

10. Living patiently with the tragedy of sin

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn, if you would, to that passage that we read in Ecclesiastes chapter 5. Charles Dickens said this, Some faces are in their brightness a prophecy, and some in their sadness a history.

Well, our faces do tell a story, don't they? On one level, they betray the emotions of the moment, they give away our hearts. And by the way, a pulpit is a very good place to view that.

You'd be surprised just how much that I can see up here. There are many, many things that are very transparent indeed, and I can see them just by looking at your faces, especially when we're singing.

I can see people are happy, or if they're sad, or if they're half asleep, which is often the way on a Sunday morning, especially up in the gallery, and whether you're angry, or whether you're just plain bored.

But at another level, a facial expression can be a clue to a more permanent character, can't it? I remember once when I was at a minister's conference, doing a workshop with Dick Lucas, and he was talking to me afterwards, and trying to describe one of the people, and he said, You know, that chap with a face in need of a good slap.

[1 : 27] And I knew immediately who he meant, because indeed he was a very arrogant young man, with a very superior attitude, and it was all there right in his face. I can't remember his name, which is just as well, but I can remember his face, and his nickname, Slapface.

That's what we call them for the rest of the conference. But in the longer term, too, our faces can tell a story, can't they? They do speak of history.

They have life experience etched into them. The sorrows, the hardships, the struggles, perhaps. Maybe bitterness and loss.

But they are also, aren't they, a prophecy, because they speak not only of the events of the past, but they speak also of the reaction of that life lived through these events.

And therefore, they speak of the attitude to the present and to the future of the heart that is hidden below the visible face. That's true, isn't it?

[2 : 35] There's often an undeniable quality expressed in the faces of men and women. Sometimes it's captured, isn't it, by the great photographers taking portraits, or the great portrait painters.

Something that's perhaps indescribable in words, but somehow can be eloquently displayed by capturing the depth of somebody's face.

And some Christians have truly shining faces, don't they? faces that speak of a deep inner joy, a peace, a contentment.

But of course, not all Christians have that kind of face, do we? Some believers, too, do have hard faces. And they prophesy, they tell a very different message.

And the thing is, the difference between those faces is not accounted for by the one having had a hard life and the other having had a charmed life. In fact, often it's those faces that are most shining, most glorious, that have had the worst and the toughest and the most bitter experiences that life can offer.

[3 : 48] Isn't that right? See, the difference is not in the experiences of life, but in their reaction to them and their reaction in them and their reaction through them.

For the one, it has been truly a path of glad acceptance and submission that has led to that sweet contentment, the shining face of someone who truly is at peace with God and with the world.

But for the other, it's very, very different. It's been a path of resistance and resentment to what life has thrown into their path. And it's life bitterness and discontent in their heart.

And that's become visible to all the world in the hardened features of their face. Now, all through this book of Ecclesiastes, we've been confronted with a message that life is unpredictable, that it's full of perplexity, that it's full of puzzle, that it's full indeed of pain.

And that's true for all of us. And the question here in our passage today in verse 1 is this. Who is wise? Who knows the interpretation of a thing?

[5 : 01] That is this thing, the proverb about life that he's giving to us here in the second half of the verse. Who knows the way of wisdom through each perplexing path of life that we sang about?

So that life, with all its struggles, with all its mysteries, with all its bitterness, as well as all its joys, so that life will work in us wisdom to make our faces shine with bright joy amid the storms of life, rather than turn our faces to be hard and hardened by our experience of this passing and perplexing world, this life under the sun.

It's a big question, isn't it? Because many of us as Christians, we face hardness through life and that hardness in life can harden us.

Because our hearts can become bitter and embittered by disappointments, by letdowns, by bad experiences, by all sorts of things. Maybe you're one of those people.

Maybe you're on your way to becoming one of those people. Well, the preacher is talking to you. In fact, of course, he's talking to all of us, isn't he?

[6 : 16] Because without God's grace, without God's word of hope to shape us, to instruct us, every one of us would go that way, the way of the hardened face, wouldn't we, living in this world?

Well, he's speaking to us, so we'd better listen. What is the key to the shining face that he's speaking about, to the path of peace and contentment, full of joy, whatever the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune might throw at us in this life?

What is the key? Well, as we've learned so well by now in this book of Ecclesiastes, the key is never, ever in escapism, is it?

