

# Living Patiently with the Mess of Man's Sin

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Date: 23 January 2022

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good, well let's turn, shall we, to our Bible reading for this morning, and we are in the book of Ecclesiastes. So please turn, if you have your Bible with you, to Ecclesiastes chapter 8.

And we're reading there from verse 1 through to verse 15. Ecclesiastes 8 and reading from verse 1. 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.

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 what he pleases.

For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, what are you doing? Whoever keeps command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way.

[ 1 : 20 ] For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. For he does not know what it is to be, for who can tell him 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.

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 where they were praised. We'll just note, also the footnote there, in your ESV, can also be read as forgotten.

The holy place and forgotten in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity, because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily.

[ 2 : 31 ] 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. 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 that this also is vanity.

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. Amen. Amen.

[ 3 : 36 ] May God bless his word to us this morning. Well, if you turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and to the passage that Paul read to us there.

It was all about living patiently with the mess of human sin. Some faces are in their brightness a prophecy.

And some in their sadness a history. Or so wrote Charles Dickens. Our faces tell a story.

Verse 1 here. A man's wisdom makes his face shine. And the hardness of his face is changed. An astute physician can tell a lot by looking at a face.

Can betray all kinds of signs of illness. But our faces often reveal a lot to others as well, don't they? They do speak of history. Life's experience is very often etched into our face.

[ 4 : 44 ] Maybe sorrow or hardship. Bitterness and loss. But they also prophesy. That is, they speak not only of the events in the past, but also of our reaction to the lives that we've lived.

And therefore our attitude of heart. Which speaks of both the present, but also the future. And that's hidden, isn't it? Beneath our visible faces. That's why I think painters and photographers are so often fascinated with faces.

And often their portraits are very eloquent, aren't they? In revealing so much of a subject's inner character. It's there in the face. And some Christians have wonderfully shining faces.

Faces that radiate something of a deep inner joy and a contentment in God. And I'm afraid there are Christians who have hard faces.

Stony faces. Faces that prophesy a very different message. And the difference is not actually in the fact that one maybe has had a charmed life and the other has had a hard life.

[ 5 : 56 ] No, actually, very often the most shining faces are in people who have been through very tough and bitter experiences in life. The difference is not in life's experiences, but it's in our reactions to them and in them.

For one, it may have been a path of glad acceptance and submission, which has borne fruit in contentment and in the shining face of one who is at peace with God and with the world around.

For the other, it may be a path of resentment at what life has dealt. That leads to bitterness and discontent. And that's visible very often in a face, isn't it?

Which has become hard like flint. And the question from the preacher in Ecclesiastes here today in chapter 8, verse 1 is, Who is wise? Who knows the interpretation?

Who knows the way of wisdom through each perplexing path of life? With all its joys and sorrows, but also with its bitterness. Who knows the way of wisdom that will make our faces shine with bright joy even amid the dark storms, rather than being hard and hardened by experiences of life in this world, life under the sun?

[ 7 : 21 ] It's a big question. Because alas, there are Christians, too many Christians, whose faces sadly do harden through life. Because their hearts have become embittered by experiences, by the letdowns, by the disappointments, by all manners of sorrows and injustices.

And it may well be that some of us here this morning are on the way to becoming like that. Well, the preacher is talking to all of us.

Because the truth is that every single one of us, without the grace of God, without his word to shape us and instruct us, every one of us is in danger of going that way. So what is the key to the shining face of fruitful joy in life, and not the scowling face that betrays a stony heart of hardened bitterness in response to the slings and arrows of life?

Well, in Ecclesiastes, as we've seen, the answer never lies in escapism, in a sort of let's pretend world. No, it always lies in embracing reality.

The reality of the world as it actually is under God. And embracing it with acceptance and not with anger. And here in chapter 8, right through to chapter 9, verse 10, once again, he is insisting on two things that we find very, very hard to come to terms with.

