

Humble Joy - in the mystery of God's Sovereignty

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, which you'll find in the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament. We're looking at chapter 8 and 9, it's page 557 if you have one of the church visitors Bibles.

A little time ago we had a brief series on some of the wisdom books of the Bible. We spent a week looking at the message of this book as a whole, but last week and this week and then one more time we're just delving in a little more detail to some parts of this very informative, very important book.

And last week we read the first half of chapter 8 down to verse 15. It belongs with this next section. It's all tied together by chapter 8 verse 1, which is all about faces and what our faces reveal about us.

A man's wisdom makes his face shine and the hardness of his face is changed. Well, what is that wisdom? What are the things we need to learn? We began to look at that last week.

We're going to pick up at chapter 8 verse 16. When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, then I saw all the work of God.

[1 : 1 6] That man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

But all this I laid to heart, examining it all. How the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hands of God. Whether it's love or hate, man doesn't know.

Both are before him. It's the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean. To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.

As is the good, so is the sinner. And he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil, an enigma. You know, all that is done under the sun.

That the same events happen to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil. And madness is in their hearts while they live. And after that, they go to the dead.

[2 : 2 4] 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.

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

So go, eat your bread in joy. And drink your wine with a merry heart. For God has approved already what you do. Let your garments always be white.

And 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, your reward in life.

And in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might. For there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom.

[3 : 27] In Sheol, in the grave to which you are going. Amen. May God bless to us his word. We'll turn, if you would, to our passage there in Ecclesiastes chapters 8 and 9.

Page 557, I think it was, in the Vistar's Bibles. These two chapters of Ecclesiastes are all about faces that tell a story. I quoted you last time something Charles Dickens said.

Here's Oscar Wilde. A man's face, he says, is his autobiography. Then he added, a woman's face is her work of fiction. So many ladies in the congregation, I dare not go any further with that one.

So let's stick with autobiographies. What story does our face tell? There are many people, including sadly many Christians, for whom life's perplexities and pains have caused their hearts to be bitter, to be resentful, and to be hardened.

The many manifest injustices in this sinful world. And the refrain of their life has become this. It's so unfair. It's so unfair. And of course, much in life is so unfair.

[4 : 47] But they can't come to terms with it. And their faces show it. They have hard faces. And they're unhappy Christians.

And therefore, unfruitful Christians. And they radiate in their faces. Not gracious forbearance, but griping frustration. And yet, of course, there are other believers whose lives have been tinged with just as much hardship and disappointment and pain and great injustice, perhaps.

But their faces tell a quite, quite different story. Verse 1 of chapter 8 here is absolutely true of them in spades. Wisdom has made their faces shine.

And there is no hardness visible at all. Because they have learned the message that the Apostle James writes about in his first letter. When he says to Christians, Count it all joy when you meet all manner of trials.

For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And they've done what he said. They've let steadfastness have its full effect in them.

[5 : 53] So that they might be perfect and complete and lacking nothing. They've come to terms, in other words, with mortal life as it really is in this fallen world.

Even for Christian believers. Even for those who have the knowledge of the true and living God. And even for those who walk in faith truly in Jesus Christ. They've come to terms with reality.

But it's not an easy thing to come to terms with, is it? Because otherwise there wouldn't be so many Christians who are dissatisfied with life. And who do have hardened faces. Joyless faces. But friends, let me tell you.

If you don't come to terms with this biblical reality. If you try and hide from it. In some sort of fantasy Christianity. That pretends that everything will be fine in your life.

As long as you do the right things. As long as you sing the right songs. As long as you pray the right prayers. As long as you go to the right churches. Then one day, that fantasy is going to collapse underneath an avalanche of realism.

[6 : 59] And some real crisis comes into your life. That you just can't pretend away anymore. Now it's far, far better to learn that reality now.

The truth about real biblical faith and trust. Because that is the only way to strength. In fact, it's the only way to survival as a Christian believer. And it's the only way to real joy in life as well.

