

Four Things to Humble Us

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[0:00] The book of Ecclesiastes chapter 7 is where we're found in the study of this book.!

In this meaningless life of mine, I have seen both of these, a righteous man perishing in his righteousness and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

Do not be over-righteous, neither be over-wise. Why destroy yourself? Do not be over-wicked and do not be a fool.

Why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes. Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.

There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins. Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you.

[1:24] For you know in your heart that many times you have cursed others. All this I tested by wisdom, and I said, I am determined to be wise.

But this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound. Who can discover it? So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate, and to search out wisdom in the scheme of things, and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap, and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare.

Look, says the teacher, this is what I have discovered. Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things, while I was still searching, but not finding, I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all.

This only have I found. God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes. Preaching is all about exalting in God's glory.

[2:54] And that's exalting with a U. So we're rejoicing in God's glory. We come to learn, yeah? We come that sinners would be converted.

And we come to be encouraged. But the preeminent reason that we are here tonight, and that I am up here, is because we want to taste the goodness of God.

And the way we taste the goodness of God is by looking into His Word, by finding the truth there, by letting it sink into our hearts, taking delight in it, and exalting in God our Father, Son, and Spirit.

The word that we hear cannot dead end in our hearts. It has to get to its destination, which is God's praise.

And the reason I'm saying this is the passage that we have in front of us this evening is not an easy passage. This is a difficult passage. It's difficult to understand.

[3:57] But even more than that, it's difficult to let it come to our heart and to do its work. Because this passage humbles us.

The temptation will be to tune it out, to give up on the passage. But we must let it do its work, or we're never going to get to worship. And that's what we want to get to.

You can't have high thoughts of God, and at the same time have high thoughts and high views of yourself. And you can't rejoice daily in God's grace to you, if you can't appreciate the bad news about yourself.

In other words, if you miss the point tonight, the whole of Ecclesiastes is going to be pointless. Understanding Ecclesiastes begins with humility before God.

The reason Pastor John began at verse 15, when we've already preached on verse 15 through 18, is that 15 to the end of the chapter is one section with one theme, one single unit.

[5:14] And so let's review what we talked about last week, and then let that bring us to where we are, where we're going tonight. In verse 15, our teacher, in Hebrew is named Koaleth, Koaleth

makes an observation.

He says, I've noticed the righteous dying young, and the wicked living long. And if you think about that long enough, it becomes very troubling.

Very painful. It's paradoxical to what the Proverbs say. It's paradoxical to what God's law says, but it is painfully and obviously true.

And so some people, when they're staring at this paradoxical nature of living in a world like this, they say, I want to avoid that. I don't want to die young, and so what I need to do is live a very righteous life.

And so they try to be super righteous, but their effort to be super righteous sabotages their ability to enjoy God's gifts. They're too concerned with living sterling, perfect, righteous lives that they can't enjoy living in an imperfect world under God's smile.

[6:36] And this is not to speak against the earnest pursuit of holiness. This is not contradicting what Jesus said when he said, be holy, be perfect, as your Father is perfect.

This is a word against a wrong-headed kind of righteousness that tries to provide safety in a very difficult world.

Well, Kohleth moves on from there, and he says, don't be over-wise either. And this super wisdom isn't based on fearing God. It's trying to figure out why things happen.

What's going on here? It's staring at the problems of life until they drive you crazy. It's the kind of wisdom that really turns out to be no wisdom at all. And so, he says, don't be over-wise.

But just in case anyone is thinking, well, he's throwing out righteousness, he's throwing out wisdom, he comes back in the next three lines, and he says, don't be over-wicked, and don't be foolish either.

[7:40] The alternative to super wisdom and super righteousness is not to give full reign to your sin and just to do whatever you want. That would be madness, he's saying. If you want to die before your time, then give full reign to your sin.

It would be utterly foolish to think that you could live a careful or a careless life and have joy at the same time. Well, how do you fall, or how do you avoid falling into the trap of super wisdom or super righteousness and wickedness?