[ 8 : 47 ] Here, in chapter 8, verses 1 to 15, it is living with a manifest injustice of a sinful world. And then from verse 16 through chapter 9, it is living with a mysterious justice, often very mysterious to us, the mysterious justice of a truly sovereign God.

And it is only the wisdom of living in the light of both of these realities that is going to save us from the hardened face, that is going to lead us to the joy of shining faces throughout life.

Not anger and resistance to these realities, but acceptance of what God plainly tells us is true. And in fact, we honestly observe, the world confirms is true.

And we stop trying to pretend. So we're looking this morning at verses 1 to 15 of chapter 8, which are all about learning to live patiently with joy amid the tragic mess of human sinfulness.

Verses 1 to 9 focus on the present injustices of our sinful world. A world where, as verse 9 says, man has power over man to his hurt.

[ 10 : 04 ] And the truth is that the shining face of contentment belongs to the believer who has learned to live patiently with a lot of mess. Not passively, but with the patience of true wisdom that knows what verse 5 calls the proper time and the just way to act against wickedness and evil.

We might say being as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves in a world full of many wolves. Now the picture here in verses 1 to 6 is the court of Israel's king, which of course is God's king by his promise.

Verse 2, rather, his oath. So clearly to storm out of his presence, to join an evil cause against him, isn't just wicked, it's very foolish.

Verse 3, because he will do as he pleases. Because verse 4, the king's word is supreme. And the way to avoid evil, misfortune, verse 5, coming your way, is to accept the fact of his authority.

Because that's simple reality. Now this is all about our attitude to dealing with what it means to live under authority in life.

[11:17] Even when that authority may be imperfect and unjust, and we may question it. Now the truth is that some people, perhaps most people, find living under any kind of authority very difficult.

That causes a lot of resentment, doesn't it? People become often very bitter and cynical, very angry. But the reality is that God has put authority structures into our world for our protection.

Protection from evil and promotion of good. Now he's given different spheres of authority.

Principally, the family, but also the church, and also the city, that is civil authority.

Now these are clearly different spheres of authority. They shouldn't transgress wrongly into each other. But even though we live in a messy, fallen world, where man has power over man to his hurt, and therefore where authority will be imperfect, and sometimes unjust, still, the fact of authority structures is God-given.

And so, as here, the anointed Davidic kingship is God's institution, even when it's corrupt.

[12:37] So it can't just be ignored. Although, of course, God himself constantly brought bad kings to account, didn't he? Through his prophets like Elijah to Ahab and so on.

Now we today do not live under the authority of monarchs who are ordained by God. James VI of Scotland, James I of Britain, held to the divine right of kings.

He thought they did. So did his son. But Charles I lost that argument with Parliament, and he lost his head as a result to the Puritans, Cromwell and the others who resisted him, rightly.

Now the true son of David is on the throne today, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is Lord over every nation. But no earthly state today is like ancient Israel was before Christ's coming.

And yet, the New Testament is also clear that human authority structures, including civil authorities, are ordained of God. They're part of God's common grace and mercy for ordering people, for protecting our lives.

[13:45] Now they're not perfect. But even poor and imperfect authority is better than sheer anarchy, where there's no restraint at all on the power of man to hurt others.

And that's why in the New Testament, for example, in Romans 13, Paul says that there is authority. But the authority is not an autonomous power. It receives that authority only from God.

And it's instituted by God to carry out God's wrath on wrongdoing and to serve the good of those who do what is good. And of course, what is good and what is evil is not the changing view of capricious earthly rulers, but it is what God clearly tells us is right and is wrong.

The God who delegates authority and rule to human being, he tells us what is good and he tells us what is evil. That's why in Romans 13, Paul says that the Christians are to be subject, subject themselves to the fact of civil authority, not simply because they fear punishment by the power of that authority if they do wrong, but he says for the sake of conscience.

That is our conscience which is governed by the Spirit of God and by what his word teaches is right and wrong. That's the critical arbiter in determining things like what verse 5 here says, the proper time and the just way.

