

# Accepting Things We Don't Understand

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] And as I gave some time thinking about that sandal situation this week because one of the local pastors was on the radio saying that all churches and pastors should join with the union.

! And if the union leaders say to shut the country down, they need to shut the country down. And so I realized normally when that happens, the press will pick up the phone and call and say, hey, do you agree? What do you think? And so forth.

But so trying to be ahead of that, I decided I would take a look for myself to see what the Employment Act really said concerning redundancy.

And what I found is that Sandals made those 600 workers redundant in accordance with the law, in accordance with what the law allows them to do.

And I thought, this makes no sense. Maybe I'm reading something wrong. So there are two lawyers who I would normally run things by, not my brother Paul, because he may just tell me what I want to hear, because lawyers could do that, you know.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] But I spoke to two independent lawyers and asked them, you know, am I reading this correctly? And they both said, yeah, that's right. What Sandals did is in accordance with the law.

And so you wonder, why is it that the head of the union, Mr. O.B. Ferguson, who is a lawyer, not telling the workers what Sandals did is in accordance with the law?

Why isn't the attorney general telling the public what Sandals did is not illegal? The law allows them to do that. The law says that if a business anticipates or is going to not need your services at all or at a reduced level, they can make you redundant.

That's what the law says. And so Sandals was going to close down for three months. No guests. Got the whole place, or at least a lot of it.

Rip up pools and move walls and refurbish the place. So they had no need for the staff. And so they let them go in accordance with the law. And what we have is we have what I would say is this game, this taking advantage of the ignorance of people and allowing them to go down a path, believing that they have some legitimate position and that you support their position, when that is really not the case.

[ 2 : 4 5 ] And let me just say this. While what Sandals did was legal, I have no doubt in my mind that they intended it to bust the union.

No doubt in my mind. They were taken to court the other day. They didn't like that. And so though they acted within the law, I think it is unethical to let people go, pay them out, and then hire them back.

They have lost the tenure they had, and they are just a regular employee starting on day one whenever they start again. So what Sandals did, in my view, not illegal, certainly unethical.

And I am not supporting, or I am not saying this to support the union, because the union, in my view, that particular union, the hotel union, and most of the unions in this country, in my view, are too strong.

And many of them break the law. Many of them threaten and hold the country hostage. And really what you have is you have sometimes unethical employers, and you have unethical unions and union leaders.

[ 3 : 57 ] So I am not in any way taking sides for the union. I am just mentioning in passing what is a very sad situation of manipulation playing on the ignorance of people.

But I listened to the news coverage of the job fair. One of the radio stations that I listened to went there, and they interviewed some of the employees, the former employees who were applying again for their jobs that they were made redundant in.

And one of the things that became immediately clear as you listened to the various people they talked with, it was immediately clear to me that some of these people were people of faith.

They sounded like Christians. They were affirming their faith in God, their trust in God, that he promised to take care of them and to meet their needs. And even if those people I heard weren't true Christians, I can guarantee you that among 600 employees at Sandals, some of them were genuine Christians.

But the truth is that what happened to all the others, unbelievers, also happened to those believers.

[ 5 : 19 ] They were all made redundant. They were all subjected to what I would call an ethical, unjust decision, legal but unjust, on the part of their employer.

But the Christians weren't exempt. The Christians were not kept on just because they were Christians and then the unbelievers let go.

And all of this is a reminder that this world that we live in treats the people of God the same as unbelievers.

And we come once again this morning to this truth, this hard truth about this world in which we live, in which righteous people and wicked people experience the same things.

This passage that we have come to this morning brings us once again face to face with this sobering reality. So if you've not done so already, would you kindly turn in your Bible to Ecclesiastes chapter 8.

[ 6 : 36 ] We begin reading this morning in verse 16 and we will conclude at verse 10. And for those of you who are joining us for the first time this morning, we are in a sermon series in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. And we begin this morning at Ecclesiastes 8 and verse 16.

Ecclesiastes 9 and verse 16.

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[ 8 : 35 ] Ecclesiastes 9 and verse 16. Ecclesiastes 9 and verse 16. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun. That the same event happens 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.