Well, verse 18 says that if you fear God, if you fear God, you won't be drawn in to the false super righteousness and super wisdom. You won't fall into wickedness and you won't fall into folly.

You're going to walk in a path and you're going to find wisdom and you're going to find righteousness that is true. And so, may God put the fear, His fear, in our hearts because we need that kind of righteousness.

And it is so easy to fall into super wisdom, super righteousness. We desperately need real wisdom and so we need to fear God.

[8:55] Well, in verses 19 through 29, Kohalath breaks down the pride that is lurking behind super righteousness and super wisdom.

And in so many words, he says, listen, listen, look at what we are. We're sinners. We're sinners. We curse each other.

We aren't wise. We're easily led into temptation. We don't understand each other. God made us upright, but we've gone after many schemes. That's who we are.

We're a bunch of deceitful schemers. And so, we need to give up the grandiose ideas of being wise, of being so wise and so righteous. It's not going to happen.

It's simply not going to happen. What man is has been known. We aren't wise enough. We aren't righteous enough. And it's that simple.

[9:58] And that's what he's saying. And so, don't let the talking heads fool you. Just like in his day, coalesced day, in our day, people are saying, what you need to do to live a triumphant life, a victorious life, is to merely believe in yourself, believe in your own efforts.

And so, our kids are told at a very young age, okay, victory is in your hands. All you have to do is really want what you want. All you have to do is believe in yourself.

And you have everything that you need inside of you. You have every resource to overcome everything. And so, they march out into this world of Havel, of meaninglessness, with their inflated egos, with their overestimated views of themselves.

and what happens? Well, life happens. Their hopes are dashed because sometimes, no matter how smart you are, no matter how much you believe in yourself, bad things still happen.

And so, it's this modern, the modern movement of self-esteem is the same thing as super wisdom and super righteousness. It's just dressed up in psychological clothes.

[11:14] And there's nothing new under the sun. The pride is the same. It's all arrogant. It's all ignorant.

Huffing and puffing. But Koholeth gives it to us straight. He's going to really tell us how it is with us. And so, he tells us four things that he's found out about humanity.

In all of his searching, he's found four things to humble us. And this isn't pretty. But we need it. We need to hear it.

And we must see it. Because this is who we are. The first is found in verses 19 through 22. Look at verse 19.

Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city. And then it could read, but there is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

[12:17] In the NIV, the connection between these two verses is not very clear. But in between the two verses, there is a conjunction that can be interpreted or translated as but. And when you put that but in there, it clarifies the relationship of these two proverbs and why he put them next to each other.

He's saying, wisdom makes one man wiser, one man more powerful than ten rulers in a city. And so the strength of the wise is their wisdom. Proverbs 21, 22 says a wise man attacks the city of the mighty and pulls down the stronghold in which they trust.

And so wisdom brings power. And all the people who are pursuing super wisdom say yes, amen, that's what we want. They think they can escape Havel through their wisdom.

And Colossus says it's true, but there's a problem. But, there isn't a righteous man on the earth, one that does what is right and never sins.

So in traditional way of thinking, if you are righteous, then you are wise. Righteousness and wisdom go together. But do you see how verse 20 takes the wind out of the grandiose ideas that I can be super wise?

[13:32] of humanity's capability to become wise? The fact is that no one here is righteous. Yes, wisdom is good.

Wisdom is great. It makes you powerful. It makes you strong. But let's be realistic. Our sin undermines our wisdom. So imagine a strong, a tall, strong, powerful wall.

And the wall is wisdom. And the wall is too high to climb. And the wall is too thick that you can't break through. And that's wisdom. It's this powerful wall. But there's a problem.

The problem is that every day, every night, sin is digging underneath the wall. sin is and it's and it's ruining our wisdom.

It's weakening its strength. And this isn't just a problem here and there. Colossus says, there's not a righteous man on earth. There's no exceptions.

[14:47] There's no one righteous. And so there's no one who's going to have the ability to become super wise. And Paul picks up on this line and uses it in Romans 3.

And as he's indicting, as he's accusing all of humanity, he's putting us all under sin. And this is what he says. There's no one righteous. No, not one.

There's no exclusions. Men cannot escape Havel because we're all sinners. We can't be smart enough to escape God's curse because we're sinners.

And so how many foolish, sinful, stupid things do we do all the time? We know that we should stop eating.

But we can't stop. We have all the facts about obesity in front of us. And yet we kill ourselves with food. Is it because we need more information? We need more wisdom. We need more knowledge.

[15:47] No, it's because inside of us, we're enslaved to our lust. And thank God, He gives the Holy Spirit to His people to teach us self-control.

But even now, the work is still incomplete. And even now, sin is undermining the wisdom of the best of us. Well, in verse 21, He gives a prime example of human sinfulness and another reason we can't think too highly of ourselves.

He says, Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you, for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

Kolath is warning us against a hypersensitive attitude towards the faults of others and a hypersensitive attitude towards the value of our own reputation.

Do people curse you behind your back? Yes. They do. Should you hold a grudge? No.

[17:01] Should you go, and as soon as you hear that, you try to make it right. Should you try to fix it? No. Should you go on a crusade to protect your reputation and to correct what everyone's saying about you?

Not necessarily. And you say, but righteousness must prevail. He doesn't say that. Are you really the one to do that?

Are you the one to make sure that righteousness prevails? Are you the one to do the delicate eye surgery when you have a timber coming out of your own eye?

When you know many times you have cursed others. And so we can't go nitpicking into other people's lives and being petty with them.

Have they sinned? Yes. Yes, they have. And so have you. So have I. And what is one of the most common kinds of sin?

[18:04] It's the sin of the tongue. James 3.2 says, we all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man able to keep his whole body in check.

Do you get it? If you don't sin here, you're perfect. You will not sin at all if you can control your tongue perfectly. But Coleth reminds us again, no one's perfect.

They're saying bad things about you and you have said bad things about them. Well, that's us.

That's us. We're a bunch of talk behind your best friend's back teenage girls in a lot of ways.

And this is what some of you are completely and some of you are recovering from. Some of you, this is how you live.

You're hypersensitive to what other people are saying about you. You're hypersensitive about what people think about you. And so as soon as you hear someone talking bad about you, you get all in a huff.

[19:11] And you want to know what this person said about you and you want to know what that person said about that person. And when you hear that they've cursed you, you become furious. You're shocked. You're offended. But the whole time, you're saying the same nasty things behind their back.

And Coleth, the Bible, says, who are you really fooling? That's your righteousness. You're offended when other people sin against you.

But you're not offended when you sin against others. And brothers and sisters, this is what we are recovering from. We're sinners still, but we can't take our reputations too seriously.

because what a disgusting sight it would be if the very best one here had their dirty laundry aired for everyone to see, for their reputation to really be known.

There's no point in acting like our reputation is so great because God knows. God knows what we do in secret. and we're not accepted on the basis of our reputation.

[20:19] We're accepted on the basis of Jesus' reputation. It's His good name, not ours. That's the reason God has a relationship with us. And so, when you believe that, when you believe, you know what, my real standing doesn't depend on what other people think of me.

It depends on what God thinks of me and He sees me in Jesus and it's perfect. Then we can relax. We don't have to be so uptight about what other people are saying about us.

We are sinners saved by grace. And that's all. But you know what? That's enough. That is enough. That's all we need. Well, Coleth isn't done.

He's telling us four things that he's discovered about humanity. And the first thing is that our sin undermines wisdom. Super wisdom, all wisdom. We're all sinners.

And now he knocks us down again. He's going to put us in our place. And he says, you are too small to handle what you want. You're too small to handle super wisdom.

[21:27] So listen to what he says. All this I tested by wisdom and I said, I am determined to be wise. Stop there. We need to ask what kind of wisdom is he determined to have?

What does he mean when he's saying I'm determined to be wise? Is he talking about God-fearing, humble wisdom? Or is he talking about the wisdom of verse 15?

Or verse 16? Do not be overwise. Wisdom where you try to understand what God is doing all the time. Where you try to understand the big scheme of things.

Where you want to understand all the havel of life. And I think he's talking about super wisdom here. You'll see why I say that in a moment. He says, all this I tested by wisdom and I said, I'm determined to be wise but this was beyond me.

The kind of wisdom that understands all the reasons for everything in the world, understands the reasons why God does what he does, understands the crooked things in this world, what these overwise people want.

[22 : 38] He says, it was beyond me. Why does a righteous man die young and why does a wicked man live long? Coleth, the wise man, says, I don't have an answer.

I looked and I couldn't find one. I couldn't figure out. It was beyond me. My arms weren't long enough to reach around the problem. My eyes weren't keen enough to view it, view the problem and see through it and I wasn't tall enough to look over the counter, the kitchen counter and see what God was cooking.

We're too short. We're too small. It was too big for me. And he explains what he means in verse 24. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound who can discover it.

I think we need to read this more literally to understand it better. He doesn't say whatever wisdom may be is too far off and most profound.

It literally says what has been is too far off and most profound. What has been? I don't think he's talking about wisdom here being profound.

[23 : 53] He says that but he's saying the things that happen in life, what has been the history. Remember Ecclesiastes 3 and he's giving us these are the days of your life.

This is the time and there's all these times and it's God's time and there's a time for everything under the sun. That's what he's talking about. All those things, all the days of our life and all the happenings of the things that have happened in our world.

He says it's too profound. It's too mysterious for me. Super wisdom that understands all those things. It's too far away. It's impossible.

Why? Because God has made the crooked things crooked. He doesn't let you or me in on why he's doing what he's doing.

Why do the wicked prosper? Why do the righteous suffer? From the Bible we can give some answers but no one should fool themselves and pretend like they know and have all the answers.

[25 : 02] Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? And so again, Koh-leth puts us in our place.

It says, look, you want wisdom, you want insight into the mysteries of life, you're not going to get it. You aren't going to get it.

It's too big for you. No matter how hard you strive for it, no matter how much you pray for it and want it, no matter how much you pretend that you have it, you don't.

You can't. It's beyond you. And he's saying, I was loaded with God-given wisdom. And remember, he's writing a book of the Bible.

He had wisdom. He says, I have all this wisdom and it was beyond me. And so don't go that way. Don't go down that path. It's impossible. You're like a baby and you're trying to climb Mount Everest.

[26 : 03] And everyone would say, that is impossible. It's beyond you. And it is. So be smart and stop. See what you are. You're too small to handle all the answers that you're looking for.

Well, not only is super wisdom impossible, next he says, it's dangerous. It's dangerous. Men are easily tempted from wisdom into sinful folly.

Look at verse 25. I turn my mind to understand and to search out wisdom in the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

We need to notice two things here. I think we have a clue of what kind of wisdom he is looking for again. Coleth is saying, I want to understand the scheme of things.

You know, I was trying to find out why all these things happened. I was trying to figure out the havel of life. Then the New American Standard says, I was looking for an explanation.

[27 : 10] I wanted an explanation for why all these things were happening. and I was trying to get my hands on the blueprints. I set my heart to understand these things.

And so that's what he's looking for. He's looking for that kind of wisdom. And the second thing to notice in this passage is that it echoes chapter 1 verse 17.

Then I applied myself. This is what 1.17 says. I applied my heart to the understanding of wisdom and also the madness and folly. But I learned that this too is chasing after the wind.

Remember, Coleth did an experiment. And he was going to figure out this world. He was going to figure out Havel. And he says, remember, I tried this earlier.

I did this and it didn't work. I tried to come up with an explanation for everything and I found that it was Havel. Actually, the wiser I got, the more I began to understand all things, the more miserable I became.

[28:18] That's what he says in chapter 1. And so, now he brings something else that he discovered when he was in this experiment phase, when he was looking, but not finding.

Verse 26, I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap, and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare. He says, I didn't find an explanation in my pursuit. I didn't find an explanation in my experiment, but I did find a woman. I found a particular kind of woman, a woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap, and her hands are chains.

