[35 : 20] He's the maniac. He's about as wicked as they come. And so. Please consider. That Paul wrote these words. While Nero.

Was the king. Okay. If we expect any exception. We would expect it then. So what does Paul say? Let everyone. Be subject to the governing authorities. Including Nero. For there is no authority. Except from God. And those that exist.

Have been instituted by God. Therefore. Whoever resists the authorities. Resists. What God has appointed. And those who resist. Will incur judgment.

For rulers are not a terror. To good conduct. But to bad. Would you have. No fear. Of the one who is in authority. Then do what is good. That's the same thing. The Ecclesiastes writer wrote.

[36 : 18] Be wise. Obey. And you won't see any evil. Do what they say. Do what is good. Well. If you do what is good. You will receive his approval. For he.

The governor. The king. The authority. Is God's servant. For your good. But if you do wrong. Be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain.

For he is the servant of God. An avenger who carries out God's wrath. On the wrongdoer. Therefore. One must be in subjection.

Not only to avoid God's wrath. But also for the sake of conscience. For because of this. You also pay taxes. Oh. Why do you have to bring that in? Because of this.

You also pay taxes. Wait a minute. He's legitimizing taxes. To Caesar. A killer of innocent people. Yes.

[37 : 21] Jesus said the same thing. Didn't he? For the authorities. Are ministers of God. Attending to this very thing. Okay.

When I. When we heard those words. What did you hear emphasized? What did you hear? Submit. Is that what you heard? That's actually not the emphasis.

What he said over. And over. And over again. Is the government is. From God. Instituted. By God.

Servant of God. Said that several times. A minister of God. Okay. So it's not just God permitting. It's God.

Instituting. It's God. Giving. The king is God's. Person. In. Place. And he doesn't even mention king here.

[38 : 21] He mentions those in authority. So we're not just. We're talking about all levels of authority. Because remember Peter goes. Even to the place of. What about. What about if I have a bad boss? Remember what Peter said?

Yeah. Even if your boss is unreasonable. Submit. That doesn't sound right. That's un-American. Well.

Peter wasn't an American. He was a Christian. So. So. Notice that. Okay.

So in other words. Is it hopeless? If the government is. From God. And by God. And a servant of God. Is it hopeless? No. It's in God's hands.

And are his. Are his hands. Good. And just. And right. Yeah. But why doesn't he fix things sooner?

[39 : 23] Well. That's his business. Isn't it? His timing is impeccable. I'm sure Joseph asked. Did I have to really wait 13 years? Yes you did.

Just like the people of Israel. Had to wait 400 years. Before they were free of slavery. Just like the people of Israel.

Had to wait another 70 years. To be freed from bondage. Again. Just like the whole world. Had to wait. 2,000 years. Before.

God the son. Came. To earth. And now. How long are we waiting now. For justice to be completed. We're still counting.

Day with the Lord is. What? A thousand years? So we got. You know. It's only been a couple of days. Okay. Ultimately the government is in God's hands.

[40 : 23] It's not hopeless. Change comes by and through him. Christ is our hope. We trust him. And that is wisdom. So secondly. There's another answer he brings.

In regard to a second issue. The issue of the inexplicable. When facing the inexplicable. Those things beyond our understanding. The things we can't figure out. The things that seem backward and upside down.

When facing the inexplicable. Fearing God still finds joy. The fear of God still finds joy.

A particular fear of God will find joy. Because he commends joy. And he talks about those who fear God. Will do well. So.

What about injustice? So he brings up injustice in verse 10. Verses 10 through 14. He's going to talk about this. This man who's buried. He's a wicked man. And he's a wicked man that used to go in and out of the holy place.

[41 : 25] Wait a minute. He's a wicked man going in and out of the holy place. Out of the temple. How was he even allowed in there? Well he's a hypocrite. He's like the Pharisees. They were wicked men.

But righteous on the outside. They went in and out of the temple all the time. Even though Jesus accused them. To their face of their wickedness. Their pretense. Their hypocrisy.