[15:24] When we perhaps should oppose authorities who violate God's norms of right and wrong and transgress the legitimate sphere of that authority. And that's why, of course, from the time of the New Testament onwards, early Christians were martyred because the Roman state considered their claims and their behavior as treasonous.

They wouldn't obey Caesar above Jesus and so they were seen as political rebels. Most of Christ's apostles were condemned as criminals, therefore, and executed as enemies of the state all through church history.

That's what we see. William Tyndale was executed in this country, wasn't he, for putting the authority of scripture above the authority of the state and of the church of Rome.

Reformation leaders and thinkers like Samuel Rutherford who wrote the famous work on political philosophy, *Lex Rex, The Law and the King*. He clearly taught that to oppose political power, sorry, he clearly taught that oppressive political power was, quote, a licentious deviation of power and no more from God than a license to sin.

And in that regard, it's worth noting Francis Schaeffer's comment that in almost every place where the Reformation had success, there was some form of civil disobedience. So we need to be clear, we need to be comprehensive in our thinking about this whole area of civil authority, not naive, not superficial.

[ 16 : 54 ] There's been a lot of very pious sounding but very superficial appeals to Romans 13, verse 1 of late among some Christians. But to quote Karl Barth, one of the foremost theologians of the 20th century, the last thing this instruction in Romans 13, 1 implies is that the Christian community and the Christian should offer the blindest possible obedience to the civil community and its officials.

And Barth, along with Bonhoeffer and others, they had to thrash all of this out, didn't they, in the very stark context of the rising tyranny of the 1930s. They knew what they were talking about. Now what it does mean, he says, is that although the Christian's true home is not of this world, we are still in this world and therefore we also are responsible for this world's stability.

And that true love for our fellows, for our neighbors, will mean that we subordinate ourselves to that reality. And he says, we do so truly, quote, by making our knowledge of the Lord, who is Lord of all, our criterion.

And distinguishing between the just and the unjust state, between government and tyranny, between the state as described in Romans 13 and the state as described in Revelation 13, where believers are called to endure and not bow to the beast with its persecution and its propaganda. It's precisely, he says, in the making of such distinctions and judgments from its own center, that is, from Christ, that the church, the Christian community, fulfills its political co-responsibility.

[ 18 : 49 ] In other words, as good citizens of this world, truly loving our neighbors, as well as citizens of the heavenly world. There's a lot for us to ponder there.

And some of us may need to ponder that. But you see, here in Ecclesiastes chapter 8, the point is that this is a fallen world, a messy world, a sinful world.

And even with largely good and uncorrupt government, there are always going to be all sorts of incompetences and injustices and bad policies which may anger us and which may fill us with bitterness, fill us with resentment.

And yes, there is, verse 6, a time and a way for everything that includes opposition. And the wise, he says in verse 5, will know the proper time and the just way and they will take it.

It is not passivity that the preacher is promoting here, but it is patience. The point is, are you going to let these things, these injustices, eat you up and poison your life?

[ 20 : 02 ] Or, even as you do seek to counter evil and injustice and promote good and healthy policy and healthy laws, are you going to come to terms with reality and live with the inevitable limitations of a world of mess, a world that will not ever be as it ought to be until the recreation of all things?

Will you learn to live with the mess of man's sin and overcome it in your patient and joyous hope? That's the question. And it's such an important question.

And not just at the level of national and political rule and so on, but all through our daily lives. All of us who work virtually will be working under authority.

And we will often feel that we know far better than our bosses. We'll often be driven mad, won't we? By the incompetence, by the unfairness. Well, are you going to let that harden your face?

Are you going to let it embitter your heart and make you cynical and unhappy throughout your life?

Are you going to live with a permanent chip on your shoulder because of it? Or, is the patient enduring hope of the gospel of Christ and the priority of eternity, is that going to let your face shine even in the midst of all of that?

[ 21 : 23 ] Maybe you're a teacher and you're driven mad by the latest dictates for the dumbing down of education. Or the absurd and indeed the very dangerous issues of the trans lobby and the latest diversity policies and all these things.