In flights of fantasy, running away to our let's pretend world. Now, that's never the answer. It's exactly the opposite. It's always all about learning the way of submission to the reality of this world as it really is under God.

It's about meeting life's realities with acceptance, isn't it? Not with anger. And in particular, this long section that runs right through to chapter 9, verse 10, tells us that we have to face up to and embrace two things that we as human beings, even as Christians, find very, very hard to deal with.

[7 : 32] The first that we'll look at today is this, the manifest injustice of a sinful world. We have to face up to that and live with it if we're not to have hardened faces.

And the second half we'll look at next time is the mysterious justice of a sovereign God. We have to learn to live with that too and we find that almost as difficult. We have to come to terms with living in this world with both of these realities whether we like it or not.

And that wisdom and that wisdom alone is what will lead to a life of joy, to a shining face, to not having a hardened face. Not being angry, not being resistant always to these things, but rather accepting them, submitting to them.

It's just what God plainly tells us all the way through Scripture but also it's what our experience of life confirms to us. This is a manifestly unjust and sinful world.

And the minute that we wise up to that and take it seriously, the minute that we dispel a protective cocoon of fantasy that we so often put around us, we simply have to accept that that is the fact of life.

[8 : 50] And one way or another we have to live with it. And either it will make our faces and our hearts hard or if we listen to God it will nevertheless make our faces shine with joy.

Well let's look at the text a bit more carefully then. It's all about living with the manifest injustice of a sinful world. The message could be summed up like this really.

You must learn to live patiently with the tragedy of sin if you are to be a believer who has a shining face and not a hard face. In other words real wisdom knows that we are not good and therefore it accepts the limitations of a world that is sinful and corrupt and that will never be otherwise under the sun in this life on earth.

In a nutshell the shining face of contentment belongs to the believer who has learned to live with mess. The mess of this sinful world.

See look at verses 1 to 6 it's a picture isn't it of the king's court and the point is that even though there may be foolishness and injustice at work well you are a fool if you think that just because of that you can therefore ignore the authority of the king.

[10 : 11] You can assert yourself every time you think you know better. So keep the king's command that's the way of wisdom. Don't storm out of his presence with a face like thunder.

Don't take your stand he says don't persist in an evil cause in other words don't persist in the kind of futile behavior that can never win just because you know that the king can do what he pleases.

He's in charge his word is supreme he's in authority. Now you see verse 5 the way to avoid evil misfortune coming your way is to accept the place of the king's authority that's just simple reality.

See it's all about an attitude to dealing with what it means to live under authority especially when that authority seems to be unjust even evil. It's about how to cope when it riles us and it irks us and it makes us mad to have to live under that authority and there are only two ways to cope the one is a spirit of rebellion and rejection of that authority it's letting it get under our skin and embitter us that'll give us a hard face or it's the way of submission that acceptance learns wisdom and discretion it doesn't get bitter and it adapts to the reality of a life that just never will be perfect in this world and that's the way to a face that shines even though times are hard and tough and difficult now you see some people find living under authority very very hard indeed so much so that it causes angst it causes anger it turns you into a very bitter and angry person but you see the reality is that authority structures in our world however flawed they are are something that God has put into the world and he's done it for our protection you see verse 2 obey the king because of God's oath to him now it could be that we're to read it as the footnote in our Bible suggests that it's about your oath to God but I think the Bible as we have it here in the ESV is correct he's talking about

Israel's king and Israel's king was ordained by God that's why Proverbs 24 verse 21 says fear the Lord and the king my son and do not join with the rebellious you see the the Davidic kingship the kingship of David and his progeny was God's institution and it was God's institution even when it was corrupt and therefore it couldn't be ignored although of course God would also hold to account a wicked king now we don't live under a Davidic king we don't live under an earthly monarch ordained by God but the New Testament is just as clear isn't it that human governing authorities in this world are ordained by God they're part of his merciful ordering of the world for our protection and therefore whoever resists these resists God himself if you don't believe me read Romans chapter 13 when you get home read 1st Peter 1st Peter 2 and verse 17 he's speaking to a people isn't he being persecuted under the emperor