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.

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 and their envy have already perished.

And forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. Go eat your bread with joy.

[ 9 : 36 ] And drink your wine with a merry heart. For God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white.

Let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love. All the days of your vain life.

That he has given you under the sun. Because this is your portion in life. And in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do.

Do it. With your might. For there is no work. Or thought. Or knowledge. Or wisdom in Sheol. To which you are going.

Let's pray together. Father we thank you this morning for your word. And Lord I ask this morning that you would open our eyes.

[ 10 : 33 ] And open our hearts. To see. And believe. The truths in your word. I pray Lord that you would care for us.

From your word. As we navigate life. And as we. Find. That even though we are believers.

Some of the same things that happen to unbelievers. Also. Happen to us. I pray Lord that you would. Speak to our hearts. From your word. To enable us.

To. Live with these. Contradictions. That we see. In this world. And father. There may be specific. Ones.

Gathered this morning. Or whom may hear this recording. For whom. This is a live issue. And I pray that you would care for them Lord.

[ 11 : 34 ] Through your word. I ask for grace. To help me as I. Proclaim your word. Help me to be faithful. And I pray that your name.

Will be glorified. Through all that is said and done this morning. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So again. We have come to a somewhat lengthy passage.

In. The book of Ecclesiastes. And. As we consider it. We should ask ourselves.

What is the point? What is the. What is the preacher saying. In this passage that we've just read. What is it that we are to learn from it?

Here's what I believe we are to learn from this passage. In the midst of mysteries and hardships. Enjoyment of life.

[ 12 : 34 ] Is still possible. In the midst of mysteries and hardships. Enjoyment of life. Life. Is. Still. Possible.

For those of you who are taking notes. I have organized my thoughts about the passage under three headings. And the first one is. What we can't know. What we can't know.

The preacher tells us. What we can't know. In verses 16 and 17. And he says. We can't know. God's work. Notice again how he says it.

He says. When I applied my heart to know wisdom. And to see the business. That is. Done on earth. How neither day nor night. Do one's eyes. See sleep.

Then I saw all the work of God. That man cannot find out. The work that is done under the sun. However much. Man may toil in seeking.

[ 13 : 32 ] He will not find it out. Even though a wise man. Claims to know. He cannot find it out. What we can't know. Is the work. Of God.

This is the conclusion of a wise man. This is the conclusion of a man who invested. An incredible amount of time and energy. To try to understand human life.

And human activity. In this world. And the preacher reminds us. That our world is fallen. And that there is no true rest. Even for our eyes.

What the preacher is saying. Is that even when we sleep. He is saying it is really not true rest. It is not true rest. He says. This world. We have no rest. In this world.

Neither day nor night. Do our eyes see sleep. And while there is no doubt.

[ 14 : 27 ] The preacher recognized as well. That somehow he could see the work of God. But he just could not understand the work of God. He didn't understand how many of these things fit together.

And he tells us this. And even if somebody tells you they understand it. They don't understand it. And what we are saying. What we are coming up against. As we hear these words of the preacher.

Is we are coming up against this reality. Of the difference between the creator. And his creatures. This gap of knowledge.

This gap of the ability to understand. The work of God. This entire world is God's work. All of it. There is no part of it that is not.

But we will never fully understand it. And it is the work of God. It is the design of God. And so we must be content with not knowing. Content with not understanding.

[ 15 : 27 ] And that is an expression of humility. We don't need to toil. We don't need to go down that path. The preacher says to us. Save your time. Save your energy. He is going to tell us what we need to do.

But for now. He is saying. You just can't know these things. We just can't know them. And I wonder this morning. If we are aware of this.

Because sometimes we could think that you know. If I study hard enough. If I give enough effort to this. I'll be able to figure these things out. But we need to be aware.

That there are things. That we can't know. We need to be aware. That the works of God. Are withheld from our knowledge.

By divine design. And we need to be content with that. Adam and Eve. Were placed in a garden. And God gave them. Particular rules.

[ 16 : 24 ] He says. You can eat off. All the trees in the garden. But this one is off limits to you. And they weren't content with abiding within the boundaries that God gave them.