Or you're a doctor perhaps or a nurse or a therapist and you're arraigned. You're just enraged by the latest reorganizations in the NHS. You're worn down maybe just by the sheer incompetence and the chaos of all that's gone on with the mismanagement of COVID and all the knock-on effects from that.

Or maybe you're in business and you're in trade and you're just wondering if it's going to survive. You're struggling with ever increasing ESG and GDPR and all the other acronyms that get thrown at you in business these days.

And on and on it goes. We could all list our problems couldn't we? Well says the preacher don't be hardened by it. It's maddening.

It's sapping. But you're a Christian believer you understand reality. This is an unjust and a corrupt and a sinful world.

[ 22 : 34 ] And you need to learn to live patiently with the tragic mess of human sin. Not passively not never seeking change or even forcing change sometimes.

But patiently with wisdom and realism about the time and the way. Don't be the kind of person who just storms out and resigns at the first little irritation with your boss.

Don't be the sort of person who gets embroiled relentlessly in pursuing disputes that actually you can never win. Embrace reality. See the bigger picture and learn to smile.

The wise believer knows that there's a time and there's a way for everything and that includes God's justice that he will bring to book in the end.

Verse 6 there where it says everything literally it's every matter it echoes chapter 3 verse 17 where we saw it says God will judge the righteous and the wicked because there is a time for every matter.

[ 23 : 39 ] So be patient. We know that. And we can trust God's timing. God's justice will prevail in his good time. Sometimes in this lifetime and Christians have always worked for justice and for righteousness against evil like William Wilberforce to end the transatlantic slave trade or like Bonhoeffer the theologian who joined with others seeking to assassinate Hitler because of his evil.

And many Christians who have helped lead the resistance to evil think of the Christians who led so much of the resistance to communism behind the Iron Curtain led to its fall in Eastern Europe.

We may see justice on some issues in this lifetime. We're not to be passive but certainly without doubt we know that God's justice will prevail ultimately.

Very last verse of the book God will bring every deed to judgment. And it's that trust isn't it in God's justice that will help us to endure with shining faces whatever trouble verse 6 literally evil lies heavily upon us and so often it does.

And we need that anchor don't we because verse 7 is true. Who can tell what our lives will be? None of us can control our times.

[ 25 : 09 ] So much of life is beyond our power and always will be. we're going to have to live with so many limitations in life just because of the tragic fallout of human sinfulness.

And until we accept that until we live patiently with it we will never be at peace in this world. That's not to say I repeat not to say we can never change anything in life and that Christians shouldn't bother to change evil and challenge injustice and tyranny and so on seek to bring a better way of course not.

Look as I said of all that Christians have campaigned for and fought for throughout history it is not passivity the preacher is advocating. Not passive acquiescence and tyranny and totalitarianism and state sponsored evil that's never been a Christian virtue it's never been the Christian way.

Not passivity not hiding behind mantras saying oh it's not a gospel issue let's just stick to evangelism. The issue of Christ's lordship over every aspect of this world is the gospel issue because Jesus Christ is Lord not Caesar.

Not passivity but patience and realism. We have to realize that fallen human beings can never sort a fallen world.

[ 26 : 36 ] That there's going to be sin and injustice and evil right to the very end. Jesus tells us that very clearly. And we'll see that in this world's institutions and its governments and its societies.

We'll see it in our work life. We'll see it in our family situation. We'll see it in our relationships. We will see it everywhere. And unless we accept that, unless we learn to live patiently with the tragedy of sin, it will make us bitter and unhappy.

And our faces will become hardened. Some things in life we will never control, verse 8. The spirit probably should read just the wind, literally.

Or the day of death. Or whether we're caught up in wars, so many are, and so on. But, those who give themselves to wickedness in this world won't be delivered from death either.

And that is a comfort too, isn't it? Their time will come. They can't escape ultimate judgment. But this is the mess of life, isn't it, as we know it to be.