The wise believer. Chapter 8 verse 1. The one who knows the true interpretation of things. The one who has grasped the truth of the biblical gospel.

The one who sees and knows just how vast and pervasive the tragedy of human sin really is. And therefore just how colossal the disaster is that man has brought upon this world.

And God's curse upon these things. And he knows it's not something that can be put right easily. Just by pious words or prayers.

[8 : 05] Or indeed by flamboyant sentimental words. About the supposed power of romantic love. No matter how enthusiastically those words are spoken at a royal wedding. No, the wise believer knows the truth.

That the real answer will come to this world only through its recreation in glory. When at last it is, as the apostle Paul says, freed from its bondage to decay.

And obtains the freedom of the glory of the children of God. When human beings are recreated. When the Lord Jesus comes. Nothing less than that can ever, ever put right.

The manifest injustices of our sinful world. Nothing else can put right the sheer mess of human sinfulness. Certainly not some supposed redemptive power of human romantic love.

And the wise believer accepts that. And so the wise believer with the apostle Paul. Waits patiently in hope for that great day. But he lives also with patient joy.

[9 : 14] Even amidst the mess of that sinfulness. Because that hope is real and certain. Because that hope will never disappoint. Because he knows the whole story.

Not just is he realistic about the present reality. And that's what the preacher is pointing us to here as well. We saw that last time in chapter 8 verses 12 and 13.

When it seems that the wicked seem to prosper now. Yes they do. But it's not the whole story. Ultimately it will be well. He says for those who fear God.

But not so for the wicked. Because they do not fear God. They will not prolong their days. Into ultimate life. So we must see with that true perspective.

With that sight that comes from heaven. That sight that comes from above the sun. That's the preacher's constant message through this book. This world is unjust and unfair.

[10 : 14] Verse 14. Look. Good things happen to bad people. Bad things happen to good people. And that's vanity. That's an enigma. It's a puzzle. It vexes us. And it always will do. Under the sun in this human mortal life.

But it's not the whole story. God's justice is a future certainty. And when we remember that. And indeed only if we remember that.

Can we be liberated. Not only for endurance through this life. But for joy. Even amid the mess of this fallen world. Hence verse 15 there.

As we saw last time. I commend joy. To be joyful through all the days of our lives on earth. Under the sun. Now that is not shallow happiness.

That's not pretending away life's bitter realities. No. That is the deep happiness. Of the contented spirit. That's learned to live with patient joy.

[11 : 12] Amid all the mess of man's sinfulness. Because of a sure and certain hope in God's grace. But there's more even.

More. To living with contentment and joy. Than just a realistic view of this sinful world. Awaiting its final redemption. There's another big thing. That can cause anger and resentment.

And especially to Christian believers. And if we don't come to terms with it. That also will rob us of our joy. And our contentment. In life.

And it's the fact. That we know as Christians. That behind all man's sinfulness. Behind all the injustice in the world. Behind all of these things. We know. That ultimately there is the hand of God himself.

We know. Don't we? That God is sovereign. That he rules over all things. And that means. Doesn't it? That so often. When we are angry and resentful.

[12 : 12] About the world. About its injustice. About its unfairness. Deep down. We are often angry and resentful. At God himself.

Aren't we? And that's very serious. And you see. Verses 16 of chapter 8. Through to chapter 9. Verse 10. That we read. In these verses.

The preacher is putting his spotlight. Exactly there. To pinpoint this issue. Because we must live. Learn to live. Not only. Patiently. With the tragedy of sin.

But we must also learn. To live humbly. With the transcendence of God. And he is urging us. In these verses. To live. With humble joy. With the mystery.

Of God's sovereignty. See. Real wisdom. The wisdom that will make us. Shining faced believers. It accepts. Not only. Are we not good.

[13 : 08] Just why the world is in a mess. But also. We are not God. And it accepts. Therefore. The limitations. Of our creatureliness.

And that even for believers. Even for Christians. There are. And always will be. Mysteries. That are utterly beyond us. It will never be. Otherwise. Under the sun. In this.