And so they breached those boundaries. And they sought to go after what God said. You are not to go after. Quite interesting. There was a tree of life in the midst of the garden.

That they had no interest in. They had interest in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were not content to live within divine boundaries.

They were not content to abide by God's rules. And the outcome was not a good one. So let's embrace the counsel of the preacher this morning.

Let's embrace the counsel of this wise man. Who is distinguished in scripture. Nobody else undertook the experiments. And had the experiences that he had with all of the things that we pursue in this life.

[ 17 : 27 ] And we try to understand in this life. He didn't understand them. And so let us not toil to know aspects of God's work that we cannot understand. Instead, let us accept them.

One of the works of God that the preacher had a hard time understanding. That he was preoccupied with. Is the fact that God allows the same things to happen to righteous and wicked people.

Bad things. The preacher was preoccupied with this. He couldn't figure it out. It troubled him. It vexed him. And we come to the third time in three chapters where he raises this issue again.

And this brings me to my second point. What we must accept. He's helped us to see what we can't know. And now he is going to direct our attention to what we must accept.

We can't know the work of God. And he says, this is what we must accept. And what we must accept is life's brokenness. The preacher tells us this in verses 1 through 6 of chapter 9.

[ 18 : 46 ] Now before we look in detail at what the preacher says in those six verses. Let me summarize what he actually says.

The preacher says it is an evil thing. It is an evil thing for the same thing to happen to righteous people and wicked people.

The ultimate thing being death. The preacher says it is evil and it is unjust for this to happen. But then he concludes by saying even though this is evil and unjust, he is saying life is still better than death.

In other words, this world is so confusing and so broken and so unjust and evil in the sense that the same bad things that should happen to wicked people, they happen to righteous people.

But he says, but don't check out yet. This world is still worth living in this world is still worth it. And you know what?

[ 19 : 59 ] I think every single person present this morning agrees with him. No matter what our hardships are, no matter what difficulties we face in this life, despite all those hardships, none of us wants to die.

Sometimes you'll find a person who has been injured, perhaps in a very bad accident. And they're fighting to live.

Fighting to hold on to life. And so the preacher is recognizing this injustice.

He's recognizing this evil of the same bad things that happen to wicked people happening to good people. But he says, as hard as that is, life is still worth living.

Now let's look in detail at what the preacher says. In verse 1, He begins by affirming that the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

[ 21 : 06 ] That's what he says in verse 1. Now this doesn't mean that the wicked and the foolish and their deeds are not in God's hands.

It doesn't mean that at all. But what the preacher is doing is the preacher is singling out the righteous and the wise and their deeds, because that's his concern. His concern is for them.

His concern is that for them, bad things happen to them. So he only has them in view for the moment. And he's acknowledging, he's saying, you know what?

He says, the righteous and the wise and their deeds, they're in the hand of God. And brothers and sisters, that is an important place for us to start this morning as we consider life in our broken world.

As we consider the fact that the same bad things that happen to sinners happen to us as well. We need to remember these words that we are in God's hand.

[ 22 : 09 ] So that's what he says. He says, the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in God's hands.

Let me say this before I move on. It is puzzling when good things happen to wicked people. It's puzzling.

But it's not troubling. It doesn't trouble us when we see a wicked person get some blessing, some good thing. We wonder about it. It puzzles us.

It doesn't trouble us. But when we see what should happen to the wicked, happening to the righteous, we're not just puzzled.

We're troubled by it. And sometimes, outrightly, we complain about it. So the preacher, in essence, is beginning by saying, I know that the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

[ 23 : 17 ] But he goes on to say, But who knows if in this life they will experience love or hate. In other words, good or bad. Pleasant things or unpleasant things.

He says both possibilities are before them. The preacher is saying that being righteous gives us no guarantees.

We're in God's hands, yes. But before us is love and hate. And we don't know which way it's going to actually go.

In verse 2, the preacher says, It is the same for all. So now he moves from the righteous and the wise, who and their deeds are in God's hands.

And now he says in verse 2, It is the same for all. Since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.