[ 27 : 48 ] And we'll see it all, all around us, verse 9. In a world where man has power over man to his hurt. The present and the very patent injustice of a sinful world, who can deny it?

But remember, it is a temporary situation. Look at verse 10. The wicked too will come to the grave. And verses 10 to 14 speaks also of the patient justice of a sovereign God. It's hard to know whether we should take verse 10 as it's printed, or as the footnote says, most of the manuscripts actually

have.

Should we read it as praised or forgotten? If it's praised, well, the point is that injustice extends even to the funeral where the wicked are eulogized even in the place where they did evil. That certainly happens, doesn't it?

Who's ever heard of a crook really ever being called for what he really is actually at his funeral? But if forgotten is the right reading, the point is simply that even the wicked will die and they'll soon be forgotten.

[ 28 : 54 ] In other words, their power to hurt is not forever. And that's certainly the point taken up in verses 11 to 13. And this really is an absurd vanity.

People living with a fantasy that there is no judgment to come just because God doesn't judge every evil deed immediately. So they think they can do as they please. Their hearts are set fully, he says, to do evil.

And that is our world. where any thought of God's judgment is banished including sadly in many churches where such an offensive thing can never be mentioned.

Just as the apostle Peter said the last days would be, isn't it? Where is the coming judgment people will say? What rubbish? The world's just going on as it always had from the very beginning. Not so, says Peter.

And not so, says the preacher here in verses 12 and 13. It may seem verse 12 like you can do evil a hundred times and prolong your life to a ripe old age. Yet I know, he says, the ultimate story is very different.

[ 30 : 00 ] That it will be well with those who fear God, he says. Notice, not because they're morally superior but because they fear God. But verse 13, not so for the wicked.

Their days will not go on stretching out like an ever lengthening shadow in the sunset. No, when judgment comes, he says, they will vanish. They'll be swept away because, notice again, they do not fear before God.

They live under the complete illusion that there is no God of ultimate judgment. And so, they live lies in utter denial of God, in utter denial of his commands.

But God is not powerless to judge. He's just patient. He will, in his time, bring every deed to judgment.

That's the very last verse of the book. With every secret thing, whether good or evil. And friends, it's living in the light of that ultimate reality that is the key to living patiently with the tragedy of human sin and with the intractable injustice that we live with under the curse.

[ 31 : 17 ] If we view it only from the earth, life is a vanity. It is a total enigma, as verse 14 says. Bad things happen to good people and good things so often seem to flow to the wicked.

Isn't that right? It's a puzzling enigma. It's an evil. It's an injustice. But, if we listen to God's revelation, to his explanation from above the sun, we shouldn't be surprised.

How could it be anything else in a sin-sick world? And we can accept and we can bear it and we can live patiently in the midst of it because we do know it's not the whole story.

And we can trust God to sort out this world's injustice his way. And we won't become angry and bitter because he hasn't done it yet our way.

if we listen to God and if we trust God and even in the midst of this messed up and cursed world full of injustice, well we can find what verse 15 describes the persistent joy of the truly wise believer.

[ 32 : 33 ] The preacher's prescription for life in this world of mess is not despair, it's joy. this is vanity he says, so I commend joy.

If you want to be a believer with a shining face and not a stony face you'll be the kind of Christian who is always counting your blessings and not cataloging your complaints. Because amid all the mysteries, all the injustices that we can't solve, there are blessings that we can enjoy and God commands us to enjoy them.

We can be liberated you see to be satisfied even amid our many dissatisfactions, not dissatisfied even amid the many satisfactions in life. But that joy amid an unjust and a messy world is only possible where we stop resisting the realities of our own limitations, where we live patiently with the tragedy of sin.

Because we know that in this world we have no abiding city, no true home, we are waiting for one that is still to come. And that's the Christian who can say even in the midst of all the mess in this world, I commend joy.

Like Paul did from prison, writing to the church in Philippi, saying rejoice always. Again I say it rejoice. He said I've learned contentment in every situation, whether I've got plenty or I'm hungry, whether I've got abundance or in the midst of need.