Human life of ours. And so the preacher. Is telling us. That the only way. To joy. In life. The only way. To the real. Shining faced faith. Is to live.

Not just. With the mess. Of man's sinfulness. But also. With the mystery. Of God's sovereignty. Look at verses. 16 and 17.

Of chapter 8. They make it so plain. Don't they? The workings of God. In this world. Are simply. Unfathomable. To mortals. They might try.

[14 : 03] Day and night. To understand them. They can't. Verse 17. Man cannot. Find. Out. However much he's seeking. He will not. Find it out. Even the wise.

That's the person. Who fears God. Who knows God. Even the wise. They cannot. Find it out. They cannot. Fathom. God. See.

He is. Debunking. Isn't he? The nonsense. The naivety. Of so much. Shallow. And superficial. Faith. The sort of Christianity.

That says. Well come to Jesus Christ. Believe in Jesus. And all your problems. Will disappear. There'll be no more mysteries. You'll understand. Everything about life. That is nonsense.

Verse 17. Is plain. Even for the wisest Christian. There are so many things. That remain. An utter mystery. And that's what the New Testament.

[14 : 59] Teaches us. Plainly. Isn't it? Even now. Even filled with the spirit of God. What does Paul say to the Corinthians? We still see as through a glass. Darkly. We're confused.

We can't see everything. We know. He says. Only in part. Only in part. And we need to be content. To accept that.

Because it's simply recognizing. Fundamental reality. That God is God. And we are not God. And so that we can't. And we won't ever. Be able to control.

Or understand fully. The totality of things. About life in this world. Or indeed about our own life. And our own personal world. We don't like that. Do we? It's the essence of sin.

That we will not recognize. And we'll not submit. To that simple fact. We want control. We want knowledge. That's complete. We want for us. Things that only belong to God.

- [15 : 55] That's the very essence of sin. Think back to Genesis 3. In the Garden of Eden. It was man reaching. For a God like knowledge. For control of his destiny. That's all wrong.
- And the reality is utterly different. And that's what verses 1 to 3. Of chapter 9. Are saying here. Look there. Verse 1. It's all in the hands. Of a truly sovereign God.
- Even the very details of life. Of the righteous and the wise. People of faith. Even as Christians. We are not exempt. From the mysteries. Of his sovereign hand.
- We just do not know. What lies ahead of us. Do we? Whether love or hate. From others. Whether it's good fortune. Or bad. It's the same for all. Verse 2. The same events happen.
- To the righteous. And the wicked. The good. And the evil. The clean. And the unclean. And so on. As is the good. So is the sinner. As is he who swears. So is he who shuns an oath. This is an evil. This is a mystery.
- [16 : 51] An enigma. Under the sun. The same sort of things happen to all. We all face mixed experiences.
- In our lives. Because we're all human beings. We all inherit the same world. A world. Which he tells us so plainly. Is full of evil and madness.
- And we'll all. Verse 5. In the end. Go to the same place. Won't we? We'll all go to the grave. We can't deny that. Can we? And the point he's making here.
- Is you can't just look out at life. And judge from what is happening in life. Whether God loves us or hates us. Whether we're being rewarded. Or whether we're being punished. Because the same things.
- So often happen to the good and the evil. God's justice. Is mysterious to us. In this human existence. It's utterly baffling to us.
- [17 : 47] In this world. Because. Why? But. He is a sovereign God. And we're just creatures. And that means God is beyond us.
- And God will always be beyond us. And he's not saying. Don't mistake. He's not saying there's no meaning to life. He's not saying it's all random and chaotic chance.
- No. It's all in. The hands of God. He says plainly in verse 1. There is meaning and order. There is design. God is directing. Every intimate detail.
- It's just that God is much much bigger than us. His plans are beyond us. And they always will be. We will never fathom God's mysterious and sovereign justice.
- What does Isaiah say? For as far as the heavens are above the earth. So are my ways higher than your ways. Says the Lord. Friends.
- [18 : 50] Let me tell you. If you are not going to be a hardened and embittered Christian. You simply have to come to terms with that. You have to live with that. You have to learn to live humbly.
- With the transcendence of God. With the mystery of his sovereignty. And to trust him that he is just. And not unjust. Even when it is a great mystery to you.
- That's what it really means to trust God. Isn't it? That's what it means to have faith. To see the invisible. And to live with mysteries that are beyond us. Things that we will never fathom in this world.
- If we weren't doing that. We wouldn't be trusting God at all. Would we? But it's hard. When we can't understand why God allows something to happen in our lives.
- Or in somebody else's life. A loved one. When we lose the job that we love. Or we're bereaved of a loved one that we love. Or we don't have the child that we long for.

- [19 : 51] Or they have to bear some handicap in life. In our body or in our mind. Something that's agonizing for us. Or a hundred other things. That puzzle us. That grieve us to the very core of our being.
- It's hard. But you see. Real biblical faith is not about controlling God. It's not about always understanding God.
- And therefore manipulating God to do our bidding and what we really want. That's not faith. That's idolatry. And alas so much of what passes for Christianity today is often just that.
- It's a consumerist idolatry. It's an escapist fantasy. The idea that we can manipulate God to dance to our tune. To give us all the things that we want in life. If only we pray the right prayers.
- And to give us that insurance policy for beyond death. But that is so utterly false. And so often that is exposed, isn't it?
- [20 : 49] When life's reality hits home hard with bitter disappointments. With tragedy. Which isn't explained. Which can't be sorted. By trite religion. And that's when so many people lose their faith, isn't it?
- Except that it never was real faith. Real biblical trust in God. Because at the heart of what is real faith. Is not some attempt to manipulate God's sovereignty. And anger.
- And frustration when we can't. But rather real faith is always accepting. And submitting to his sovereignty. Recognizing the mystery of a God who is far greater.
- And living humbly. With the transcendence of God. Amidst the mess of our sinfulness. And for our face to shine.
- Even in the midst of the darkest clouds. Of his mysterious providence. That's real faith. And that, friends, is the attitude that can liberate us to live to the full under God.
- [21 : 52] Even in this veil of tears. Look at verses 4 to 6. See what he's saying there is, while you're alive, there is hope. Verse 4. Knowing what being mortal really means is what liberates us to be most fully human.
- Because we know that the grave awaits. And so what he's saying is you must seize the day. While it is still today. That's always the Bible's message. Today. Today is the day for action.
- And verses 5 and 6 there. They don't mean for a minute that there's nothing beyond the grave. For the living know that they will die. But the dead know nothing. They have no more reward.
- For the memory of them is forgotten. End of verse 6. They have no more share in all that's done under the sun. That doesn't mean there's nothing beyond the grave. All through this book. There's been talk about God's judgment to come.
- And life beyond that. It just means simply. You've only got one life to live on this earth. Death will be a decisive end to that.
- [22 : 58] There's no reincarnation. There's no second chances. That's just what the New Testament tells us in Hebrews chapter 9. It's appointed for man to live once. Then comes judgment.
- And the point is we are given this earthly life by God for living to the fool before him. For life as it really can be. Not for trying to make it what it isn't.
- What it never can be. And you see. When you come to terms with this sovereignty of God. The mystery of his justice.
- His transcendence. Actually it is a liberating thing for us. First of all it frees us from anger doesn't it? And from anxiety. If you won't come to terms with the transcendence of God.

With the fact of his real sovereignty. That you can never manipulate him. That you can never control him. That you can never use God to shape the world around you the way you want it to be.

[24 : 03] If you can't come to terms with that. You will very likely waste your life seeking something that you can never ever find. Because it just doesn't exist in this world. You will be looking for a level of control.

A level of authorship over your life that you just cannot have. Why? Because you are not God. Is that a surprise to us? If you don't come to terms with that.

You will very likely grow bitter and angry. And life will constantly disappoint you. Because these things elude you. And you will become increasingly an angry person.

Not a happy person. A bitter person. And in the process. You will miss out on so many of the wonderful things that do exist. That can be enjoyed.

That can be found and rejoiced in. And that should be found and rejoiced in. In these lives. Even in this veil of tears. Even in this world of a groaning creation. But if you accept that reality.

[25 : 03] If you embrace real biblical faith. If you trust God as God. As transcendent. As beyond your control. Beyond your understanding. If you're content with what you are.

A mortal. A creature. Not the creator. Yes. A beloved. Redeemed. Human being. But still just a human being. Not a divine being. If you accept that.

Then you will be liberated. To rejoice and revel in all the joy. In our true created humanity. You'll be freed from a life of anger.

Anger about the world. And anger at God often. You'll be free from a perverse view of God. That you constantly think God is against you. Or ignoring you. Or being angry with you.

Because certain things are happening in your life. And not others. Just because you can't fathom what's going on. When you accept. The mystery of God.

[26 : 01] That his ways are. And they always will be. Higher than your ways. Above your understanding. When you learn to live humbly. With God's sovereignty. And trust him. That really is liberation.

Because we stop trying to work out. All the time. Why? Why has God allowed this. Or that. Or the other thing to happen? Why has that lovely Christian man. Lost his wife so young to cancer?

Why has that wonderful work of God. Seemed to have it so hard. There's so much opposition. Why is this thorn in my flesh. That I've pled to God to remove.

Why has he not removed it? And never will. See. The answer to so many of these questions. That we ask. The answer is. We don't know.

And God hasn't told us. And we may never know the answer to these things. But he's asking us to trust him. Just the same. To humble ourselves under his mighty hand.

[27 : 04] To live humbly with his transcendent sovereignty. Because we know him. And because we love him. And because we know we can trust him. That's the only way to live friends.

That will free you from a life of anger. And from a life of constant anxiety. About the future. It's just very simply.

Believing and taking to heart. That verse we saw in Deuteronomy. 29 verse 29. That the secret things. Belong to the Lord our God. But the things revealed.

Are the things that belong to us. And our children. So that we might do. All these words. That is such a charter of liberation.

When we grasp it. That God has his secrets. And they're for him. Not for us. But that he has given us. All the secrets that we know. For the life. He longs to bless us with.

[28 : 02] That frees us from anger. And from anxiety. Always seeking to. Find the things that we cannot know. And it frees us for. Lives of action.

To get on with. Throwing ourselves at the life. That God has given us. Without paralyzing anxiety. About the future. Again that is such a vital. Thing to grasp. So many Christians.

Are paralyzed in their lives. Because they're waiting. And waiting. And waiting. For God to reveal. Some special thing to them. About what they should do. Some Christians can't seem to take. A step forward in anything.

A career move. A relationship move. Anything. Because they have to feel sure. That it's in God's will. In other words. What they want. Is a revelation of the future.

In advance. But that is simply to fail. To live humbly. With the sovereign transcendence. Of God. That is. An unwillingness. To come to terms.

[28 : 59] With mystery. With the fact. That there are secret things. That only belong. To God. And not to us. And the future. Is one of those things. Verse 1.

Again. All our deeds. Are in the hand of God. And whether it's love or hate. Whether it's good or ill. Man. Does not know. Both.

Lie. Before him. We can't know. That puts a huge spoke. Doesn't it? Into that kind of idea. Of God's guidance.

You cannot know. Your future. God says so. Are you hearing? And nor can you try to gauge. By events.

That happen to you. Whether God is showing you. Favor or punishment. For the decisions. That you have made. Because look at verse 2. The same events. Happen to all. The obedient. And the disobedient. It's a hopeless course.

[29 : 59] To seek those kind of assurances. I must be doing the right thing. Because God's given me this. Well that must have been the wrong thing. Because that bad thing happened. That's why so many Christians. Get in such a knot.

Such a mess. In this whole area of God's guidance. Don't do that. Stop. Stop trying to second guess. The secret things of God. And instead.

Do what he tells you. Lay hold of the things. That he has revealed. Get on. And do them. When I'm talking to folk about guidance. I nearly always turn them to 1 Thessalonians.

Don't turn there now. But listen. Here's the question. What is God's will for your life? Here's the answer. 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 3. This is the will of God.

Your sanctification. Your holiness. In chapter 5 verse 16. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. For. This is the will of God.

[30 : 58] In Christ. For you. There's your answer. To the will of God for your life. God wants your holiness. And God wants your happiness. The truly liberating happiness.

That only comes from a perpetually thankful heart to God. God. And that's just what the preacher is saying here. Submit to God's true sovereignty. And it is liberating.

It frees you from anger. From resentment. From anxiety. And it frees you for action. And rejoicing. When you truly grasp. Just how great God's sovereignty really is.

Just what it means to be inescapably in his hands. That is what liberates you to seize the day. While it still is today. While you're still alive. There's only one life for living that God has given you.

And then comes judgment. So live that life. For him. And with him. And live it with all your might. That's what the Bible teaches us. Recognize the mystery of God.

[32 : 00] Yes he is. Truly sovereign over it all. And therefore. Rejoice in the mandate of God. That he has set you truly free. To live before him with joy.

And he really does. Look with me at these final verses. 7 to 10. You could call these the three R's. For that holiness and happiness.

That is God's will for our lives. First R. He says. Find joy in the refreshment. That God gives you now in life.

Go eat your bread in joy. Drink your wine with a merry heart. God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

Now that is a liberation from some perverse view. That God's always against us. It's a liberation to rejoice in God's good gifts. And liberation from the perversity.

[32 : 59] Of slaving miserably through life. Working so hard all the time for the future. So that the present. Just passes you by. And leaves you constantly miserable. And exhausted.

And angry at life. And angry at God. Stop. Says the preacher. Go home. And rejoice in the simple pleasure of a good meal and a glass of wine.

Don't feel guilty. Look. God has already approved what you do. Does it need to be any clearer? What a great verse that is for workaholics. For people who never have any time for lunch.

Never any time for anything. Always at work. Always at their desk. Always stressed out with everything. Always looking and not having enough time for anything at all. No. Look. Where I say.

Put on your white garments. Put on your happy clothes. Take time to make yourself look good. Put on those cosmetics. That Yves Saint Laurent. Hair oil or whatever it is.

[33 : 57] God has made us to enjoy refreshment in life. While we're still alive. Is it too late in the grave? For your cosmetics.

The preacher is actually speaking to a society not unlike ours. Probably the returned exiles. There was a great economic boom. There was a rat race.

People were striving. Working two or three jobs to pay their mortgages. Nothing changes under the sun. Well he says to us. There's only one life. The dead have no more share in that.

No more rewards of life on earth. So find joy in refreshment. In rest. God is the God of rest. The God of Sabbath. Joy. Especially on the day of rest.

Rejoice in his day of rest. If you're a student. Do not spend all your Sundays studying for your exams. That's miserable. Go out and enjoy the sunshine. And have a picnic with your friends. As long as you're doing some work some other time.

[34 : 59] Find joy and refreshment in life. Even now before you're dead. Second are. Find joy in the relationships that God gives you in life. Now. Verse 9.

Enjoy life with the wife you love. Because that is your reward. Relationships with other people are at the very heart of what's really important in life.

So make time for them, he's saying. Relish them. Find joy in them. Don't sacrifice these things which are really valuable and joyful. For worthless things.

For things that will just pass away and mean nothing in the end. Isn't that extraordinary? Isn't it tragic when people do that? When there are people for whom their garden.

Or their properties. Or their money. Or other things. Is more important to them. Than the relationships they have with their family. With their friends. With others. And it's only too late.

[35 : 56] That they discover just how tragic it is. But they've missed that. Yes. The focus here is. Especially on marriage. Because that's the closest relationship of all.

And we can fail. To invest properly. In that relationship. Maybe especially. It's a word to men. He is speaking to men. Isn't he? But I'm sure it applies to both.

But it applies to all of our relationships in life. With our family. With our friends. With our loved ones. They are so precious. Yet. Often it is. Isn't it? That it's only too late. When we've lost them.

That we realize just how precious they were. You kids say to you. Come and do something with me. And you're always saying to them. No. I'm too busy. I'm too busy working. Too busy doing this and that. Stop that.

Go and play hide and seek with your kids. There won't be children for very long. You're the kind of woman who can never get out. Because you're always doing one more thing in the house.

[36 : 53] One more bit of cleaning. One more bit of ironing. One more bit of something else. Leave it. Live with a dirty house. Live with crumpled clothes. And go out for a romantic meal with your husband.

He's going to ask you this week to do just that. Aren't you men? Do it. Do your friends never see you because you're constantly involved in things?

Spiritual things. Church things. Maybe you need to read chapter 7 verse 16. It's a warning against being over righteous. We can be over righteous. Even in the service of the kingdom of God.

Sometimes we need to step back and invest. Find joy in the relationships with those that we love. That's your portion. That's your reward in this life.

That's what God reveals he wants us to do. Do it. With a merry heart. He's already approved it. Find joy in our relationships in life now.

[37 : 52] Before we go to the grave. And thirdly. Find joy in the responsibilities that God has given us in our life now. Verse 10. Whatever your hand finds to do.

Do it with all your might. Because you only have this life to do it in. See a real grasp of God's sovereignty never ever ever leads to fatalism to inaction.

It is the total reverse. It liberates us for action. To work urgently. For the night is coming when no man can work says Jesus.

Just the same thing. And we want to serve our master while it is still today. While we're still alive in these bodies. So don't be paralyzed by fear. By fearfulness.

Don't be waiting constantly for some special assurance of God's guidance before you ever do anything. It's not possible. Go and do it says God with all your might.

[38 : 51] Has God given you a place to serve? At home? Or at work? Or maybe in full time ministry? Wherever it is. Well grasp it with both hands. Go. Do it.

Has God opened a door for you? Has he given you a heart's desire to do something for him? Well don't wait. Go and do it with all your might. God's true sovereignty doesn't constrain you.

It compels you. To step out in faith and trust in a God in whose hands all that you do is all of the time. All your deeds are in the hands of a sovereign God.

You don't need to worry that there's something that you can do that can somehow mess up God's plans. Let me just reassure you that cannot happen. He is a lot bigger than you. This is a transcendent God.

A sovereign God. And living humbly with that reality means you don't waste time seeking the mysterious secrets that are not ours to know. That's a dead end alley every time.

[39 : 55] No. You launch out in faith with him. You joyfully trust him all the way. So there we are. The secret things. They are for God alone.

The mysterious sovereignty. Recognize the mystery. But the things revealed they do belong to us. That we might be truly liberated for joy in life.

Recognize his mystery and rejoice in his mandate. Find joy in the refreshments that he gives us in life. And there are many. And find joy in the relationships that he gives us in life.

They are so precious. And find joy in the responsibilities he gives you. Whatever they may be. Be freed. Freed. Freed from anger.

From anxiety. And freed for action. That's the way to live this life with a joyful heart and with a shining face for the Lord Jesus Christ.

[40 : 54] That's the true biblical gospel. From the preacher in Ecclesiastes. From the apostles. And from the Lord Jesus himself.

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.

Go. For God has already approved what you do. Lord help us.

To have faces that tell the world that we are people. Who are living with humble joy. In the mystery of your sovereign grace and power. Help us.

To love and to trust you. To humble ourselves under your mighty hand. But to rejoice. In all that you have called us to. In the many and the varied joys.

[41 : 58] Even in this messy world. Lead us we pray. Lead us now. And lead us in the way everlasting. And lead us to show others that way of joy now.

And of joy unspeakable to come. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.