But he says. So that's the problem. So that can't be right. A wicked man going in and out. And then when he's buried. He's praised. He's praised. That word also could.

You know Hebrew. One little tale on a letter. Can change what a word is. This word in Hebrew could be praised. Or it could be forgotten. It's like. Well that's totally different.

He's forgotten. But it could mean. That he's. That his wickedness is forgotten. And he's still just kind of honored. You know. We forget how wicked he was. So let's just let it all go.

[42 : 24] Could be that. Or the tale could be on that Hebrew letter. And it could mean praised. Okay. So. One of the fun things about interpreting Ecclesiastes.

Is. Those little anomalies. Then verse 11. He talks about evil that gets ignored. That's a horrible thing. The sentence against evil is not executed speedily.

It's just kind of ignored. It let go. What happens then? What does that do? Well it encourages more evil. The heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. What happened? We see this. When stores don't prosecute.

Theft. What happens? I mean. There's more theft. And they're right on video. And they don't care. When all the lights go out. And the power goes out. What happens?

Looting. Why? Because they can get away with it. What it shows is the evil in man's heart. Is really all there. And if they could just get away with it. They don't care. The only thing restraining them. [43 : 24] Is the law. And if the law is not working. What happens? All man is basically good. Right?

Yeah. Look how good he is. So he says it's flourishing. Verse 11. Verse 12.

There's some hope here. Verse 12. Though the sinner does evil 100 times. And does prolong a life. It looks like. You know. He's flourishing. Even though he's evil.

Yet I know. Now I don't know if he's saying this in genuineness. Or if he's saying this sarcastically. Yet I know. I know. It will be well with those who fear God.

Or is he saying. No. I know. I know. Because that's the truth. He may not mean it genuinely. But he is speaking the truth. Those.

[44 : 25] It does go well with those who do fear God. Because they fear before him. Because it's about him. Not about what happens in society. They trust that God will be just in the end. And it will not be well with the wicked.

Neither will he prolong his days like a shadow. He might live for a little longer than he should. But the shadow won't be getting longer and longer at the end. Because. At some point.

God will. Because they don't fear God. And his days will end. Verse 14. Again. He mentions that. That. That. That. That. Inexplicable. Wickedness that happens.

That. The. The. The. The righteous are treated like the wicked. And the wicked are treated like the righteous. Everything's upside down and backwards. It's pointless. He. He. He gives us a double vanity for that one.

Beginning of verse 14. At the end of verse 14. Vanity. Vanity. Vanity. Emptiness. Pointless. Absurd. Right. So what do we do?

[45 : 25] Well. The answer is. Verse. Verse 12. Those who fear God. It will be well with them. Because the future is in God's hand. He is the alpha. The beginning.

And he is the omega. He is the end. We read that. We saw that over and over again. In the book of Revelation. There will be a time. God is waiting. God is waiting. God is waiting.

God is waiting. The souls in heaven. In the altar. Are saying. How long? How long? How long? And he's saying. It will happen. Trust me. Trust me. Right.

Got it. Okay. We're good. I think we'll be good in heaven. Here on earth it lasts shorter. And it's like. Okay. I'm good. No. I need a reminder again. Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. Right. That's how we are here. We. So now he commends joy.

Verse 15. Here's his answer. I commend joy. I praise joy. I commend joy. Which seems odd. You know. He just said this.

[46 : 23] Verse 14. This. This. This. This. Inexplicable thing. This. This. Paradox. And then in verse 15. Says. Oh. But I commend joy. For the man.

Has no good thing. Under the sun. But to eat and drink. And be joyful. For this. Will go. With him. In this toil. Through all the days of his life. That God has given him.

Under the sun. So under the sun. This is the best you can do. Eat. Drink. And be merry. While you're here. Find enjoyment. Carpe diem.

Seize the day. Here's your day. Live your day. Right. So is he saying that as a skeptic?

I think so. Because where's the question? Where. Where. Where is the. The looking forward. Like in Psalms. Like in Proverbs. Where is the looking forward about.