[ 34 : 02 ] Or when he writes for the Corinthians, saying that he's afflicted, he's perplexed, he's persecuted, he's struck down, and yet he's not crushed, not despairing, not destroyed.

We do not lose heart, he says. Why? For these slight and momentary afflictions are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison.

As we look not to the things that are seen, present injustices of this messy world under the sun, but to the things that are unseen, and to the coming perfect justice of God.

For the things that are seen are transient, they're vain and passing, says the preacher, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

You see, that's just a New Testament way of saying what the preacher in Ecclesiastes is saying here. And we need that message, don't we? It's so easy as Christians to become hardened by the injustice, by the fallenness of this sinful world, so unfair, makes us so angry, so resentful, even bitter.

[ 35 : 21 ] That's just not wrong, friends. It's terribly, terribly destructive as well. Makes us miserable. evil. That attitude will rob us of all the manifold joys that there are for us to possess in this life, even here under the sun.

That attitude will take the shine right off your face because it will drive the joy right out of your heart. will make you hard and bitter.

It will consume your inner soul if you let it. So let me ask you, has the shine come off your face lately? Is this world, is your life, is your Christian walk just getting you down?

Maybe you're just fed up with the sheer unfairness of life and the world and the government and lockdowns and the injustice that seems to flourish all around you in your circles.

Whether those who deserve nothing seem to always be the ones who walk away with everything.

Whether it's the billionaires, making more billions from COVID, whether it's the failed politicians who are getting knighthoods and getting honors.

[ 36 : 35 ] While you beaver away doing the decent thing, the right thing, and you get no thanks, you get no recognition, you get no reward. Well, maybe that is you today.

I suspect perhaps it's many of us. And the preacher says if it is, we need to do two things again and again if we're not to become and not remain a bitter person. And there are a few worse things than bitter cynical Christians.

He says we need to be always remembering and always rejoicing. We need to be remembering constantly heaven's perspective on our life under the sun.

That means two things. First, we need to accept and not try and airbrush out present realities. Don't delude yourself about this present world. what the Bible plainly tells us about it.

What we can see with our own eyes. This is a sinful world. It's full of manifest injustice and it will be until the day the Lord Jesus comes to judge all things and renew all things and reign forever.

[ 37 : 43 ] And if that's what it takes for God himself to sort out the mess of human sin, we cannot delude ourselves that somehow we can sort out all the problems in life before then. That's just to deny the gospel.

And we must learn to live patiently. Not passively, but patiently with the mess of sin in so many areas of life. So many things that as chapter 1 said are crooked and just cannot be made straight in this world.

The only way to satisfaction, the only way to sanity as a Christian is to accept that. Not to resent it, not to try and fight it and disbelieve it.

And that might be very hard for us. For some, their great burden in life, their great frustration is in the realm of politics and social change and so on.

And maybe you are rightly concerned for issues of justice, of decency, in public life, of the betterment of people nationally and internationally.

[ 38 : 47 ] Well, I hope we all are. We're all called as Christians to seek the good of our society. And sometimes that does mean fighting for the truth.

Sometimes it does mean taking a stand against lies and deception and for freedom against tyranny. Sometimes it does mean advocating for those who don't have a voice for themselves in our society, not least as we'll be hearing this week, the unborn in the womb and many others whose voice is not

heard.

And that is, as verse 5 says, to find the proper time and the just way for every matter. But you see, if you allow yourself to be so consumed with zeal in these areas, that you begin to believe that if only we could achieve this policy, only we could get that scheme or this next thing, then everything will at last fall into place.

Now, friends, if that's what you think, you're deluding yourself. Because even if you achieve all of those things, we'll still never have heaven here on earth.

And so you'll never be happy. You'll always be disappointed and bitter. It's the same in the realm of your job or your career or your marriage or your family life or your church life.