[ 24 : 27 ] As is the good, so is the sinner. And he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. So in verse 2, the preacher gives us these six contrasts between the righteous and the wicked.

And he's essentially saying, in this fallen, broken world in which we live, the same event happens to everyone. In other words, we're not exempt just because we're Christian.

In verse 3, the preacher says, This is an evil. It's an evil that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all.

Now one of the things I think we need to appreciate about this preacher is, clearly, he is one who believes in God.

You cannot read the book of Ecclesiastes without coming away and recognizing that this preacher is a man of faith. In the end of this book, he's going to say to us, hear the conclusion of the matter.

[ 25 : 38 ] Fear God and keep his commandments. Because that's the whole duty of man. This man is a man of faith. But he's also a brutally honest man. He's also one who's looking at life for what it is.

He's not hiding behind his faith and trying to just polish everything and make it look rosy and call it what it's not. He is being brutally honest as he says, The same event happens to all.

He says, This is evil. This is unjust. And you know what? If we live long enough, and I know many of us have, whether we have verbalized what the preacher said, we have wondered about it.

We have wondered about it. And some would even go as far as to say, Well, why even serve God? When it just seems like the same things that happen to the wicked, the bad things, they also happen to the righteous.

And even some of those good things that we would expect that the righteous should get, some of the good things perhaps we've been praying for, we see the wicked getting. And the preacher is just brutally honest with this contradiction that we see.

[ 26 : 57 ] And he says, It is an evil. And the reality is, we can identify with the preacher because, just like non-Christians, we get sick.

Our cars break down. We lose our jobs. Our spouses die. Our marriages break down in divorce and separation.

Hurricanes destroy our property. Yes, and like the wicked, we die. And sometimes we even die earlier than we expect to die.

And that loved ones expect us to die. And so even though we are people of faith, even though we are people who believe in God, we don't have to pretend that it's all good.

We don't have to pretend that it all makes perfect sense. Because it's not all good. And it doesn't all make perfect sense. And the reason it does not make perfect sense is because life is broken.

[ 28 : 05 ] This world is fallen. It wasn't always this way. It was not intended to be this way. God did not design it to be this way.

It was not meant to be. But all of this reminds us of the fall. All of this reminds us of Adam's sin. When he sinned and he plunged the entire world into sin.

As recorded in Genesis 3. And so we should accept this as followers of Christ, as a reminder that we are not exempt from the effects of a fallen world.

We are not exempt from living in a fallen world and all the effects that it brings to those who live within it. God doesn't give us a free from adversity card when we become Christians.

No, we live in this same fallen, broken world. We live with this awareness that we are in God's hands, those of us who are righteous. But yet, these events happen to us in the same way that they happen to the wicked.

[ 29 : 30 ] The preacher goes on to say something that all men have in common. Something else of you all have in common.

Look at what he says in the latter part of verse 3. He says also, Notice that in this statement now, the preacher doesn't distinguish between the righteous and the wicked.

He says, The hearts of the children of man are full of evil. He uses this universal description, the children of man. And clearly, the preacher is pointing to Adam's sin and pointing to Adam's race, all of whom he plunged into sin after his sin.

And notice where the evil comes from that we commit. The evil doesn't come from our hands or our feet or our mouths. No, the evil comes from our hearts.

It comes from our evil hearts. In this commentary on this verse, in his Ecclesiastes commentary, Douglas Sean O'Donnell summarizes well the words of the preacher when he writes, In Adam, all the children of man, and the Hebrew for man is Adam, spiritually and physically die.

[ 31 : 16 ] And between being born in sin and dying in our sin, we sin. That's our lot.

And again, it's the commentary on all of Adam's race. So when we look at the children of man as a whole, we see that death really is not an injustice.

Because this commentary is true of all of us. All of us. Our hearts are full of evil.

Madness is in our hearts while we live. and after that, we die. In a true sense, Adam's sin certainly affected us, plunges into sin, but you know what?

We committed our own sins. Put Adam's sin aside. Put Adam's sin aside, we have committed our own sins. And therefore, even though we see this injustice in terms of what happens to the wicked versus what happens to the righteous being the same thing, in the end, we all die.