There's two ways to understand that. this may be Dame Folly, the woman Folly. Remember from Proverbs. This could be a metaphor for that.

The woman Folly is loud. She is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house at the highest point of the city, calling to those who pass by. And so throughout Proverbs, Folly is described as an adulterous woman.

[29:27] She's compared to an adulterous woman, and she's calling to people to come and dine with her. She's saying, stolen water is sweet, food eaten in secret is delicious, but little do they know that the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of the grave.

And so this woman, Folly, hunts men, and she traps them, and then she murders them. So Coeth might be referring to Folly here.

He's saying, I sought to understand everything. I looked for an explanation, but what I found was that I became entrapped in Folly.

I found myself in Dame Folly's clutches, and I began to fill her net and her snare coming down into my heart and into my life, and I felt that iron grip around my neck.

I was becoming a fool, even as I was trying to be wise. That's one alternative. The second is, he might be talking about an actual woman, actual women.

[30:31] he said, I tried to find an explanation for things. I was looking into the stupidity of wickedness, the madness of folly, and in my searching, I find that alluring seductive women are more bitter than death.

And I tried for wisdom, but my heart became encaptured by an adulteress. My heart was captured by an adulteress. Either way, either way you understand it, the main point is clear.

the whole experiment, the whole pursuit of having an explanation for everything was dangerous. It led to temptation, a temptation that was more bitter than death.

And so, to think too highly of your abilities, too highly of your wisdom, it opens you up for all kinds of temptation.

Pride isn't the path of safety. Why? Because a huntress walks those paths.

[31:41] Temptation walks that path. And she wants to ensnare you and drag you and then kill you. She wants to drag you down to the grave.

and she hunts in the forest of pride. She's looking for men there. So, moms, dads, teach your children about the dangers of pride because it will destroy them.

Because in that forest, the cunning huntress of temptation walks and she is looking to bring men and women down. So, save their souls from death. Warn them of the danger.

Kola says, the man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare. So, the man who has his heart set on pleasing God, he doesn't have his heart set on super wisdom and explanation, but he has his heart on something much in a way more modest.

He wants to please God. It's safe. The sinner is done for. He doesn't have any time for God. He doesn't have a chance when that hunter comes hunting him.

[32:55] And here you get a hint of what true wisdom really is. It's not getting an explanation for all things. It's knowing how to please God in the situation where he's put you.

It's obeying God. It's learning to please him in those situations. And if you do that, that will be enough. And if you try for more, you will die.

So we come to the conclusion of the section. It tells us the fourth thing that he found about man and his pursuit. Look, says Koala, says the teacher, this is what I discovered.

Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things while I was still searching but not finding. In other words, I was looking for the bottom of everything.

I was looking for the whole scheme of things. I wanted the blueprints. I was doing all kinds of calculations. But I wasn't finding what I was looking for.

[34:05] In the midst of that effort, in an effort to understand everything, to get to the bottom, I didn't find an explanation. But I did find one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all.

Can we be dismissed now? How should we understand this passage?

I think, to be honest, the first thing we have to say is that anything is possible. That doesn't sound very comforting coming from here, but there's a lot of ways of understanding this.

He actually might be saying what the NIV says. I don't think that's what he's really saying. I don't think he's saying, I found one man who's righteous, but I've never found a righteous woman.

I don't think he's actually saying that for a couple of reasons. The first is that the word upright is not in the original Hebrew. You'll notice the NIV puts little brackets around the word upright in both cases.

[35:23] That's because they've supplied it. They've added it to try to make sense of the text. I don't think Ko'oleth is saying he's found a righteous man but no righteous woman because he's already said there is not a righteous person on the earth.

No, not. There's not anyone who's righteous. I don't think he's talking about uprightness yet. He's going to talk about that in the next verse, in verse 28, but he's not there yet.

So how do we understand this? I think we should read it literally and the ESV translates it literally. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.

And that doesn't really help. So what does that mean? So he's saying, I was doing all my adding, I was doing all my searching, I was looking, and I found a man and a thousand, and I didn't find any women, a woman.

What does that mean? What is, I think if we look around the text, he's using the word finding and found, and I found this several times in the passage.

[36:32] And what it means in every other case is simply understand. I haven't been able to understand. I haven't been able to, I was looking for an explanation, but I wasn't able to understand what I was looking at, and what, I couldn't come to a good understanding of things.

And obviously, when he says, I was looking, I was searching, but not finding the scheme of things, he's talking metaphorically. He's saying, I wasn't able to understand the scheme of things.

And I think that's what we should be saying, what he's saying here. He's saying, in all my research, I've been looking, and I've understood one man in a thousand, but I have never understood a woman.

And we can't take that chauvinistically, because all he's saying is, I don't understand people. I haven't really understood anyone.

So when you get down to it, it's hard to know what people are thinking. It's hard to know what people are doing and their motivations.

[37:42] People are inexplicable in a lot of ways. And every person is hard to understand if you get to know them. Parents, do you really know why your teenager is acting the way they're acting?

How many times have you thought you knew, and it turned out you were totally wrong? And do you really know and understand your neighbor's motivations? You might pretend and think you do, but you don't.

Can you read minds? Can you read hearts? That's God's prerogative. That's not ours. And Cole left knew better.

He says, you know, in all my looking, all my searching and figuring out, I have to be honest, I don't really even understand people. And the argument, I think, is if you don't understand people, how can you really come to understand what God is doing?

If you don't understand people, do you really think you're going to understand what God is up to? If you can't walk up the little mole hill that is a person, how are you supposed to climb the Himalayas?

[39:01] You can't do it. And so he hasn't come with any profound conclusions at the end about reality, but he did figure something out for sure.

Verse 29, this only have I found. God made man upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes. God made us upright, but we went on our own way.

We went in search of many schemes. We followed our hearts, and our hearts led us away from God, and we ended up walking in crooked paths. So we walked away from God's righteousness,

we walked away from God's law, and we walked in our own way, in our ways we're crooked, in our ways we're deceitful and scheming.

And so all of this confusion, all of this havel, it's our fault. That's what he's saying. This is our fault. This isn't God's fault.

God made man upright, and we have gone in search of many schemes. This is our fault. We walked away. And so the most wicked thing that we could do is to look at this world and blame God for it.

[40:19] Yes. You know what? God did make things crooked. He's already said that. He has no problem acknowledging that. God did make things crooked, but he did it to fulfill his redemptive purposes.

He did it for good, but he did it because we became the deceitful schemers that we are. And so this is our fault.

God and so if you this week you're tired of your job and it's monotonous, who should you blame?

Yeah, God gave you the job, but it's your fault that it's monotonous. This is our fault. And Derek Kinner said, this is our fault, but this isn't our fate.

God didn't leave us in Ecclesiastes 7. Ecclesiastes 7 is not the last word. He didn't leave us in our sin, in our lying, in our backstabbing, in our confusion.

[41:31] He sent Jesus to be the light of the world, to bring light into this dark world, to save us from ourselves. So, in Ecclesiastes, is Ecclesiastes 7 the end of the story?

No, Jesus is the end of this story. Ecclesiastes 7 is saying, you know what, we need a Savior. If you study this passage over and over and over again like I have, it's really hard to understand, but if you just read it at its face and you take the big drift of it, if you just look at it, there's nothing good in it about us.

There's nothing good there. We have wisdom, but we're all sinners. And we all lie, or we're all cursing each other, and we're too small to understand what God's mind is.

And we're easily fallen to sin and to temptation, and we don't understand each other, and a lot of times that is because we're hiding from each other, we're walking in the darkness. Ecclesiastes 7 is saying we need a savior.

We need someone to help us out of this mess, because we don't have what it takes. Our most meticulous, stringent self-righteousness will not save us, and our greatest wisdom will not save us.

[42:57] We need someone to help us from the outside. We need a savior. We need grace. God to pity us. We need someone to help us out of this mess.

And praise God, Jesus answered that call. When he saw us trapped in our sin, he had pity, he had compassion on us, and so he came, the fullness of God, in a human flesh, in a human being.

He came, and he lived a perfect, blazing, white, righteous life. He never talked bad about people behind their back.

His wisdom was perfect, because he was perfect. And he took that life, that perfect life, and he took it to the cross, and he laid it down.

He died with our sin, our deceit on him, and he gave us his righteousness.

[44:17] He offered himself up to God. And so what human righteousness and human wisdom never could do, God did for us in Jesus Christ.

And he triumphed. And so Ecclesiastes 7 is a very dark corner of the scriptures, but the scripture goes on, the Bible goes on, and it tells of a Savior who helps us out of this passage.

So in the meantime, what do we do while we're waiting for him to come and to save us totally?

well, remember Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom. Coleth is teaching us how to live wisely. And Ecclesiastes 7, 15 through 29 is telling us that we need to come to grips with our limitations, with our sinfulness, and our weakness, and our smallness.

Yes, we need to hang on to righteousness. righteousness. And yes, we need to hang on to wisdom. But we can't go too far from the mirror while we're doing it.

[45:35] You can't go too far because you have to reckon with who you are and what you are. And as you look in the mirror, you have to get past yourself, and you have to get to God.

So you have to see that yes, I am sinful, and I am weak, and I'm even sneaky, and yet God has loved me.

He's given me his son to reconcile me to him. And he's given me a family, and a husband, or a wife, and he's given me a job, and children, and he's given me all these wonderful things to enjoy.

And so as you look in the mirror, get past yourself, and get to the God of grace, because he's standing behind that. God is merciful to you and to me.

And so every day we're drinking in God's grace. We don't deserve a thing, but he's pitied us. We're nothing compared to him.

[46:45] We are that mole hill, and he is Mount Everest. Christ. And yet he loves us, and he's showering his blessings on us. So do you understand how Ecclesiastes 7 is fitting in with the whole big picture of Ecclesiastes?

You can't enjoy God's gifts if you're proud. You can't enjoy God if you're too proud. And so you have to stay in front of the mirror, learn what you are, and then find grace in God.

And if you have never been reconciled to God, then you should know that even now, Jesus Christ is standing with his arms wide open.

The God of grace has always been the same. He was the same in Coaleste, he's the same in the Lord Jesus' day, and he's the same now.

He is waiting for sinners to come. And when he sees them afar off, he runs to them. He looks and he has compassion on them. And he doesn't have time for your self-righteousness.

[47:56] He's going to give you something better than your plan to work your way into heaven.

He's going to give you grace, but only if you turn away, only if you turn away from your sin and repent and believe and then you can have all of God, all of his grace, all of his mercy, even in this world of Havel.

And so as you're looking in the mirror, let it draw out praise to God. There's no point in just looking at the mirror and becoming upset and sad.

That's not leaning on God's promises. But, look in the mirror and see God's grace to you. Let's pray. Let's pray. our heavenly father, I ask that you would just help us to be honest with ourselves, to be honest with your word, to let it do its work.

It doesn't feel good to have the wounds of our souls exposed, and yet they are necessary if we're going to find healing. And thank you that there is full and complete healing in Jesus Christ.

Will you sovereignly and powerfully call sinners to yourself even tonight? And will you powerfully and sovereignly sanctify your people tonight? for their good and for your everlasting glory and praise that millions of years from now some sinner will be praising you, will be worshiping you, will be exalting in a God who is so different than us, so exalted and high in his power and in his grace.

[49:54] Will you help us to see those things even in our smallness? will you give us power to understand that which is beyond understanding the love of God that has been poured out into our hearts?

Will you help us to understand the greatness of the love of Jesus Christ to come and to die for his people and to save them from this whole sinful mess that we have put ourselves into?

Thank you that we have a God of grace. And we pray that you would come and work mightily among your people and call those who are not yet your people to be your people.

In Jesus' name, Amen.