[13 : 41] Nero and yet Peter says fear God and honour the emperor Nero because you see bad government even though it's bad and unjust is still better than anarchy isn't it just look at Iraq look at Afghanistan places like that but you see this is a sinful world and even pretty good and pretty uncorrupt government will always have injustices and incompetences and flaws of all sorts of kinds it will always be full of all kinds of reasons to make us furious with anger and bitterness and resentment and you see the preacher's point is this are you going to let that eat you up and poison your life or are you going to just come to terms with reality and accept that the world is like that are you going to learn to live with the limitations of a world that awaits a recreation and won't be perfect until then will you learn to live with mess will you learn to overcome it with patient joyous hope that's such an important question for us isn't it it's not just at the level of politics and rule although for some of us that may be a very real issue but it's something that impinges on our daily life every single day doesn't it most of us all of us

I guess who are working work and live under some kind of authority and I guess most of us often feel that a lot of the time we know far better than our bosses we've got a much better idea how to run the business than they do we're driven mad aren't we by their incompetence by their injustice some of the time well are you going to let that harden your face are you going to let that embitter you and give you an ulcer and make you cynical and unhappy are you going to let these things make you live with a persistent chip on your shoulder or is the hope of the Christian gospel about what you know about the reality of eternity and the priority of eternity for that matter is that going to let your face shine through all the worst of these things maybe you're a teacher a lot of you are teachers maybe you're just driven mad by all the sats and the tables and whatever the next piece of thing is that the government dumps on you or maybe you're a doctor or a nurse working in the health service and you're just enraged by the latest agenda for change the latest regrading scheme in the

NHS or the latest reorganization or the latest chaos about employing junior doctors and giving them jobs or maybe you're a businessman maybe you're a tradesman and you're just drowning under the directives of the latest thing that we're getting from the Bampots in Brussels maybe these things are just driving you crazy well I'm sure they probably do well says the preacher don't get hardened by it you're a believer you understand reality you understand that this is an unjust world it's a sinful world you've got to learn to live patiently with the tragedy of sin don't be the kind of person who storms out and resigns at the first little irritation with your boss although as verse 6 says there is a time and a way for everything that might be needed sometimes don't get embroiled with endlessly pursuing disputes that you can never ever win embrace reality says the preacher see the bigger picture learn to smile in the midst of these things see the wise believer knows that verse 5 and 6 is true that there is a time and a way for everything including

God's judgment the thing that at last will bring injustice and wickedness to an end the everything verse 5 literally every matter the same word used in chapter 3 verse 17 where we're told that God will judge the righteous and the wicked for there is a time and a matter for every work that time is coming and you as a believer know that so be patient we know the bigger story we can trust God's timing he will bring foolishness and injustice to book the current injustice isn't forever God's justice will be pervasive and it will be in his good time sometimes it may happen yes in this lifetime but certainly without doubt ultimately his justice will prevail in the end it's the very last verse of the book isn't it God will bring every deed to judgment you see knowing that and really believing that is the only thing that can help us endure with shining faces no matter what trouble what evil verse 6 that we might have to bear in this life and we need that anchor don't we because verse 7 is true isn't it none of us can control our times none of us can predict all of our lives for ourselves neither can anyone else we simply have to face up to our own ignorance to our own powerlessness we just have to learn to live with it there's so much in life that's just totally beyond us isn't that true and until we accept that reality about life and learn to live with the huge limitations that are on our lives simply because of the tragedy of sin then we will never ever be at peace that's not to say of course that we can never change anything in life and we shouldn't bother to try ever to change injustices of course we can and of course we should just look at all the things that Christians have done over the years think about

Wilberforce and the slave trade and all of these things that we've just been celebrating of course it's not passivity that the preacher is advising here but it is patience and it is realism there will be sin and wickedness and injustice right to the very end that's what Jesus himself tells us again and again there'll be wickedness and injustice and annoyance in this world's governments and in its institutions and in all its societies there'll be all of these things in our own country in our own city there'll be all these things in your life personally in your relationships in your work in your family everywhere they'll be there right till the end and unless you can recognize that and accept it and live patiently with the tragedy of sin then friends it's very likely to make you into a bitter person a hardened person an unhappy person there are some things you just can't control in life look at verse 8 the wind or the spirit as it's translated here or the day of death nobody escapes that war says the preacher the war of mortality of course that's a comfort too isn't it because no king even no unjust ruler no boss can control these things either and their time will come too but that is life as we know it isn't it verse 9 says that's what the preacher observed it's what we observe too it's a world where man has power over man to his hurt it's the world we live in isn't it it's real it's the manifest injustice of a sinful world we just can't deny it but you see we're told to remember that it's not forever it's a temporary situation verse 10 you see the wicked too will come to the grave it's very hard to know whether we should take verse 10 as we have it printed here in the ESV or as it is there in the footnote the word forgotten instead of the word praised you see if the word praised as we have it in the text here is correct the point is that that injustice sometimes stretches even to the grave even to the funeral where the wicked are eulogized even in the place where they did all their wicked deeds well that happens doesn't it we've seen that haven't we with funerals of rather despicable people never really said at the funeral how despicable they were and no crook is usually ever really called what he is at a funeral is he always find something nice to see but if it's as the footnote has it there forgotten then the emphasis is simply that even the evil die even the wicked die in the end and they're soon forgotten in other words their power is not a lasting power and either way it's that latter point that's taken up in verses 11 to 13 can you see that this really is a vanity he says you see people live with the fantasy that

[23 : 18] God is dead and that God is powerless that there's no judgment to come you see people don't meet the reprisals of God on their wickedness immediately and therefore they conclude that there never will be any reprisal and they can live exactly as they like they set their hearts verse 11 fully to do evil well nothing's changed has there that's our world too isn't it our world has banished any thought of there being a judgment by God even the church apparently seems to find it a taboo that we can hardly mention the judgment of God Peter warned about that in his second letter he said in the last days there'll be people who say where's this coming judgment what a lot of tosh the world's just going on as it always has been always will be there's no judgment to come that's what people say isn't it this world is as it's always been there was no creation just happened there'll be no judgment it'll just roll on but no says the preacher that is not so verses 12 and 13 he says it may seem that you can oppose

God with impunity it may seem that you can do that and live to a ripe old age that you can do evil he says a hundred times and prolong your life yet I know says the preacher that the ultimate story is very very different but it will be well with those who fear God ultimately why says verse 12 well not because they're morally superior but because they do fear God they take God seriously they take his judgment seriously for one thing but not so the wicked says verse 13 do you see they will not prolong their days their days as the the authorised version translates better here their days are like a shadow in other words when the day of judgment comes they will vanish they'll be swept away they will not last and all because they do not fear God see they're living with the complete illusion that there is no ultimate judgment so they live carefree lives in flagrant denial of God's justice just as many young criminals today do in our society don't they they have no fear of a of a increasingly impotent legal system it's powerless often to prosecute them and if it can prosecute them seems to be powerless to punish them so they do as they please but you see the preacher says God is not powerless he's just patient and he will as the preacher knows and keeps reminding us he will bring every deed to judgment he'll bring it to prosecution and he'll bring it to punishment you see knowing that and believing that that the fact of God's clear revelation from above speaks this word of truth to us and allowing that word to permeate all of our life on this earth that is the only key to living patiently with the tragedy of sin isn't it to living with the mess and the injustice that we see all around us in this world because viewed from planet earth life is a vanity it is a total enigma look at verse 14 there is a vanity an enigma a mystery that takes place on earth that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked and wicked to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous

I said also this is vanity it is a mystery bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people we see it all the time don't we and it is indeed a vanity it is an enigma it is a puzzle it is an injustice but you see says the Bible if you listen to God's revelation if you listen to his explanation from above the sun you shouldn't be surprised it is what to expect in a fallen sinful world how can it be anything else and we are to accept it and we are to bear it and we are to live patiently in the midst of it because we know more it is not the whole story and we can trust God to be God and to sort out the world's injustice is his way not get bitter because he hasn't sorted them all out our way and that's why you see the preacher's prescription for life in a world of mess is not despair is it look at verse 15 it's joy

I commend joy for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun see if you want to be a Christian with a shining face and not a hard face you'll be the kind of believer who is always counting your blessings not the kind of believer who is always cataloging your complaints because amid all the mysteries all the injustices that we can't solve we'll see that there are blessings that we can enjoy that we're commanded to enjoy in this life you see it's only when we've come to a realistic acceptance that this world and our lives will never be ideal will never bring absolute satisfaction and contentment it's only then that we can be liberated like this to live and rejoice in all the relative happiness and contentment and enjoy that we can have and that we must have if we're to be shining face believers we learn to be satisfied even in our dissatisfactions in life not dissatisfied even amid the satisfactions that this life affords we trust God's justice to come amid man's present injustice and that's what liberates us to eat and to drink and to be joyful all the days of our life under the sun but you see that joy in life in a manifestly unjust world is only possible when we stop restlessly resisting the reality of our own limitations in life and when we learn to live patiently with the tragedy of sin knowing that that in this world in this world of tragedy and mess we don't have an abiding city knowing that in this world we don't have an eternal home and we'll never find it because we wait for a city to come and see that's the person who in the midst of the mess of life and the tragedy and the pain of life can still say I commend joy remember the apostle Paul from a Roman prison writing to the church in

Philippi rejoice he says rejoice always I'll say it again rejoice how can you rejoice well he says I've learned the secret of contentment in every circumstance whether I've got plenty or whether I'm hungry whether I've got abundance or whether I'm in need or when he wrote to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 he talks about being afflicted and perplexed and persecuted and struck down and yet not crushed not despairing not destroyed we do not lose heart he cries why for this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen the present injustices of this world but to the things that are unseen the coming justice of God for the things that are seen he says are transient the things that are unseen are eternal you see that's that's just the New Testament way of saying what the preacher of

[31 : 58] Ecclesiastes is saying to us here and don't we still need to hear that message today don't you I certainly do so easy isn't it to become believers who are hardened by the injustices of this fallen sinful world we look at the world we look at our life we look at our experience and we say to ourselves it's so unfair we get angry don't we we get resentful we get bitter but you know that's not just wrong it's terribly destructive too isn't it makes us miserable that attitude if we let it engulf us will rob us of the manifest joys that there are for us to possess on this earth that attitude will take the shine off your face because it will squeeze all the joy out of your heart it'll make you bitter it'll make you hard it'll make you resentful it'll harden your face which is the expression of your outward life because it will harden your heart it will eat you up it will consume your inner soul so let me ask you is your joy at a low ebb this morning has the shine come off your face is the world or your life or your work or your

Christian walk is it getting you down maybe you're just fed up with the sheer unfairness of life and the world with the injustice that seems to flourish all around us where others who deserve nothing seem to walk away with almost everything and you well you do the right thing all the time you try your very best and yet you seem to get no thanks you get no recognition you get no reward well if that's you today and I guess it might be most of us today the preacher says to us you need to do two things again and again and again if you're not to become and remain a hardened and a bitter person there are fewer things worse really aren't there than a Christian who's hardened and bitter and cynical and has a chip on the shoulder he says you have to do two things if you don't want to be like that you have to remember and you have to rejoice remember heaven's perspective on our life under the sun and that really has two parts firstly it means submitting to the simple reality of what the Bible plainly teaches us and what we can see with our own eyes that this is a world of manifest injustice that it's a sinful world and that it always will be until the day Jesus Christ comes to reign forever to make every injustice right you know if that's what it takes for God himself to sort out the implications of the sin of human beings and we simply can't delude ourselves can we that we can somehow sort out all the problems that cause us anguish before that day how could we that's to deny the gospel we've got to learn to live patiently with the tragedy of sin in so many areas of our life because life is a mess in so many areas until then as chapter 1 verse 15 put it if you remember there will be an abundance of crooked things that simply cannot ever be straightened out and the only way of satisfaction in fact the only way of sanity for us is to accept that and to submit to it and not disbelieve it and fight it and resent it that might be very very hard for us for some it might be the whole area of politics and social change maybe you are rightly concerned for issues of justice and betterment of people nationally and internationally

I hope we all are we're all called to love our neighbours we're all called to show care and compassion wherever we can but if we allow ourselves to become so consumed with zeal in that whole area that we begin to believe that if only we could achieve this scheme or or that policy or if only the next thing could fall into place somehow we would sort out all of these issues then friends we're deluding ourselves we're very likely to be on your way to becoming a fanatic but not only that to becoming a very unhappy person because if you'll never be happy until you've achieved the kind of utopia on earth in our society or by government or whatever that you think we should have then you're going to be very very unhappy in this world maybe that it's just in the realm of your job and your career or in your marriage or in your family life or in church life or whatever it is and as long as secretly deep down in your heart you have this idea that if only you had this or had that or did this or could achieve the other thing then at last we'd overcome all the injustices the the irritations the aggravations the limitations so that at last then we could we could stop striving and really start enjoying life and being happy well as long as you think that you will never ever be happy you'll only ever be disappointed because you're chasing fantasy remember says the preacher that this is an unjust and sinful world it's tinged in every part with the tragedy of sin and if you don't remember that if you don't come to terms with it my friend you will go mad with frustration and eventually your heart will be full of bitterness your face will be hard

I've often mentioned one of my favorite films as good as it gets there's a scene in that where Jack Nicholson who's a chap struggling with all sorts of psychological problems storms out of the office of the psychiatrist that he's been attending and stands in the middle of the waiting room with all these other people with their problems sitting around and he just looks at them and says what if this is as good as it gets well in your life now today what if this is as good as it gets because it may very well be that it is as good as it's ever going to get under the sun in this world if it is as good as it gets can you ever be satisfied can you be happy despite that your answer to that question will tell you if you have understood properly the Christian gospel are you going to let your sleep be robbed by worry over your job or whatever it might be forever and ever are you going to let your resentments about work or your work relationships or your family or whatever it is fester forever spoiling your joy why you look for justice or change that might never ever be possible just because this is a fallen world or are you going to remember heaven's perspective on life under the sun in other words remember the true gospel of

Christ and that does mean submission to the reality about life's present injustices but only because of the second thing and that is that you know that there is also the reality of a great day of reversal that is still to come when at the last the universe will be put right for all those who fear God that's the other part of the reality of the Christian gospel we have to remember isn't it there is a life beyond the sun it points us to the reality of the great future day of salvation the day of Christ Jesus the day of redemption according to his promise because of that that we can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God says Paul in Romans because of that and because of that we can also he says rejoice even now in our sufferings that's what we constantly need to remember isn't it both those things when we're surrounded by the vexations of life in this unjust world under the sun it's why we constantly need to come back to the Bible's realism and truth and genuine gospel over against the wishful thinking and the subversion of the gospel that so often creeps into our minds we won't face with realism the abiding facts of this fallen world and learn to live patiently with a mess of sin then we're deluding ourselves and eventually friends if you are deluding yourself then reality will overcome you and your faith will collapse because it wasn't real it was a fantasy it was an escapism but if we don't also focus our lives on the great future hope of the gospel on the judgment to come on the reality of that great reversal when Jesus comes then we would despair wouldn't we?

[41 : 39] we'd be crushed by the pain of life under the sun but if we remember all this the true gospel that this is a sinful world and it will never be put right but that Jesus is coming and it will be put right if we remember these things then we can also as the preacher tells us rejoice we can rejoice in heaven's provision for our life even now under the sun we'll be able to have joy even in pain even in perplexity we'll rejoice in the good gifts of our creator God to us for every day of our lives now we'll rejoice in our daily food and drink however imperfect it may be whether it's much or little we'll rejoice in our daily labors however ultimately dissatisfying they may be we'll rejoice in so many other things too and we can do so because we've set our faces towards the glory of the world to come and the Christ to come that's the only place you know that you will find the true wisdom that will make your face shine brightly with joy whatever this world may throw at you and you know it will throw many many things at us we're told in Matthew's gospel that Jesus' face shone like the sun on the mountain of transfiguration even though his mind and his discussion was all about his suffering to come but his face shone because he saw the joy that was set before him he saw the glory of his coming kingdom and there's no difference is it for those who follow in his train for his disciples for you and for me no different at all that's where the shining face comes from let me finish by reading some words from the apostle Peter blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time in this you rejoice though now for a little while if necessary you've been grieved by various trials so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it's tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ though you have not seen him you love him though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory receiving the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls if we really understand that which is the

Christian gospel we will be able to live patiently with real daily joy even in the middle of the mess and the tragedy of human sin that's the way to the shining face let's pray and I commend joy for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun Lord our father grant us patience we pray to live with the reality of this world as we've made it but may our hearts and our minds be filled always with the greater reality of the world to come that you have made by your resurrection from the dead and so may we with Paul rejoice even in suffering because of the glorious hope to which we're called and may our faces radiate to the world the joyous light that radiates our lives from our hearts within for we ask it in Jesus name

Amen