[ 32 : 26 ] And truly, because of sin, we all deserve to die because the Bible says the wages of sin is death. But God's gift is eternal life.

You know, when we consider verse 3 of chapter 9, when we consider it from a secular point of view, from humanistic eyes with no awareness of God, no awareness of an afterlife, that is such a true description of life.

I mean, take God out of the picture. Take an afterlife out of the picture. Evil people live and evil people do evil things and then they die.

That is a surface view of all that life is about. And frankly, that's the view of a lot of people today.

There are a lot of people today who don't believe that there is a God, that there is an afterlife. And so, they do evil as they live. They do whatever they need to do to get by and they have no sense of accountability for when they die.

[ 33 : 44 ] But Scripture says it is appointed unto every one of us to die and after death the judgment. so we ought not live with any unawareness of that even though many are rightly rejected and they have no sense of accountability.

But you know, as bad as this broken world is, where the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, where evil people commit evil, the preacher tells us that life is still better than death.

That's what he says in verses 4 through 6. He helps us to see first, the importance of having hope in a broken world.

Notice what he says in verse 4. He says, but he who is joined with all the living has hope.

He who is joined with all the living has hope. We need to remember that. As long as there is life, there is hope. And hope is so necessary for this world that we live in that is broken and fallen and confusing and unpredictable.

[ 35 : 14 ] We need to maintain a sense of hope. And our hope is not just rooted in just hoping for some good things. Our hope is rooted in God.

Those of us who have trusted in him knowing that he says we are in his hands, both us and our deeds, the righteous, the wise, they're in the hand of God.

And to illustrate his point, the preacher uses this amazing illustration of two animals on the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of the way they were viewed in Israel.

He says a dead dog, a dog, was the most despised animal in Israel. Dogs were considered to be scavengers and considered to be unclean and they're not the way we view dogs today.

Dogs were despised. I think for us dogs are prized, but in Israel dogs were despised. And so he says a dead, a living, sorry, a living dog, not a dead dog, a living dog is better than a dead lion.

[ 36 : 32 ] And the lion would have been one of the most respected and revered animals in Israel and also in the animal kingdom. And he says a dead, a living dog better than a dead lion.

In other words, he's basically saying, you know what, this world with all of its brokenness and fallenness and difficulties and contradictions and all the other kinds of things, it's better to be at the end of the totem pole in this life than to be in the best grave.

Than to be king in the grave. So the preacher's point is that he is calling us not to despair on life, not to give up on life, not to abandon life.

He is still saying there is much to commend about this life. And just in passing, I would mention that in verse 5, I know there are seven Adventists who use verse 5 to support their doctrine of soul sleep and the absence of awareness after death.

But that's not the point that the preacher's making. And Ecclesiastes is not one of the strongest books that you want to look to build doctrine. And in any event, doctrine is not built on one isolated scripture.



[ 37 : 59 ] It is built on the witness of scripture. And all that scripture says about that particular topic. Not just an isolated text.

The preacher is simply making the point that the dead are fully cut off from this life. And in the context in which he was writing, he says that for good reason.

in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Michael Eaton points out that there are many cultures in the eastern world that had superstitions about contact with the dead as we do in the western world.

There are people who believe that you know the dead can come back sometimes and talk to you and hound you and all the other kinds of things. And Michael Eaton points out that actually among the Babylonians and the Assyrians it was customary for relatives of the departed to supply the graves with food and drink.

Because if you don't put it on the grave then they come into the house for it. And that's not a good thing. So they said you have nothing to come back for. You have all the food and drink that you want. Of course that's an unbiblical view.

[ 39 : 20 ] That was not the case in Israel. they had a biblical understanding of death that the dead are finished with this life when they die.

They die and they're soon forgotten and they have no more share in this life. That is what the preacher is saying. And so brothers and sisters this is something that we must accept.

we must accept that life is broken. We must accept that the contradiction of the same event happening to the righteous and the wicked is one of the realities that we will face in this fallen world.

We must accept that we live in a world filled with evil people who do evil things and death awaits us all. And when we think about this world filled with evil people with evil hearts we're not exempt.

We are part of that broad description. It's a sober description. No matter how nice we are no matter how well behaved we are no matter how saved we are at our core we are all evil people.

[ 40 : 42 ] And this is what theologians refer to as human depravity. that the effect of the fall has affected us to the depth and the core of our being.

So the preacher has reminded us of what we can't know. He has told us what we must accept and third and finally he tells us what we must do.

He tells us what we must do in verses seven through nine. what he says we must do is enjoy life. As morbid and as discouraging as the assessment of life on this earth is the preacher says here in verse seven go eat your bread with joy drink your wine with a merry heart for God has already approved of what you do.

Now this is not the first time that the preacher is saying this but this is the first time that he is saying it with the kind of volume and with the mood in which he is saying it.

Earlier in chapter eight verse fifteen he said I commend enjoyment of life. Here he commands it. In chapter eight verse fifteen he commends it.

[ 42 : 06 ] Here in verses seven through nine he commands it. He is essentially saying life is hard and uncertain filled with evil and you are going to die so enjoy life and make the most of your brief days on this earth.

That's what he means in this context when he refers to our vain life. That it's like a mist. It's a vapor. It's evaporating. It's a short existence.

And the preacher also says that this enjoyment that he is commanding that we pursue that God has approved it. And the reason is that all of the gifts that we are to legitimately enjoy are gifts from the hands of God.

God has given us these gifts. And so clearly this is not an invitation to indulge in sinful pleasure. This is not an invitation to indulge even in unbridled good pleasure.

pleasure. It is an invitation to enjoy the gifts, the good gifts that God has given to us that will bring pleasure to our lives.

[ 43 : 23 ] But as we enjoy these gifts we don't ignore the rest of scripture. Because the rest of scripture supplies the boundaries in which we are to enjoy these gifts.

we are not left to ourselves to determine what that is going to look like. No, scripture guides us in the enjoyment of life. And the four things the preacher commands.

First of all he says eat your bread and drink wine with a merry! heart. And basically what the preacher was doing was he was referring to the basic foods that they enjoyed.

and consumed in that culture which were bread and wine. They were the basic food. I guess something like corned beef and white rice or something. I don't know. But whatever we consider basic.

He's just saying your basic normal food. Your basic normal drink. Enjoy it. The simplicity of life. Just enjoy it. And again we are reminded that it's not the luxuries that are needed for enjoyment of life.

[ 44 : 30 ] It is simply the necessities that we need to have for the enjoyment of life. And I'll tell you something better than recognizing that God is supplying our needs and giving him thanks for it.

When we give grace what we're doing is we're giving thanks. We're thanking God for what he has given us. We're not to be mindful of what he has not in his providence given us.

But we have to thank him for the necessities not the luxuries because they're not needed for the enjoyment of life.

In verse 8 he says let your garments be white and let oil not be lacking on your head. And here he's speaking to comfort. He's speaking to the comforts of life.

Wearing a white garment and having oil on your head. First and foremost it spoke about celebration. That's the way they would be dressed when they were going to some feast. But it also spoke practically about what would have made them comfortable in that very hot climate.

[ 45 : 39 ] White garments would reflect the heat as opposed to absorb the heat like dark garments. How they would put on sack cloth and ashes when they were mourning, when they were not pursuing comfort.

He says let your garments be white. And having oil on their head was conducive to the hot sun beating down on their heads. It would lubricate their scalp and just help that whole experience to be more comfortable.

So he's encouraging them to pursue life's comforts. And then in verse 9 the preacher commands the enjoyment of marriage.

marriage. And clearly what is in view is romantic love and sexual intimacy and the enjoyment of that and the gift of that. Clearly he is a man in view.

Not sure why he doesn't have a woman in view, but he has a man in view. So he says enjoy life with the wife whom you love.

[ 46 : 44 ] And we see here the beauty of marital love. We see the fidelity of marital love being praised because it's one wife for all of your days.

One wife for all of your brief days. And this is our divine portion from God. This is a gift from God.

These enjoyments they make life easier in a fallen world. There is no closer relationship relationship that we can know on this earth than that of a husband and wife.

There is no more intimate sharing of life than a husband and wife, a man and wife. And two men will never know that, two women will never know that.

And this mutual support that we can know in marriage, in a fallen, in a broken world, is a tremendous gift from God. the companionship and the enduring nature of it is a gift from God.

[ 47 : 58 ] And then finally in verse 4, sorry, in verse 10, the preacher commends work. He commands that whatever we do, we are to do it with all of our might.

And this command to work and really to work hard balances out the enjoyment of life. And the reason is that actually it is only through working that we are going to be able to enjoy some of life.

If you don't work, you are not going to have anything to eat or drink. That's the way we get it. That's the way God has ordained that we should have it. If you don't work, man, to feed your wife, she is not going to be a happy wife.

And all the women say, Amen. They wouldn't be happy. This command about work is a positive command.

We should work with all of our might, whatever that job happens to be. Whatever it happens to be. I know there are some people who would slunk on a particular job, say, I'm waiting for that other job.

[ 49 : 09 ] When I get that other job, then I'm going to do, you know, he says, whatever your hands are doing, you are to do it with all of your might.

Here again in verse 10, and I point this out just because I'm aware of this being a reality in our community with Adventist teaching just being promulgated at almost lightning speed, but this idea again that we don't know anything when you're dead, but that's not the point the preacher is making in verse 10.

The preacher is making the simple point that when we die, we cease to have the same experiences that we used to know in this life. He says, we are all going to Sheol, and Sheol is the place of the dead.

In the Old Testament, that's the place of the dead. sometimes referring to death itself. Now, even though the core message of this passage is that in the midst of mysteries and hardships, life can be enjoyed, this passage really ends on a sad note.

Actually, this is a sad passage. Not only does it end on the note of death, but this passage actually is filled with death. Some eight times death is referred to either directly or indirectly.

[ 50 : 44 ] But death is not God's plan for us. One of the reasons that we fight to live, one of the reasons that when a person hears, even a believer, you have cancer, they fight.

They want to live. It's because God has put that in us. God created us not to die, but he created us to live. But death came into the world and death came to all men through Adam and through his disobedience.

But scripture says through the last Adam, through the second man, Jesus Christ, life, has come to us.

Eternal life is possible through Jesus Christ. And even though we will still experience physical death in this world, if the Lord tarries, if he doesn't come sooner, we may experience physical death, but we are promised something beyond physical death.

In John 6, 25, and 26, here's what Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

[ 52 : 06 ] And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. He's talking about two different kinds of death. he's talking about the physical death, that though you die, you will live.

And then he says, if you really believe in me, you will really never truly die. That's a promise that Jesus gave to Martha on the occasion of the death of Lazarus.

And then Jesus said to Martha, he says, Martha, do you believe this? And that's what I asked you this morning. Do you believe this? Do you believe that though this world is broken and though life is hard and filled with all of these contradictions and that we are all journeying towards a day of death?

Do you believe that that's not all that there is to it? Do you believe that for you, those whose lives are in God's hands, those who belong to him, that there's a resurrection, a glorious resurrection that awaits you?

And for you. The view of the preacher didn't have this in view, although the view of the preacher helps us to see why Jesus had to come.

[ 53 : 25 ] Jesus had to come because he is the only one who was able to overcome death. And you hear this morning and you have not put your trust in Jesus Christ.

If you have not trusted him as your Lord and your personal Savior, then you cannot say what Martha says, how she answered Jesus in terms of what would happen after death, that there's a resurrection for believers.

And so I encourage you this morning to to turn to turn to Jesus, to put your faith in him, to turn from your sins. And as you do, this promise will be yours.

And you will know that it's not just I'm born in sin, my heart is filled with sin and I commit sin and then I die in sin and then that's it.

No. Jesus Christ, as we were singing this morning in some of the different songs, he makes the difference that unrighteous, sinful, wicked people like us in and of ourselves can be declared righteous in the sight of a holy God because of what Jesus Christ has done on the cross.

[ 54 : 42 ] I encourage you this morning, if you're here, you don't know Christ, turn to him and put your trust in him. Let's pray.