[ 40 : 02 ] Everything. As long as deep down you harbor this idea that if only you had this or you did that or you achieved the other, then at last you overcome all those aggravations and irritations and injustices of life.

And then you'll be able to stop striving and at last you'll be happy. Friends, if that's your thought, you will only ever be disappointed. Remember, says the preacher, this is an unjust, sinful world. It's tainted in every part of the mess of human sin. If you don't remember that, you'll go mad with frustration and despair.

And even worse, very likely you'll grow hard and bitter in your heart and stony in your face. Look at your life now today and ask yourself the question that Jack Nicholson asked himself in that film. What if this is as good as it gets? What if this is as good as it gets? Well, let me tell you, friends, it may well be that it is as good as it gets.

[ 41 : 12 ] But if it is, can you ever be satisfied? Can you ever be happy? You're going to allow your sleep to be wrought by anxiety and by worry forever. You want to let your resentments about work or your family or your friends or whatever it is, let them fester on forever while you look for justice.

That might never be possible. just because this is a messy and fallen world. Or are you going to remember heaven's perspective, the true gospel perspective on life under the sun until Jesus returns?

Well, that means accepting present realities. In this world, you will have tribulations at the Lord Jesus. But, remember also, I have overcome the world.

Because gospel remembering means also fully embracing future certainties, not just present realities. Don't delude yourself about present realities, but don't deny yourself the joy that lies in our future certainty.

The great reality of the Christian gospel points us to our hope that is in life beyond the sun, above the sun. It points us to a day of redemption that is certainly coming on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 42 : 35 ] And has always pointed us to a destiny above the sun. And as the preacher declares here with such certainty, it will be well, verse 12, for those who fear God because they fear before him.

We're those who rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, as Paul puts it. And because of that, we can rejoice now and always, even in our sufferings.

That's what we need to remember constantly. When we're surrounded by the vexation of life in a messed up world under the sun. Friends, Christians who will not face with realism the fact of the abiding fallenness of this world, who won't live patiently with the mess.

They're deluding themselves. And eventually, reality will overcome them. And their faith will collapse because it's not real.

It is just a fantasy. It is just escapism. And believers that don't focus their hearts on that future hope of the gospel and on the judgment to come and on the certainty of that great reversal when Jesus comes, when justice flows in like a flood, then they may well despair and just be crushed by the pain of life under the sun with all its injustice, with all its mess.

[ 44 : 06 ] But if we are constantly remembering all this, the true gospel, well, then we'll be able, won't we, for the second hour, verse 15, rejoicing.

Rejoicing in all heaven's gracious provision for us, even now under the sun. We'll be able to find joy even amid the pain and perplexity. Joy in all these good gifts of our creator and our redeemer, real joy in our daily food and drink, even if it's imperfect or deficient, in our daily work and labor, however dissatisfying, however toilsome it is.

And in so many other good things in life too. We'll see later on next time in chapter nine. And we can do it because our faces are set towards the glory of Christ who is coming and the glory of the world that is coming in his kingdom.

Do you remember in Matthew chapter 17? We're told that Jesus' face shone like the sun on the night of transfiguration. Even though his mind was full of the discussion about his suffering that was to come in Jerusalem, but his face shone because he also saw the joy and the glory of his eternal kingdom that he would win through the suffering of the cross.

And it's no different for those of us who follow in his train for you and for me. It's that wisdom, you see, that so embraces future certainties.

[ 45 : 43 ] They can accept all present realities. It's that true gospel wisdom, Bible wisdom. It's that that will make our faces shine.

It's that that will take away the hardness. It's that that will lead us to joy, to living joy and lasting joy. Let me finish by reading the words again of 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 being kept in heaven for you who are being guarded through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice. Although 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 so that your faith may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Friends, if we truly believe that, then won't we be able to live patiently with real joy, daily joy, even amidst the worst mess of this fallen world?

[ 47 : 25 ] we will keep remembering so we may keep rejoicing. Let's pray.

O almighty God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest and desire that which thou dost promise.

that so amid the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen.