

Here is the Conclusion of the Matter

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[0:00] The teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads. They're collected sayings like firmly embedded nails given by one shepherd.

Be warned, my son, of anything in addition of them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body. Now all has been heard.

Here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Some ways I feel like I'm standing at the train station saying goodbye to an old friend tonight. I'm a bit sad. For the last year or so, my Bible has opened itself up to Ecclesiastes almost every day. And from now on, I won't be seeing so much of it. Coleth has been a very interesting, stimulating, depressing, fun house guest.

[1:17] And since March, we've listened to him and appreciated his wisdom. And we've heard his perspective on life. And I really hope that you found that to be a refreshing perspective, an encouraging perspective even.

But as I said tonight, we say goodbye to our friend Coleth. But it's good to know that here he is in our Bibles every day, still, ready to disabuse us of our grandiose visions of what we think life should be like and what we want our life to be like.

He's ready to tell us to enjoy ourselves despite the difficulties that we face. And he's always ready to steer us back into God's vision for how to live in the world that we find ourselves in, in a sin-cursed world.

And so, while we're saying goodbye tonight, I hope that you will go back to Coleth again and again over the next few weeks and months and years. We need his perspective.

And he certainly has a unique perspective, but I think and I hope you've found it to be a godly perspective on living. Well, let's finish Ecclesiastes then. Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

[2:40] And first we're going to see a review of Coleth's work. A review of Coleth's work. And this might be editors' comments. There's some debate as to who wrote these last few verses.

It might be Coleth speaking in the third person. And it doesn't really matter too much. Because this is God's word. And this is God's review of what Coleth said and thought.

And so, if you have disagreed with Coleth. And he's rubbed you the wrong way. You need to change your opinion.

Because God says that Coleth's words were delightful and true. So, if Coleth's been rubbing your cat the wrong way, you need to turn your cat around and get it going the right direction.

So, let's look at verse 9. Not only was the teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. Coleth had a pastor's heart.

[3:44] I read a couple of commentaries through my preparation of this material. And they were closer to philosophical textbooks than they were to Bible commentaries.

And so, when they came across this verse here, they said, Well, of course, he doesn't mean average Israelites. They're talking about the intellectual elite.

So, what do you think of that? What do you think of their opinion? As for me, I have no doubt that Ecclesiastes is written for the educated elite. But I found it said a whole lot to people like you and me.

Average Joes and Janes. You know, we have our six to six jobs. And we get tired of working in the factory, in the office. And we wake up and we say, Do I have to do this again?

And the answer is still yes. And so, there we are. We know what it's like to be in Ecclesiastes. And so, he says a lot to people like you and me.

[4:47] Because that's what Coleth wanted to do. He wanted to impart knowledge. He was wise. And he imparted knowledge to the people. And in the next sentence, it tells us how he did it.

He pondered. And searched out. And set in order many proverbs. Now, if you are being honest, a lot of times when you read through Ecclesiastes, it certainly seems like it's a hodgepodge of proverbs and comments and lessons and stories.

And it is hard to grasp the order. Like, why is he saying that now? And what does that have to do with what he just said? Well, this tells us that Coleth just didn't do some sort of stream of consciousness writing.

So, he's just sitting and writing whatever he feels like and he thinks as it comes to his mind. That's not how it was at all. He pondered. It could be he listened.

So, he heard what this person said. And he heard what that person said. And he thought about it. And he asked this person, What do you think of this frustration that we're going through?

[5:53] And what do you think about living and dying? And as he thought and as he pondered and as he processed, he put Ecclesiastes in order. And, you know, maybe it wasn't the order that we would have chosen.

Maybe it's not the order that our Western, single-track, extremely logical minds operate on. But it was the order that God inspired him to put it in.

And it was the order that we needed. Even if it was just to make us wrestle over the material more and more to come to try to understand that order. It was done just the right way.

That's what our writer here says. And he not only focused on the content, he focused on the presentation.

You see that? He searched for just the right words. He searched for delightful words. Coleth wasn't just interested in giving a lecture where there's the content, take it or leave it.

[6:55] He wanted to be delightful. He wanted to be interesting. Could we say entertaining? He wanted to captivate our minds as we thought about it.

And I think he did a good job, don't you? I mean, whatever we think of what he said, he sure had a very interesting way of putting it. And they kept our attention.

And Coleth worked hard for it to be like that. And so, I think it's good here to pause and apply this quickly to any of you who teach, who are parents, who have any responsibility where you're conveying the word of God to people.

And it's this. Coleth pursued just the right words. And we should too. Coleth worked hard to make his words delightful. And doesn't Proverbs say, pleasant words promote instruction.

And that's what Coleth was thinking. And he worked hard to find those words that not only conveyed his message, but did it in a way that was easy to understand or that would interest his readers.

[8:04] And so, if we have a chance to preach or to teach or just to sit down with our child and talk to them, we should make it our goal not only just to get the word out, get the right, the truth out, but to do it in such a way that those people can hear it and they're interested in a way that isn't boring.

Now, Coleth wasn't a boring preacher, a boring teacher. And Jesus wasn't a boring teacher or boring preacher. And we shouldn't be either.

It is one of the, I think it's one of the biggest sins in the world to make the word of God boring.

Because if the word of God is boring to us, then no matter how much doctrine has filled our minds, it hasn't come into our hearts.

And if we make the word of God boring, the people that are going to hear it are going to think, this isn't very exciting. And so we're pulling down the word of God. We're pulling down what people think of God.

And so we need to make the word of God interesting and work hard at it. Now, Coleth's words were delightful. They were just right. And they were upright and true.

[9:17] That's what it says next. What he wrote was upright and true. The teacher wasn't some sort of TV evangelist, just saying whatever people's itching ears wanted to hear. He wasn't this popular populist preacher.

He didn't sacrifice the truth for entertaining people. He wasn't just interested in preaching interesting sermons without truth.

His delightful words were true. And so he didn't sacrifice the content for the quality of the lesson to scratch people's ears. And again, this is an example for us.

If we teach, if we preach, if we are evangelizing, if we're just encouraging one another, if we're parenting, we need to have our hands on both of these aspects.

It is not good enough to just give some entertainment. And it's not just good enough to give some truth. We need to have our hands on both of these aspects. They have to be interesting words and true words.

[10 : 20] They have to apply to the person. And so we can't sacrifice either. Coleth was a master of both. Jesus was a master of both. And while we will never get to that level, I have no doubt that we will fall far short of Coleth or Jesus.

But yet, that is the goal. And we should set our goal at the right place. That's the target, and that's what we want to hit. And so that's a brief review of Coleth's work.

Next, our writer answers a question. And his question is, what should your response be to what he's written? What should our response be to Ecclesiastes?

Ecclesiastes. Now, the first is, you should get moving. You should get moving. How many times throughout the series did I say, get to it.

Come on, let's get moving. Don't wait. You have to do this now. And the reason I said that is because that is what Ecclesiastes is all about.

[11 : 27] Look at verse 11. The words of the wise are goads. Now, children, young people, if you grew up in some country in Africa, you would know what a goat is, and you would know how to use it, and what exactly it's for.

So your dad would say to you, Junior, I want you to move the cows from the north pasture, we'll do this right, the north pasture, and move it down to the south pasture. Well, how are you going to do that?

Well, you get dressed, and you pick up your goad, your long stick, your big stick with a point at the end, and you would go out to the north pasture, and you'd get behind those cows, and you'd start yelling and shaking your hands and trying to get them to move, and, you know, they might start moseying the right direction you want, but you don't have all day.

And so what do you do? You take your goad, and you jab that cow, and before you know it, all those big lovely ladies are just moving the right direction. They're going the which way you want them to do.

And that is what the words of the wise are like. That's what Ecclesiastes is like. They're like goads. Now, some parts of Ecclesiastes didn't feel very good.

[12 : 43] And you have to be honest. Last week, it wasn't very much fun, especially if you're an older person. And to be honest, there's parts that I would rather not have preached.

They're not particularly fun to preach on. You didn't like hearing it, but it was all designed to get you moving, to get you to take action, to go the right direction.

And so if you're still thinking about Ecclesiastes, and you're still pondering it, and you're investigating it, and saying, well, you know, I need to think about this a little more before I do anything, you've missed something.

You're not doing what you're supposed to do. And so if you were where you are, or if where you are right now is where you were six months ago, and so you haven't made any progress and living any differently from going through the series in Ecclesiastes, then what Ecclesiastes is saying is that you are more stubborn than a cow, than a cow that knows how to move when it gets stuck.

And so if you're standing still, you've missed something somewhere. And if you're standing still, you're disobeying. So go back again. I would encourage you, go back again, and read, and read, and read, until you realize that what he's trying to get you to do is to start living life to its fullest now.

[14 : 15] You have to start waking up and saying, carpe diem. I have to seize this day. The words of the wise are like goads.

And not only are they like goads, they're like firmly embedded nails. Well, maybe you're not sure what that means. What's a firmly embedded nail and how is that related to Ecclesiastes?

Well, it's a solid, it's a nail that's been driven in and bent over. It's in the wood. It's solid. It's something that gives stability to a structure. And so you could put your weight on it.

And the word nail here could also mean peg. And so you're out camping, right? And we'll say you're camping on a windy day and the wind is blowing and you're trying to set up your tent.

What do you do? The first thing you do is you spread out your tent and you peg it into the ground so it won't go anywhere. And that's what Ecclesiastes is like. It provides stability for us when our lives are being blown about by Havel and by the winds of just life being hard and difficult.

[15 : 24] And so when Havel is shaking you to the core and you're laying in bed thinking about how old you're getting or thinking about how fast your children are growing up and it feels like life is just slipping away and it's sad.

It's sad. And it's scary. And it's depressing. Ecclesiastes is designed to give you something to lean on.

something that you can put your weight on and live with. And Jesus said the same thing, didn't he, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount?

You remember how that passage went? He preached. He was the wise man preaching to his people. And he said, the one who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock.

And that's what Ecclesiastes is like. If you build your house on, you build your life on Ecclesiastes, then you're a wise man building it on something that is solid and firm that can carry the weight.

[16 : 33] But if you're a foolish man and you're building your house on sand, so you're building it on something else, well, you know how that ends. The rains came down and the floods came up and the house on the sand went splat.

That's how it goes. Ecclesiastes is meant to build your life on. It's meant to hold you into place.

It's meant to give you something that you can depend on and really believe. And it is God's word for unstable times, for an unstable life that is quickly flying away.

Well, what's the source of these goads? What's the source of these firmly embedded nails? The one shepherd. The one shepherd of Israel. And God is the shepherd of his people, isn't he?

And he knows how to get us moving when we need to move. And he knows how to hold us up when we need held up. He knows how to ground us. And he knows how to get us to the end.

[17 : 38] Because if it was left for us, we're wandering sheep. And we would all fall away and fall into some ditch and perish. But he is their shepherd who cares for his sheep.

And so, one of the ways that God gets us to the end, that he gives us grace to persevere in this very difficult life that we find ourselves in, is from the words of the wise.

It's from Proverbs. It's from Song of Songs. It's from Job. It's from Ecclesiastes. It's from Psalms.

And so, in Ecclesiastes, we don't get the mind of man and what men have thought and their opinions.

We get the mind of God. It came from the Spirit of God. And so, these words are true. They're God's words. And we are meant to receive them as such.

Well, how should we respond to Ecclesiastes? We receive it as the Word of God. We rest on it. And he says, Be warned, my son. Be warned of anything in addition to them.

[18 : 48] Of adding anything to these, to what we've found. If these are God's words, then they are enough. And if they are God's words, then we can't add human words to them.

They're complete. They're final. And this is a warning, especially for people who want to, who aren't satisfied with Ecclesiastes, who want something else, who aren't, who aren't satisfied with the answers that you get and the method that he takes.

They're not satisfied with coalesced answers and they think there must be a different way. There has to be a different explanation. There has to be a better explanation. What he says isn't enough.

Or, or people that say, you know what?

I have found an escape. I found a way to live above these things. And so, if you go past what is written, if you add to the what is written, if you've come up with some great explanation and you've risen above the frustrations of life, then you're simply delusional.

You're simply delusional. And so, think of the health and wealth, prosperity, gospellers out there.

And so, they say they've gotten to the point, they're to the point where they live above these things.

[19 : 56] And their lives are nothing but blessing. You know, you can live your best life now. But what is that? That's going past what is written.

That is adding something to what is written. That's pretending that you're wiser than Coaleth, God's mouthpiece for us.

And, the fact is, no one escapes Havel in this life. And so, for all their so-called wisdom, they are fools. They go past what is written.

They don't deal with reality. They don't deal in real wisdom. They don't deal in God's wisdom. So, take warning. If you find yourself in that camp where you look at this and you say, I don't think this is right.

I don't think this is enough. I need to find something else. Well, he also warns against those who think that, you know what, if I think long enough, if I think deep enough, if I just read enough, and I think hard enough and long enough about this problem of Havel, sort of like what Coaleth did at the very beginning when he said, I'm going to sort this thing out with wisdom.

[21 : 14] he warns against that attitude because, you know what we have come to? We have come to the end of the matter. And he says, of making many books, there is, there is no end and much study wearies the mind.

Coaleth says that that's folly and all that study it wearies the body and he isn't saying, he isn't saying, don't read. I believe as Christians that we need to be reading people.

And I believe as Christians that we need to be reading more than what we read. But he's warning against a slavish devotion to books and a slavish devotion to study, especially concerning this area that he's been talking about.

So books are good. And I think we should be readers. But we as Christians shouldn't think that the next book is going to figure all this out.

That it's going to actually lay down the mysteries of life so everything is cleared up. And it's going to get to the bottom of things. It's not going to happen. So don't look for it.

[22 : 29] Don't read like that. And for those reasons, well, why not? Because it keeps us from doing the very things that God has called us to do. how many times in this book has he told us to enjoy life?

That's your lot. That's what God has given you. How many times have he told you to enjoy all of his gifts? And so if your nose is stuck in a book all the time, it's hard to enjoy your wife and your children and creation.

And so we can't do any of those things if we're locked away in our study. We're locked away in our minds thinking and thinking about these problems.

Listen to what C.H. Spurgeon said one time. It's kind of a long quote, but I think it's very important. This is what he said. To sit long in one posture, pouring over a book or driving a quill in and in itself is a taxing of nature.

But add to this a badly ventilated chamber, a body which has long been without muscular exercise, and a heart burden with many cares, and we have all the elements for preparing a seething cauldron of despair.

[23 : 49] And he makes his study a prison and his books The Warders of the Jail, while nature while nature lies outside his window calling him to health and beckoning him to joy, a mouthful of sea hair or a stiff walk in the wind's face would not give grace to a soul, but it would yield oxygen to the body, which is the next best thing.

And so, if your choice is between listen carefully, if your choice is between getting an A and a seething cauldron of despair locked away in an IUSB basement somewhere, and a B with fresh air and playing Ultimate Frisbee, then you should take the B.

Much study wearies the body, and life is too short to be wasting it, pursuing things that cannot reward you.

life is too short to be always weary and tired. Remember last week he said, young people, throw off, throw off those bodily pains.

It just simply isn't wise to wear yourself out studying. Well, that's a review of Coaleth, and now he's told us how we should start applying this thing, how we should apply Ecclesiastes, we should depend upon it, we should live on it, we should trust it as God's word, and we should stop here.

[25 : 29] This is enough. God's wisdom is enough here. Now, the conclusion. Now all has been heard.

Here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. What were we supposed to learn from Ecclesiastes?

What's the big picture of Ecclesiastes? What's the big message? At its heart, if we have been tracking Coaleth, and if we've been following him through all of his arguments, and through all of his experiments, and looking, and pondering, and thinking, that it's this, to fear God and to keep his commandments.

And that is nothing new. It's not like this is an editorial comment where he's like, oh, I've said a lot of bad things, and now I've got to say something godly here at the end, or they're going to throw my book out.

He said this throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. 3.14, God is orchestrating all of history.

Remember, there's a time and a place for everything. There's a time for everything under the sun, and it's God's time, and people don't understand what is going on.

[26:38] And what's the answer? God does this so that men will fear him. Fear him. We're supposed to look at providence and fear God. Or Ecclesiastes 5.7, and in this situation he's talking about, we're thinking, oh, if I go into the church and I say lots of good things and I'm doing these things and I have fantasies about how God's going to accept my worship just because I'm here, Ecclesiastes 5.7 says, much dreaming and many words are havel.

They're meaningless. Therefore, stand in awe of God. Fear God. And that's the bottom of the book. What is your position before God?

Are you independent? Are you deserving? Are you worthy of being asked about what you think about things?

Or is God holy, holy, holy? holy. He reigns supreme and his ways are past finding out.

And so how do we live in Havel? Not by always trying to figure things out. Not by kicking against the goads of God's providence and not being satisfied with what he's doing, but by standing in awe of God.

[28:06] God. So the Lord rules on high and who am I to bring him down and expect him to explain things to me? And the Lord works out all of his purposes and so who am I to say, God, I don't think those purposes are right.

They're confused and I think you need to do it differently. So what is the conclusion of the matter? At its root, it is to say with Job that I'm going to put my hand over my mouth because I don't understand all of God's ways and his ways are past finding out, but I know that he is exalted, he is sovereign, and he is doing what is right.

So fear God and you show that fear by keeping his commandments, by obeying them. So how do you live in a world upside down? That's what this book's been about.

Well, you fear God and you keep his commandments and you focus on what you do know. You focus on what you do know. Life is full of exceptions. You know, the evil prosper and the righteous, they die early and rich men, they go on foot and slaves are going on horseback.

Things are all upside down, but do we live according to those exceptions? No. And do we dwell on the exceptions and we grow bitter in our heart?

[29:36] No. We obey God's commands. Remember Deuteronomy 29, 29. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children so that we may follow all the words of his law.

What is our business? goodness. It's the things that are revealed and we leave the secret things to God. And so friends, at the bottom, we have to know our place.

Our place is not beside God on the throne. It's at his feet. And our place is not to worry endlessly about all the confusing things of life.

It's to focus on obeying God's law with what we know we should be doing. And it says, for this is the whole duty of man. You'll notice in the NIV, at least, the ESV is a little different, but the NIV, the word duty is in brackets.

And that means it's not there in the original. It was added to try to make sense of this Hebrew phrase. And literally, it says this, this is the whole of man. This is the whole of man.

[30:52] Now, that can be taken in a number of different ways. And so we need to think through this a little bit. It can be taken as, this is what it means to be a human. This is what it means to be a man.

To fear God and to obey Him is when we truly become men. When we realize our humanity fully. When we understand, you know what? I am not God. I am a man.

I am not the creator. I am the creature. This is the, this is what it means. And so if we accept, this is what this view says, if we accept, when we fully accept in our heart that I'm different than God and God is different than me, then we really learn what it means to be a human before God.

Another way of taking it is what the NIV says, that this is the whole duty of man. This sums up everything that we're supposed to do. And the third way to take it is that this applies to every man.

This is for everyone. This applies to all of humanity. Everyone should fear God and keep His commandments. Now, all three of those things are true.

[32:06] They're all true. But which one does the text teach? Just because they're all true doesn't mean that the text is teaching all three of them.

And so we're going to have to make a decision. And I think that the third option is best. And the reason I think it's best is because the next verse talks about comprehensive judgment.

Everyone is going to be judged for everything. And so I think the third option is the best. This isn't a summation of our duty or talking about the essence of what it means to be man even though it is true.

But I think Koholeth is saying this applies to everyone. This applies to everyone here and it applies to everyone in the whole world.

Everyone has a responsibility as God's creatures to fear Him and to obey Him. And so you aren't the exception. I'm not the exception.

[33:10] Your son or daughter is not the exception. Your unbelieving neighbor is not the exception. The wisdom that can be summed up in fear God and keep His commandments applies to everyone and it applies to you.

And if you're an unbeliever it applies to you. Koholeth is talking to you. And he's calling you to a new way of viewing yourself. Isn't he? God's calling you away from a self-centered way of thinking and living where you do whatever you want.

You do just whatever you please. And he's calling you instead to submit to Him. To fear Him and to obey Him. Remember we talked last week about remember your Creator.

And that remembering meant that you renounced the center of things. It means you renounced your broken explanations of life and you renounced your broken way of doing things and living for yourself and it means embracing God as the center.

And that is what God calls us to here again. what should we do in light of everything that He said? Well we place ourselves under His feet and we say I'm going to fear God and I'm going to obey His commands.

[34:44] He ends with the reason well why should you do this? And we've seen this again and again in this book. For God will bring every deed into judgment every hidden thing whether it is good or evil.

So why should you fear God and keep His commandments? Because God is going to judge you.

He has the right to judge you. He has the power to bring you into judgment and He has the right and the power to execute His judgment.

Nothing will be hidden. If you do your good deeds in secret where only your Father can see, He who sees in secret will reward you openly. And if you do your evil deeds in secret and you have the appearance of righteousness, God will bring your evil deeds to the light and He will punish you for your actions.

God is just. And that is the bottom line for Koh Leth. All these crooked things, God is going to straighten and He is going to vindicate the righteous.

Are the righteous dying early and the wicked living long? He's going to straighten all these things out. He's going to bring it all into judgment and He'll cast down the proud and every wrong will be righted.

[36:08] And that's the end of Ecclesiastes. That's where we end. And in some ways it is a very satisfying conclusion to know that all the wrongs I see in this world, God is going to fix them one day.

But there is a problem. Did you notice in verse 8, we read it last week, Koh Leth ended this book where he began it.

And where did he begin? Well, he began saying, Havel, Havel, everything is Havel, everything is chasing after the wind. And that's where he ends it here in verse 8.

Koh Leth's experiments, his pondering, his proverbs, it gave us useful tools to handle how to live in Havel.

But at the end of the day, it still exists. It exists for every single one of us. and he didn't do anything to finally get rid of it.

[37:25] He just gave us wisdom for living in it. And he didn't make the ache go away. And he didn't make the monotony go away.

And he didn't clear up the enigmas of life. And I think it was met, it was designed, in God's providence, to ask, to make us ask, there should be something more than this. And if you're like me, you're saying, but how do I get out of here? Havel is like living in a death row prison cell. It's just a matter of time.

And meanwhile, it's a miserable business. And I don't want to live here forever. And I want more than the wrongs righted.

I want a chance to live where things are right all the time. Everywhere, for everyone. And that is where Jesus Christ comes in.

[38:31] And he shines in a way that Colette doesn't shine. Listen to Matthew chapter 12 verse 42. And listen to it in light of Ecclesiastes and how Ecclesiastes ends.

The Queen of the South will rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom.

And now one greater than Solomon is here. And so remember, Colette is Solomon, or he's at least donning a Solomonic personality.

But do you hear what Jesus is saying? Solomon was wise and he imparted knowledge to the people, but I am wiser. What Solomon could not do and did not do, Jesus Christ is doing.

Because one greater than Solomon is here. Colette couldn't get out of the death row prison cell. He just taught us how to live in it. But Jesus has the key and he broke the bonds.

[39:43] And how did he do it? Well, it was through his death and his resurrection and his second coming. Listen to what Paul says in Romans chapter 8. Actually, turn there.

Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 and verse 19.

verse 18. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subjected to Havel, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from the bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope, we were saved, but hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. And so brothers and sisters, do we still experience frustration? We said we did. We're all groaning inwardly.

[41:30] And God has subjected the whole world to frustration, to Havel. When did he go to and how did he do that? Well, in the Garden of Eden, men fell and God cursed creation. And now it's only by the sweat of your brow. And after fighting thorns and thistles, that's when Adam would eat. So God cursed Adam, cursed creation. He cursed Eve. Now her whole life, her work of raising children up. It was going to be one of pain. But did you hear that glorious promise that was in Romans? God subjected it in hope. And what was that hope? Along with the cursing of Adam and Eve in the ground, God cursed Satan and he gave a promise that the seed of the woman would come and he would crush the head of the serpent and he would undo the curse.

And Jesus came. And he defeated Satan and he went to the cross and he crushed Satan's head. And he struck Satan's death blow.

And now there's a wound that will not heal and it will end in death. And then Jesus rose again. Jesus turned back the curse in his own body as he was raised in new resurrection life, a part of the new creation. And so here we are. Here we are presently. We have begun to experience this redemption.

creation. It has already entered into our hearts. If we are in Christ, what are we? A new creation. And so we knew we experience this new creation life in our souls, but our bodies are longing for their adoption.

And all of creation is groaning for freedom. It's groaning as in the childbirth. And it's in this hope that we've been saved. That the new creation is coming. And it's already come.

[43:48] In our hearts. And it's going to be finished. And the end. And when Jesus comes back, what will it be like? Revelation 21, verse 4.

In the next chapter it says, And so here we are.

We're in the already. And we're waiting. We're in this in-between time. And we participate in the inauguration of the new creation as we're saved and as we're born again.

But our hope isn't fully realized. But what does Paul say about that? Well, he says that's okay. Hope that is seen is no hope at all. And who hopes for what he already has?

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Do we suffer now in Havel? Well, yes. But Christ the Savior is coming and the old order will pass away.

[45:01] And what we prayed about tonight, before the service started, it's not going to happen there. And the pain that we feel as our children grow up and sin ruins our world and ruins our body in old age, it won't happen there.

The old order will pass away. And behold, he makes all things new. And so here's the conclusion of the matter. Christ is coming. And while we wait, fear God and keep his commandments.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. And God's people say, even so, come Lord Jesus.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that we have been saved to such a glorious hope.

And we thank you that you have told us that it is okay for us to be groaning in expectation, groaning in pain, as we experience the effects of the fall and of the curse.

[46:07] And thank you that you have cursed this earth, but you have done it in hope. And Jesus Christ has come, and he has begun to fulfill that hope. And so I pray, Father, that every single one of us would lay a hold of him, that in our hours of pain, in our hours of suffering, in our hours of frustration and monotony, that we would lay a hold of Jesus, and not only as having come, but as coming.

And that we have a hope that this world knows nothing about, that sees past the things of this earth, and money, and houses, and cars, and all the things that this world puts their hopes in, and it lays hold of a new creation, where all these old things will be past.

Lord, I pray that you would give us faith to turn away from these dim shadows, and turn to the light. I pray that you would give faith to any who don't believe.

Call them to yourself. Show them their broken idols. Show them their broken selves, their broken hopes, and broken dreams. And show them Jesus Christ, the one who can satisfy their hearts, the one that can give them a hope forever and ever.

Pray that you would do this for your glory. Will you be with all of your saints? Thank you that you are with us, that you will be with us to the very end of the age, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[47:41] What a glorious promise. Give us faith to believe it, to make it real in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, we sing of Christ's coming in hymn 238.

Let's stand as we sing. 238.