

Living Humbly With the Mystery of God's Sovereignty

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[0 : 00] But let's turn, shall we, now to God's Word and to the book of Ecclesiastes, where he is continuing his series in Ecclesiastes. So do turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter 8.

And we are reading from just towards the end of the chapter there, verse 16 of chapter 8, reading through to chapter 9 and verse 10.

Chapter 8, I'm from verse 16.

And madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

But he who is joined with all the living has hope. For a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing.

[2 : 12] And they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished. And forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white.

Let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun. Because that is your portion, or your reward in life.

And in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. For there is no work, or thought, or knowledge, or wisdom in shale, to which you are going. Amen. May God bless to us his words. The passage fall read there at the end of chapter 8 and chapter 9 of Ecclesiastes.

[3 : 28] Ecclesiastes. Which is all about living humbly with the mystery of God's sovereignty. We've gone from ridiculous to sublime.

Or the other way around. Okay. Now these two chapters of Ecclesiastes, 8 and 9, are all about faces that tell a story.

Last week I began with a quote from Charles Dickens. So here's one from Oscar Wilde. A man's face is his autobiography.

He also added, a woman's face is her work of fiction. But there's many ladies present. Let's just stick to the autobiography. I don't transgress too far. But what he's saying is, our faces tell a story. And the question is, what is the story that our faces tell? There are many people, Christians included, for whom life has, well, has caused their hearts to become resentful.

[4 : 35] And bitter. And hardened. The manifest injustices of a sinful world have pressed upon them.

And the chorus of their life is, it's so unfair. Why is it so unfair? And of course, so much in life is unfair.

But some people just can't come to terms with that. And their faces show it. Because they've got hard faces.

And they're unhappy Christians. And therefore, sadly, they are unfruitful Christians. And they radiate from their faces not a gracious forbearance, but a griping frustration about life.

But on the other hand, of course, there are other Christians, often who have known just as much hardship and disappointment and pain, and often great injustice.

[5 : 42] But their faces tell a very different story. Verse 1 of chapter 8, that we looked at last time, is true of them in spades. True gospel wisdom has made their faces shine.

There's no hardness at all. Because they've learned, haven't they, the message that, well, the apostle James opens his letter with in the New Testament. When he says, count it all joy when you

meet all manner of trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And as James says, they have let steadfastness have its full effect. So that they may be perfect and complete and lacking nothing.

Shining faces. They've truly come to terms with mortal life, in other words, as it actually is. Even for believers. Even for those indwelt by the Spirit of God.

In this world. In this world, which is still under the curse. But of course, it's not an easy thing to come to terms with. And that's why so many Christians are dissatisfied in their lives.

[6 : 55] That's why they have joyless, hardened faces a lot of the time. Friends, if you try to hide from reality. If you try and take refuge in fantasy Christianity.

That pretends that everything will be fine. Everything will be rosy. If you just do the right things. Or you sing the right songs. Or you pray the right prayers. Or you go to the right church.

Well, one day. I'm afraid that fantasy will collapse. Under an avalanche of reality. When you just can't pretend those things away anymore. Now, it's far better to learn reality now.

To learn the truth about real biblical faith and trust. Because that is the only path of real strength and real survival as a Christian believer.

And it is the only way to real joy in this earthly life too. The wise believer, chapter 8, verse 1. Who knows the interpretation of things.

[8 : 02] Who's grasped the real biblical gospel. He sees and he knows just how pervasive and vast the tragedy of human sin is in this world.

And it's just not something that can be put to right by pious prayers or by pious words. Now, the wise believer has learned the truth. That the real answer will only come to this created order in its complete recreation.

Only through the glory which at last will be revealed. And free this world from what Paul calls its bondage to decay. When at last it obtains the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

When the Lord Jesus comes. Read it in Romans chapter 8. Nothing less than that can ever put to right the manifest injustice of a world that is caused by the sheer mess of human sin.

I'm afraid the Beatles were wrong. Love is just not all you need to make it in life in this world. And the wise believer accepts that and has a patient hope in that great day that is to come.

[9 : 18] As the apostle Paul says, all of us must. But he lives, therefore, in the meantime with patient joy. Even in the terrible mess of human sin. Because that hope is real and sure and certain.

And will never fail us. Because we know the whole story. Not just the present reality. And that's what the preacher here is pointing to us.

Just the same. As we saw last time in chapter 12. In chapter 8 verses 12 to 14. Verse 14. This world is unfair and unjust.

Good things happen to bad people. And bad things so often seem to happen to good people. And it's a vanity, he says. It's a vexing enigma. But these things are pervasive in this world under the sun.

But it's not the whole story, is it? Look at verses 12 and 13 again. It will be well ultimately for those who fear God. But not so.

[10 : 23] Not so for the wicked. Because God's justice is a future certainty. And when we remember that. And actually only when we remember that.

Can we be liberated. Not only to endure in this life. But to live this life with joy. Even amid the mess of a sinful world. Chapter 8 verse 15.

To be joyful. All through the days of our life. The God-given life that we have. In this world under the sun. Now that is no shallow happiness.

That is not pretending away life's bitter realities. No, what that verse describes is the deep joy. Of a truly contented spirit.

Of someone who has learned to live patiently. And made all the mess of human sin. Because they know the true hope of God's grace. But of course there's another big issue.

[11 : 25] That causes anger. That causes resentment. And this is something that is particularly so. For Christian believers. And which again. If we don't come to terms with.

Will rob us. Of joy in life. Will rob us of all contentment in life. And it's the fact. That behind. All the mess of sin and injustice.

In this world. We Christians. We know. That there is in fact. The hand of God himself. We know. That God is sovereign.

And so the truth is. You see. Often when we are angry. When we are resentful. About the world. And all its injustice. And all its unfairness. What that means. Often deep down. At heart. Is that we are actually angry. And resentful. With God himself. Isn't that right? That's very serious.

[12:23] Very serious indeed. So in our passage today. You see. The preacher directs his spotlight. Exactly there. To pinpoint. So clearly. This very issue. Because not only.

Must we learn. To live patiently. With the tragedy of sin. We also. Must learn. To live humbly. With the transcendence. Of God. The real wisdom.

Of true faith. Accepts that. Not only. Are we human beings. Not good. And so the world. Is a mess. But we are not God. And so often.

The world. Is a mystery to us. We're just creatures. And so even. As believers. There are many. Mysteries. That are utterly.

Beyond us. And it will never be. Otherwise. As we live our lives. As mortals. Here. In this world. Under the sun. And so the preacher's message.

[13:17] Is that the way to joy. The way to a shining face. Throughout life. Is to not just. Learn to live patiently. With the mess of man's sin. But to live humbly. With the mysteries.

Of God's sovereignty. Look first. At chapter 8. Verse 16. Down to chapter 9. Verse 3. Where he presses home. That real faith.

Surrenders. To God's sovereignty. That God's ways. Are simply. Unfathomable to us. Because we are not God. And we can't be God.

Verses 16 and 17. Make that plain. So plain. The workings of this. God. In our world. Are simply. Unfathomable. To material.

To mortal beings. To mortal beings. We can strive. Verse 14. Verse 16. Day and night. Without sleep. To understand it all. But they can't. Verse 17.

[14:17] Man cannot find out. However much. Man toils in seeking. He will not. Find it out. Even the wise person.

He says. That's the one who knows God. And trusts God. They cannot. Find it out. We get the message. Now that totally debunks.

Doesn't it? Any sort of idea. Of superficial. Christianity. That says. Oh come to Jesus. Believe in Jesus. And follow him. And everything will fall into place. There'll be no more mysteries.

No more conundrums. In your life. Nonsense. Says the preacher. Even the wisest Christian. He says. Cannot fathom.

The mysteries. Of God's sovereignty. The New Testament. Tells us that. Just as plainly. Even now. Says Paul. Filled with the spirit of God.

[15:11] We see. As through a glass. Darkly. We know. Only in part. That's what Paul says. To the Corinthian church. And we. Has. Got to be content.

To surrender to that. Because it's simply. A recognition. Isn't it? Of the fundamental reality. That God is God. And we are not God. And so we can't.

And we won't ever. Be able to understand. And control. The totality of life. And the world. Not our own life. Our personal world.

Or anything else. But you see. It's the very essence. Of human sin. That doesn't want to. Recognize that. And won't surrender to that. Because we want control.

We want knowledge. That's complete. We want. For us. All the time. What actually. Only belongs to God. Go back and read. Genesis chapter 3. It's exactly that.

[16:07] Mankind. Reaching for God-like knowledge. God-like control. Of our destiny. But that's all wrong. And the reality. Is utterly different.

That's what verses 3. 1 to 3 of chapter 9. Are saying. It's all. In the hand of God. Verse 1. Every detail.

Every deed. Of the righteous. And the wise. That is people of faith. Are in God's. Sovereign. Control. And even as Christians. We are not exempt.

From the mysteries. Of his sovereign hand. Just like all others. We do not know. The future. We don't know. What lies before us. Whether it's love. Or hate.

From others. Whether it's good fortune. Or bad. He says. Verse 2. The same event. Happens to the righteous. And the wicked. The good. And the evil. Verse 3.

[17:03] It's an evil. Under the sun. That the same event. Happens to all. We all. We all. Face. Mixed experiences. In life. Because we're all.

Just human beings. And we all. Inhabit the same world. With all the evil. With all the madness. In verse 5. It's absolutely plain.

In the end. Every one of us. Goes to the same place. To the grave. We can't deny that. Can we? The death rate. In so-called.

Prosperity and healing churches. What is it? It's 100%. Isn't it? Just like every other church. And the point.

He's making here. Is you see. That we can't. Just look at life. We can't just look at. What's happening. In our life. And judge from that. Whether God. Loves us. Or God hates us.

[17:58] We can't think. That we can learn. From God. The blessings. That we. Experience in life. Or the blows. That we experience. In life.

We cannot. Judge from that. Whether we're being. Rewarded by God. Or punished by God. Because the same things. He says. Happen to the good. And the evil. That's so important. See. God's justice. Is mysterious to us. It's often. Baffling to us. Because. He is a sovereign God. And we're just creatures.

And he's beyond us. And it will always be beyond us. Now don't misunderstand. He is not saying. That there's absolutely. No meaning to life. That everything is just. Pure random chance. And chaos. No no no. There is meaning. There is order. There is design. And God's hand.

[18:55] He says. Is directing it all. All. Our deeds. Are in the hand of God. It's just that God. Is. Infinitely bigger than us.

And beyond us. And always will be. And we will still. Never. Fathom the mysteries. Of God's sovereign justice. For as.

The heavens. Friends. Are. Higher. Higher. Higher. Than the earth. So are my ways. Higher than your ways. Says the prophet. And friends. If you're not going to become.

A hardened Christian. A bitter Christian. You simply have to come to terms. With this. And have to learn to live. Humbly. With the mysteries. Of God's sovereignty. And trust.

That he is just. And not unjust. And good. And not evil. Even if sometimes. The things he does.

[19:50] Are just unfathomable to you. That's what it means. To trust God. That's what it means. To have faith. To see the invisible.

To live with the mysteries. That we can't fathom. In this world. But it's hard. It's hard.

When we can't understand. Why God allows something. To happen in our life. Or why he doesn't. It's so hard. When we lose. A job that we loved.

Or a loved one that we loved. Or we don't have the. The child maybe. That we long for. Or we have. Have to live with some terrible handicap. Some burden that we find so agonizing.

Or a hundred other things. In life. That puzzle us. And grieve us to the core. But you see. Real faith. Isn't about. Controlling God.

[20:50] And always understanding God. And therefore actually. Trying to manipulate God. To do our bidding in life. That's not faith. Is it? That's idolatry. Sadly.

A lot of. What passes. For Christian faith. Is just that. It's a consumerist. Ideology. It's an escapist idea. That somehow we can. Bring God down. To dance to our tune.

To give us what we want in life. To fulfill our desires. But that's utterly false. And when the reality of life. Brings instead. Disappointment.

And maybe tragedies. Things that aren't explained away. Easily. By religious cliches. Well that is why so many.

People do so-called. Lose their faith. Because the truth is. It was never true faith. True biblical faith. Because at the heart of real faith.

[21:47] Is not an attempt. To manipulate God's sovereignty. And get angry when we can't. No it's a surrender to it. To recognizing.

His transcendent majesty. And living humbly. With the mystery. Of God's sovereignty. I mean. All the mess. Of our humanity.

And sin. And when we do that. That can make our faces. Shine with joy. Even amid the darkest clouds. Of his inscrutable. Providence. And that alone.

Is the attitude. That will liberate us. For life. Liberate us. To live to the full. Under God. Even in this veil of tears. Under the sun. And that's the message here.

Of verses four to six. Real faith. He is saying. Liberates. Is liberated. By God's sovereignty. Liberated. To be most fully. And most fulsomely human.

[22 : 43] While you're alive. Verse four. While you're joined. With the living. There is hope. Knowing what mortality. Really means. Is actually what liberates us.

To be most fully human. Because we know. That the grave awaits us. And so we must seize the day. While it still is today. And that's always the message of the Bible.

Today is the day for action. Verses five and six here. Doesn't mean. Don't mistake. Doesn't mean that he's saying. There's nothing beyond the grave. He's talked repeatedly.

Hasn't he? About judgment. And about the consequences. Of judgment. For what does lie beyond. The grave. And what he's saying. Simply. Is just that there's one life. That we have.

On this earth. That our death. Will bring a decisive end to that. That there's no reincarnation. There's no second chances. Verse six. Those who are dead.

[23 : 38] Have no more share. In what's done. Under the sun. In this mortal world. That's just what the New Testament. Affirms so clearly. Hebrews nine. Verse twenty seven. It's appointed for men.

Having lived to die once. And after that. Comes. Judgment. And the point is. That we're given. Life on earth. To live.

To the full. Under God. For what it really is. And for what it can be. Not. What we try to make out of it. What it can't be. And can never be. Can you see.

That when you come to terms. With the sovereignty of God. Over our earthly life. It is such a liberating thing. It is. First of all. It frees us.

From anger. And from anxiety. If you won't come to terms. With the transcendence of God. And with the reality. Of his total sovereignty. Then you can't. That you can't manipulate him.

[24 : 33] That you. You can't control him. To try and shake the world. Into. Into what you want it to be. If you can't do that. Then you'll waste your life. Constantly seeking something.

That you'll never find. Because it just doesn't exist. In this world. You'll be seeking. A level of control. A level of authorship. Over your life. That you can't ever have.

Because. You're not God. And you're never going to be God. And you'll get bitter. You'll be angry. Because life. Constantly disappoints you.

It eludes you. You'll be an angry person. Not a happy person. And in the process. You'll miss out. On all kinds of wonderful things.

That do exist. And that can be found. And that must be rejoiced in. In this world. Under God. But if you accept the reality. Of God's sovereignty.

[25 : 27] If you embrace that real biblical faith. If you trust God as God. As one who is transcendent. Who is above your control. Very often above.

And beyond your understanding. Of the world. If you can be content. With who you are. That you're a creature. That you're not the creator. A beloved child of God.

Yes. But still a human being. Not a divine being. If you accept that. And embrace that. Then you will be liberated. For that life of hope. A life you can rejoice in now.

In all the joy. In all the true creaturely humanity. That God has given us. You'll be free. From a life of anger. Of anger at the world. And anger at God.

You'll be freed from a perverse view of God. A God that you constantly think. Must be against you. Or must be ignoring you. Or must be punishing you. Because you can't fathom what's going on.

[26 : 25] And you don't seem to have. The things that you feel you ought to. When you accept. When you accept. The mystery of God. And that his ways are.

And always will be. And must be. Higher than your ways. And beyond your understanding. And when you learn. To live humbly with that. And to trust him. Trust him who bought you.

With his own blood. Then that really is a liberation. Because you stop trying to reason. Why? Why has God done this? Why has God allowed that to happen or not?

Why has that lovely man. Lost his wife. So young to cancer. Why is that wonderful work of God. Had it so hard. And had so much opposition.

Why is this. Terrible thorn in my flesh. Not being removed. Why is my good and natural desire. For certain things in life.

[27 : 23] Not. Not being fulfilled. As I'd wanted them to be. And friends. The answer to all of these questions. So often. Is. Is just going to be.

We don't know. And maybe we'll never know. Because God. Hasn't told us. But we can trust him all the same.

Because we know him. We can humble ourselves. Under his. Mighty hand. And we can live humbly. With his. Transcendent. Sovereignty.

Because we know him. And we love him. And we trust him. Who first loved us. And gave himself for us. That we might be his. Forever. See that's the only way.

Of living. That will free you. From a life of anger. And from a life of. Of constant anxiety. Worrying. That there must be something wrong.

[28 : 20] With you. Because you can't explain. Every conundrum. In your life. Or in your world. Or every mystery. That perplexes you. That's just taking to heart.

Isn't it? God's word through Moses. In Deuteronomy 29. Verse 29. Where he says. The secret things. Belong to the Lord. Our God. But the things revealed. Belong to us.

And to our children. Forever. That we may do. All the words. Of this instruction. All the things that God has revealed to us. For life. That is such a charter.

Of liberation. And you really grasp it. To let God. Be God. And don't you try to be. Omniscient. And omnipotent. But simply be obedient.

And you'll find. When you do live like that. That as the old colleague says. In his service. Is perfect freedom.

[29 : 17] Liberation. Liberation from anger. And anxiety. From always seeking. Knowledge that just isn't ours to know. It frees us from that.

But also. It frees us for action. To get on. With throwing ourselves. At living the life. That God has given us to live. Without. Some sort of paralyzing anxiety.

About the future. And again. That's such a vital thing to grasp. Many Christians are paralyzed in life. Because they're waiting.

And waiting. For God to reveal to them. Some sort of. Special sense of guidance. About what they should do. And they can't seem to take. A single step forward. Maybe in their career. Or in a relationship.

Or in anything. Because they want to know for sure. It's in God's will for my life. In other words. What they want. Is a revelation of the future. In advance.

[30 : 16] But that's not biblical faith. That's paganism. Like astrology. And it's simply failing to live. Isn't it? Failing to live humbly. With the sovereignty of God.

It's an unwillingness. To come to terms. With the mystery. And with the fact. That there are secret things. That belong to God. And not to us. And the future. That lies before us.

Is one of them. Look at verse one again. Our deeds. Are in the hand of God. And whether it's love. Or hate. Whether it's good or evil. Man does not know. Both lie before him.

That puts a huge spike. Doesn't it? Into that whole idea. Of God's guidance. You can't know. Your earthly future. Says God. God says it here.

He says it in many places. Through the scriptures. Think about Paul. In Acts chapter 20. When he's leaving the Ephesian elders. And going to Jerusalem. He went to Jerusalem. He said. Not knowing.

[31 : 16] What will happen to me there? Except that. What God has revealed. Always. That wherever we go in mission. Will mean affliction. And hardship. And battles. And nor must we ever try to gauge.

By the events. That happen in our lives. Whether God is showing us favor. Or punishment. Look at verse two. The same events.

Happen. To the righteous. And the wicked. To the faithful. And the disobedient. So it's a hopeless course. Isn't it? To seek assurances.

Like that. From what's going on. That's why many young Christians. In particular. Get tied in such knots. Don't do that. Stop trying. To second guess. The secret things of God.

Rather. Latch on to what God has revealed. And be busy with doing them. As he tells us to. Often when I talk to folk. Who are in a twist about guidance.

[32 : 20] I just turn them to 1 Thessalonians. Chapter three and four. We studied it just very recently. And I say to them. Do you want to know what God's will is? God's guidance for your life? Well here it is. I've got infallible guidance for you.

From the Holy Spirit. In his own words. This is the will of God. Your sanctification. Your holiness. 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 3.

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God. In Christ Jesus. For you. 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 16.

There's your answer. Infallible guidance. From God's Holy Spirit. God wants your holiness. And he wants your happy thankfulness. Well that's quite simple isn't it?

And it's very liberating. Truly liberating happiness comes. From having a truly thankful heart. And serving the Lord with gladness. That's just what the preacher is saying here too.

[33 : 18] In Ecclesiastes. Submitting to God's true sovereignty. Is utterly liberating. It frees us. From anger and resentment. And from anxiety about the future.

And it frees us for. Action and rejoicing. When you grasp. You see just how great God's sovereignty really is. What it means. That we are inescapably in his hands.

Then it liberates us. To seize the day. While it's still today. Because he's saying to us. There's only one life. God has given you for living. And then comes judgment. So live.

Get on with it. Live for him. With all your might. Recognize the mystery of God. Yes. He is truly sovereign over it all. And therefore rejoice in the mandate of God.

He set you free. To live before him. On this earth. With joy. He really has. I know for some of us. Doerous Scots. That's hard. To believe. Especially those who.

[34 : 19] Who struggle to throw off. A certain fatalism. And negativity. That there is. If you've. Grown up in the highlands. Or in the islands. That's a very common thing. But it's true.

Look at verses 7 to 10. It could not be clear. And that's the third thing. He says. Real faith. Liberates us. To find joy. Now. In our lives. Joy in all God's good gifts.

Which are beautiful. In their time. And which are for. Our enrichment. And for our blessing. These verses are like. A three R's. For a life of true holiness. And happiness. Three commands. For the life of faith.

From God himself. First. Find joy. In the refreshment. That God gives us. Now. In life. Go. Eat your bread. In joy. Drink your wine. With a merry heart.

For God has already. Approved what you do. Let your garments. Be white. Let not oil. Be lacking. On your head. Now. Isn't that liberating. From some sort of.

[35 : 19] Perverse view of God. That God's always against. Our happiness. Doesn't want us. That have joy. He says. Rejoice. In these good gifts. And there's a freedom.

Isn't there. From the sort of. Perversity. Of slaving. Miserably. Through life. Always working hard. For the future. And just letting the present. Pass us by. And being miserable.

And exhausted. And angry with life. Angry with God. No. He says. Stop. Go home. And rejoice. In the simple pleasure.

Of a fillet steak. And a good clarifying. Don't feel guilty. God has already approved. What you do. What a great worse. For workaholics. Person always has supper.

At their desk. With their laptop open. Super stressed. Looking ill. And miserable. All the time. No. No. Put on your white garments. He says. Put on your happy clothes. And take some time.

[36 : 16] To look the part. Wear that new perfume. That aftershave. The oil for your head. Go and enjoy a meal. With your loved ones. And friends. Rejoice. God made us.

To enjoy refreshment. In life. While we still can. While we're still joined. With the living. It's too late. Once you're in the grave. He says. For these things.

And don't forget. By the way. That the preacher here. Is writing. To a society. Not unlike our own. And it was the. Post exile. Time. There was a kind of. Rat race. People were. Forging businesses.

Paying mortgages. There was rising inflation. All these things. And while he's saying to them.

There's only one life. Verse six. The dead will have no more share.

In the rewards of this. Earthly life. So find joy. In refreshment. In life. In rest. God is the God of rest. Remember. The God of Sabbath joy. So find rest.

[37 : 15] Especially on the day of rest. On the Lord's date. That is a gift. For our refreshment. Don't ruin it. By slaving away. The whole day. In work. Or in study. God's given you. A weekly holiday.

Don't turn up your nose at it. If you're a student. If you're at school. Let me say this. Do not ruin. God's rest. By using Sunday. As a day. When you're stuck in the library.

Studying for exams. That's crazy. Don't be so stupid. Put on some aftershave. Put on some decent clothes. And go and have a jolly good meal. With your friends. On a Sunday.

That's what life's about. Not just exams. Find refreshment. The second are. Find joy. In the relationships. That God has given us.

Now. In life. Verse 9. Enjoy life. With the wife. Whom you love. All the days. Of your vain life. Your passing life. Under the sun. Because that is your.

[38 : 09] Portion. Literally. Your reward. In life. In life. And work. Your relationships. Relationships. With human beings. Are at the very heart. Of what is important. In life. That's why lockdowns.

Are so awful. For people. So immoral. Relationships. Are what life is about. So make time. For them. Relish them. Find joy.

In them. Don't sacrifice. These things. That are of real value. And reward. For worstest things. For things. That are just passing things. It's extraordinary.

Isn't it? How often people do that in life. And so sad. When it's their garden. Or their house. Or their TV. Or whatever it is. That keeps them. From prioritizing.

Their friends. Their family. Their loved ones. And then they only discover. Too late. Just how tragic that was. The focus here.

[39 : 07] Yes. Is especially on a marriage relationship. The closest of all. Earthly relationships. And yes. We can fail to invest. Properly there. That's an important word. Isn't it?

Especially for men. By the way. It's many speaking to here. Of course. It applies to. Both husbands and wives. But it applies to all of us as well. Because we all have relationships. Whether we're married or not.

Relationship with family. With friends. With loved ones. And these are so precious in life. But sometimes we only. We only realize that too late. When we've lost them perhaps.

Your kids sometimes come in. And say to you. Do something with me. And you're too busy. You're too busy.

Working. Or you're too busy playing sport. You're too busy. The housework. And the cooking. And the cleaning. And the sorting of the kids. Perhaps on top of another job as well. Well. Forget that sometimes. Live with a dirty house.

[40 : 04] Live with crumpled clothes. Get a babysitter. Go for a romantic dinner. Happy clothes don't have to be ironed. You can have happy crumpled clothes. You know. Sometimes we need to rebalance.

Our whole life investments. And invest much more. In finding that joy. In our relationships. With those we love. Because that is where true reward lies.

In our earthly life. And our work. According to the preacher. And he's speaking to us. The words of the one shepherd. Isn't he? The good shepherd. This is God's guiding word.

Do it. He says. With a merry heart. He's already approved. What you do. Don't wait for some special guidance. You don't need it. He's told you.

Find joy in refreshment. Find joy in those relationships. And the third hour. Find joy in the responsibilities. That God gives us in life now.

[41 : 02] Verse 10. Whatever your hand finds to do. Do it. With all your might. Because. Well again. You've only got this one life. To do it in.

See a real. Grasp. Of God's sovereignty. Never. Ever leads to fatalism. Never leads to inaction. It's the total reverse of that. We're liberated for action.

To work urgently. Because as Jesus says. The night is coming. When no man can work. And we want to serve our master. While it's still day. While we've still got breath in our bodies. Don't be paralyzed.

Don't be waiting. For total assurance of God's guidance. About something. He goes. Oh that was even possible. You can't. Know the future. No. Get on and do it. With all your might. He says. Has God given you a place.

To serve him. At home. Or at work. Or. As a student. Or in full time ministry. Whatever it is. Grasp it with both hands. Do it. Has God opened a door.

[42 : 04] In your life. And given you something. Your heart's desire. Is to do for him. Well. Don't wait. Go through that open door. Do it. With all your might. The true sovereignty of God.

Doesn't constrict you. It compels you. To do it. To do it. All your deeds. Are in the hand of a sovereign God.

Says verse one. You don't need to worry. That something that you can do. Will mess up the plans. Of a transcendent sovereign God. Don't worry about that. Really. He is truly sovereign.

God. And living humbly. Without reality. Means you won't waste time. Seeking out the mysterious secrets. That are his alone. And not yours to know.

That's a dead end alley. Every time. Instead. You'll be launching out. In faith. With him. Trusting him. All the way. So there we are.

[43 : 02] The secret things. Belong to the Lord. Our God. And him alone. So recognize. His sovereign majesty. But the things revealed.

Belong to us. So that we can be liberated. For joy in life. For real joy. And venturesome joy. Even on the vexed journey.

Of earthly life. In this fallen world. So friends. Let's recognize. His mystery. And let's rejoice.

In his mandate to us. Find joy. In the refreshment. That he gives us in life. And there are so many of them. In simple things. And find joy. In the relationships.

He gives us in life. How precious they really are. And find joy. In the responsibilities. He grants to each one of us. Whatever they may be. And be freed.

[43 : 57] From anger. And from anxiety. Freed for action. That's the way. Says the preacher. To live out this earthly life. With a joyful heart. With a shining face.

As we live for our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's pray. Rejoice. Always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances.

For this is the will of God. In Christ Jesus for you. A man's wisdom makes his face shine. And the hardness of his face is changed.

And so Lord we pray. That we may be a people whose faces really do tell the world. That we are those who live with humble joy.

In the mystery of your sovereign grace and power. So that our lives and our lips also. May lead others to share in that joy.

[45 : 00] Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.