[47 : 20] The promise of the Lord. The day of the Lord. The life of the Lord. Where is that? He sounds like it's all you can do.

He has a very. Very under the sun view. A very worldly view. And if your view is simply under the sun. Yeah. That's it. That's all you got. If you're not looking forward to life after this.

After this world. If this is all you got. If there is no resurrection. Like Paul says. Eat. Drink. And be merry. That is a rational response. That is a rational response.

If there's nothing. The problem is. There's too much evidence for life after death. There's too much promise. Paul says creation itself shows us that.

To learn what's just talking about. It's amazing. You go through winter and everything dies. Then comes spring. Well. We don't really have spring here. But we eventually have spring and summer.

[48 : 22] And then everything flourishes again. It's like a miracle. Isn't it? Now we know. Okay. We know. There's. There's. You know. Agricultural reasons. Why these things happen. But Paul uses.

The death of a seed. We take a seed. And we bury it in the ground. Right? For that life of that plant. You have to take the seed. And bury it in the ground.

Why do you have to bury it in the ground? Because it's where life comes from. Life comes after death. Life comes after burial. Even God's creation shows us that.

Paul says when we bury our bodies. It's just like that. Because the body has to change. We bury the old body.

What we get is the new body. So once you see creation in the light of God's glory. You'll see truth everywhere. When you refuse to see that truth.

[49 : 23] You won't see it anyway. But this is a skeptic. And then he ends.

Oh he ends on a fun note. Doesn't he? Verse 16 and 17. You know. We can look as hard as we want. Look for wisdom. I apply my heart to know wisdom.

And to see the business that's done on earth. To see everything. What did he find out? That neither day or night. No one. No one's eyes sleep. That we do all of this hustle and bustle.

And what do we have? Restlessness. Restlessness. Restlessness. Then what's the final conclusion? Verse 17. Then I saw all the work of God.

That man. What? Cannot find out the work that is done under the scene. He can't. He can't do it. However much man may toil in seeking. He will not find it out.

[50 : 18] And even the wise man. Even though the wise man claims to know. He can't find it out. How does this man know that no other wise man has it right? See that concludes it for me.

That this guy says. No there are wise men who claim to figure it out. And their names were David. Solomon. Abraham. Moses. But I don't buy what they say.

Because I've looked and I didn't find it. Who are you going to believe? Hebrews. He said. But the Hebrews.

Ecclesiastes 8. This is scripture. How can it not have all the truth? Why are we. You know.

Why are we in the book of Ecclesiastes anyway? What good is it? It is good. It doesn't hurt us once in a while to think a little bit harder.

[51 : 25] And because things in scripture don't say the full truth. Like the book of Job. Job has some obviously wonderful things to say. Also has some truth in it that.

That God at the end says. That guy he wasn't right. That guy he wasn't right. Right? So it's good for us to think.

And church history has. Has confirmed that throughout time. Even though yes. We struggle with this book. It does. He doesn't give us the answer we want. Like we get in the New Testament.

The church throughout history has said. That's valuable for us. Because there's enough here to lead us to Christ. There's enough here to lead us to true wisdom.

He does say enough. He does say wisdom. He does say fear of God. He does say joy. He hasn't experienced the whole of it. But he has still said the truth.

[52 : 27] Just not the full truth. So what does the New Testament say? What about injustice? Is injustice hopeless?

What do we do with the shootings in this world? What do we do with the tragedies in this world that we can't fix? What do we do with these social issues we're arguing about? What do we do with these changes?

These moral changes? What do we do? Right? When things we cherish are further tarnished and lost. And we see our culture sliding down from our point of view of truth.

What do we do? Is there nothing we can do? How do we judge that? And why does God tolerate this?

I think that bugs us. God is just and right and good. Yeah, yeah, I know. There's a day he'll fix it all. But what about right now?

[53 : 30] What about the innocents that are suffering? What about those innocent children? What about... Come on. Right? Why does God tolerate the wickedness that flourishes?

Okay, let me give you an answer from the New Testament. That might surprise you. Paul talks about that. Yeah. Imagine that.

Paul talks about heart issues. Imagine that. Romans chapter 2. Good thing the men are studying Romans. We're going to deal with all this stuff. Romans 2. He says...

Now he's talking about... Right? All are accountable before God. So chapter 2. He says, Therefore you have no excuse, O man. Talking to everybody.

Every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself. Because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

[54 : 29] And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things, and yet do them yourself.

But I don't do them as badly as they do them. I only do a little evil. They do big evil.

Get them. Done. Okay? We're on God's scale now. On God's scale, how's it look? Big little. Cross the line. Done.

You who judge those who practice the same thing, and do them yourself. Do you imagine, O man, that you will escape the judgment of God, because yours is less than theirs? Or do you presume on the riches of his...

Watch this now. His kindness. And forbearance. And patience. Well, has he been patient with me?

[55 : 31] He hasn't killed you yet, has he? Yeah, but he should kill them first. Right?

That's how we think. We've grown on a curve. Not knowing. Not knowing that God's kindness, His tolerance, His patience, is meant to lead you to repentance.

Oh, that's why he's tolerating wickedness. It's meant to lead us to repentance. But because of your hard and impenitent heart, because I'm judging those people who are worse than me, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works, to those who, by patience and well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey in righteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

So what does the New Testament say about this inexplicable wickedness that goes on that is not right? It says again, the future is in God's hands.

[57 : 02] All that is wrong will be made right. There will be true justice one day. But now, here's how Paul does it.

Who are you to judge? Who are you? I'm sorry, are you innocent? Granted, I don't see you as wicked as other people, but are you saying you're not wicked at all?

Well, I wouldn't say wicked. I make some mistakes. Okay? Are all those unintentional mistakes? Is there ever a time that God puts conviction, on your heart, and you don't obey it?

That's called rebellion. Well, I just thought I was putting it off. It's called rebellion. What about the time when I lean on my own understanding, and I don't trust Him?

Yeah, it's called faithlessness. Come on, you're getting picky. Let's just be honest. I love God, and I love my neighbor.

[58 : 17] Okay? Here's what God says. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, which means all of your intentions and thoughts. How are you doing with your thoughts that way, by the way?

All your soul. How do I do that? That's all my passions and affections. I have no control of those. Sometimes, like this morning when we're singing, my soul's all in it. My soul. Be still, my soul. Oh, come on. Remember He, who, when He was on earth, you know, the winds and the waves obeyed Him?

That's your Savior. Remember that guy? Okay, my soul needs that. Yeah. and all your strength. I give every, I give 110% every day, every moment of every day, right?

But that verse doesn't really mean you have to love Him. It just means, you know, just love Him genuinely. Yeah, you think God kind of looks at it that way? Yeah. Does He not deserve every ounce of my heart and every ounce of my soul and every ounce of my strength because He gave me all that?

[59 : 34] So, who am I? We all need, see, at the end of the day, that's, we all need God's kindness.

We all need God's tolerance of our own evil, even if it's not immeasurable to somebody else that's locked away or not locked away yet for the evil they commit. It's still evil.

So, in this world, we can feel hopelessness. We can feel powerless. There are things we're not able to control. But that's not it. We have a God who is the creator of this world.

And He says, you can walk with me and know me. I'm not distant. I'm not far away. Come to me.

We have a God who gave His life and then raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God the Father and now sits on His eternal throne and is putting His enemies under His feet every day, every time, until He puts the final enemy under His feet.

Well, would He move a little quicker? You want to talk to Him about that? You think He doesn't have it under control and the timing absolutely perfect? By the way, Revelation reminds us that part of

the reason He's delaying is there's more people that He is seeking to repent.

[61 : 07] there are more people and He won't be done until every last one. And you might be one of those people He's waiting for.

Do you feel hopeless? There are times we feel hopeless and maybe there's somebody here today who feels that hopelessness.

They're just overwhelmed with the hopelessness. They feel powerless over their own life. They can't fix the things that are going on. They know they need to fix and clean up their life but they can't do it. And every time they try, it gets worse.

And they're stuck. And it feels hopeless. I can't change things outside the world. I can't change things inside my world. I can't fix my kids. I can't fix my job.

I can't fix my bills. I can't fix, I can't, no control. You feel hopeless. You feel that you have no power or influence.

[62 : 14] Here's some hope. Read about Joseph. He too had hopelessness. Read about Ruth. Oh, Ruth. Talk about hopeless.

Okay. Here's a foreign gal. She lost her husband. Her father-in-law and her brother-in-law. She lost all of them. She's left with Naomi. She's a ball of fun.

And she's going back to the land of Israel with this Naomi. Why? What drove her?

Her future husband recognized, he said, you're seeking refuge under the wings of God. You heard something about this God. I know Naomi didn't display it really well, but she heard something.

She had hopelessness. She had no husband. She had nothing. And yet, her story shows she had a glimmer of this Savior.

[63 : 21] Read about David. David, all of Israel was afraid of this giant man who's defying the Almighty God. And little David, what does he have?

Got a sling. I'll get some rocks when I need them. That's not what he had. What he had was a heart for God. And when he heard what that giant said about his God, that stirred him up.

I'll take him down. I got... What did he... That was hopeless. What about Esther? Have you read the story of Esther? Talk about hopelessness.

Her people on the verge of extinction. Extinction. Who's she? Well, didn't she become queen?

Okay. Yeah, she was queen.

But not like you think of a queen. Because she was part of a harem. So maybe she's queen of the harem. So who's she? And by the way, King Artaxerxes hasn't visited in a while.

[64 : 26] So who's she? Mordecai said to her what? God has a time and a place. And God has you in a place at a certain time.

And if you won't do it, he'll find somebody else. But you're the woman for the time. What'd she have? Anything? An opportunity.

That's all she had. But I'll risk my life. Hey, we're going to die anyway. Read the story of Esther. You have no resources, no skills.

You got nothing to help anybody else. That's what Peter and John said when they saw the beggar outside the temple. They said, silver and gold have we none, but such as we have give we thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk.

And he went, walking and leaping. Right? Talk about, oh, how about the four friends of the paralyzed man? Remember those guys? I find these guys fascinating.

[65 : 27] They had a friend that they could not heal. He's paralyzed. And they heard something about this guy, name of Jesus, that he healed people.

Well, let's get him there. They get there. The house is crowded. You can't even get in the door.

What are they going to do? I don't know about you, but I'm getting him to Jesus. I'll do whatever.

I'll dig through a roof. Yeah, let's dig through the roof. Okay, let's dig through the roof. And then what's Jesus do? The first thing he says to the man, your sins are forgiven.

What? No, he needs healing. No, he needed forgiveness. He needed forgiveness. Oh, and by the way, to prove that I am the son of man that can forgive sins.

Hey, stand up and walk. Hopelessness. The Bible is full of stories of people who lived in powerlessness and hopelessness.

[66 : 30] Read about Jesus. My goodness. If there's a man who is treated unjustly. Now, he did have power to change everything.

He chose not to. I could bring 12 legions of the age down right now on you, Pilate. But you're not the issue.

I would have done that. I would have been kind of cool. I'm not Jesus. Read about Jesus. Who committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

And then, he himself bore our sins in his body on that tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

[67 : 40] By his wounds, you have been healed. And every Christian has a living hope that brings peace that passes understanding, joy inexpressible and full of hope.

And that brings us wisdom to trust him in the times that I cannot control and brings us a fear that produces a joy in times I cannot explain.

That is the gospel. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that sometimes we wrestle with it, but it's worth it.

A lot of people take the word and twist it, Lord. We thank you that if we wrestle with it and then bring in your scripture to it, we can grasp the fuller truth.

We thank you, Lord, that you did not leave us just with Ecclesiastes. We thank you, Lord, that you provided to us the Psalms and the Proverbs and, oh my, the New Testament, the gospel of Jesus himself.

[68 : 57] We thank you. We have much hope in a world full of hopelessness. Strengthen our faith.

Help our unbelief. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.