

Dead Flies, Snake Bites, & Much Chatter

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Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

So I'm going to begin reading in verse 13. So Ecclesiastes chapter 9 verse 13. It said, I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me.

There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siege works against it. But there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench.

[1 : 27] So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.

Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool. If the anger of a ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest.

Verse 5, There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler. Folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place.

I have seen slaves on horses and princes walking on the ground like slaves. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall.

He who quarries a stone is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them. If the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength.

[2 : 45] But wisdom helps one to succeed. If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage to the charmer. Verse 12, The words of the wise man's mouth went in favor, but the lips of a fool consume him.

The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness. A fool multiplies his words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him.

The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city. Verse 16, Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning.

Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength and not for drunkenness.

Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks. Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.

[4 : 02] Even in your thoughts, don't curse the king. Nor in your bedroom, curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.

Grass withers, a flower fades, but the word of God abides forever. One of the more important Bible professors of our time is a man named Vern Poitras.

He's known for many different works, and for teaching at Westminster Seminary for decades, probably four. But his commitment to the Bible, his personal commitment to the Bible may be more impressive.

One of the seminary employees saw Dr. Poitras eating lunch alone in the dining hall, whispering over his Bible one day.

The employee, the co-worker, said, what are you doing? Dr. Poitras responded, memorizing the book of Habakkuk. The employee asked, why Habakkuk?

[5 : 13] I mean, Habakkuk, after all, is one of the minor prophets, not a book people often read, definitely not a book people often memorize. Dr. Poitras simply said, because it's the next one.

The next book he's memorizing. You know, after reading these 26 verses from Ecclesiastes 9 and 10, you might be wondering, why bother with these?

Why bother with these rambling verses on dead flies, snake bites, blunt axes, and birds running around? Why study?

Shouldn't we study something simpler with three simple points to take away to which we could respond because they're the next ones? The benefit of going to the Bible verse by verse and chapter by chapter is coming to passages like these that we wouldn't normally take up.

It allows God to set the agenda. It allows God to direct the content of our study and preaching. Rightly applied, this practice can help protect us from forming our corporate worship around a burden or a word I may have.

[6 : 29] Around a burden the congregation may have. A vision the prophetically minded may have. Or an experience we're all pursuing. This practice, in so many words, positions us to hear what God is saying in the next ones.

The next verses. J.I. Packer says it like this. Holy Scripture is, in and of itself, preaching. From one standpoint, it is servants of God preaching.

From another, profounder standpoint, it is God Himself preaching. The Bible text is the real preacher. And the role of the man in the pulpit is simply to let the passages say their peace through Him.

Holy Scripture is about God. It's about God preaching. And so this morning, our desire to position ourselves under the preaching of word and let the passage say its peace.

Let the Lord say its peace. Nevertheless, this is an odd section. It's like the preacher wants us to catch our breath.

[7 : 36] And you'll understand a little bit more of what that means after the next two sermons. But it's like he wants us to catch our breath before he brings this to a conclusion. Maybe one last, you know, fold up your tray tables before he brings this down to a conclusion.

He said a lot of things about a lot of things. And rather than rushing on to the next thing, he wanders around for a bit and throws in tidbits about any number of things.

But that doesn't make it easier to read. In this short section, Solomon jumps from short story to several proverbs, to case study, to comparisons, to sayings, and to finally a command.

Martin Luther says about these verses, Solomon really does make some harsh transitions. This one's full of harsh transitions, but several things tie together.

11 times wise or wisdom occur. 10 times fool, fools, folly, or foolishness occur. This section is making clear what all of wisdom literature, that is Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Job, make clear there are two ways to live.

[8 : 50] The way of the wise and the way of the fool. But running through this section is a powerful warning that the way of the wise and the way of the fool may not be that far apart.

In a word, where we're going is, watch out, it's so easy for a little folly to wreck wisdom's blessing. Watch out, it's so easy for a little folly to wreck wisdom's blessing.

First point of five is a little sin can destroy much good. A little sin can destroy much good. Solomon begins by telling us a short story.

In verse 13, he says, he saw something great, something important, something significant to him. So this is more than just kind of passing by something. He saw something that's very important to take away.

The story goes that there was a little city with a few men in it. Few men means very little protection for it. And a great king came over. There was a, but inside this, a great king came and he came to take over.

[10 : 05] But inside this city was a poor, wise man. He wisely advised the people of the city how to get out of the situation and he delivered them.

But afterwards, no one remembered him. Much like Joseph who interpreted the chief cupbearer's dream and made the cupbearer promise to remember him to Pharaoh only to be completely forgotten.

So too, no one remembered this poor man. No one remembered what he did for the people. Look in verse 16. More than that, the poor man's wisdom was despised and his words are not heard.

Proverbs 10, 7 says, the memory of the righteous is a blessing but the name of the wicked will rot.

But not always, Solomon says. Sometimes the wise man's name rots.

But the forgetting of this man, perhaps this is why Solomon says it's significant, the forgetting of this man was not accidental. It was not out of sight, out of mind. Hey, he served us great in that time.

[11:14] We just forgot, you know, he got old, whatever. It was intentional. Solomon said, his wisdom was despised. Then he adds, look in verse 18, wisdom is better than weapons of war.

Clearly talking about that little short story. But one sinner destroys much good. One sinner, perhaps the one sinner in this scenario is the king.

perhaps the king was grateful for this poor man who helped him out in a time of need but was not ready to listen to a poor man sinfully assuming that because he's poor he's better than him.

So his sin took away much good. Perhaps the king wasn't willing to listen to anyone. You've met those people being sinfully wise in his own eyes which is the unpardonable sin in Proverbs.

He's unable to hear from anyone sinfully assuming. He's got all the answers so indeed one sinner can destroy much good. One sinner can mess up everything.

[12:24] We live in a world where wisdom continues to offer great blessing but is easily frustrated by one little sin. sometimes in the story it's just one little sinner.

It could be a boss who barks out orders and is too self-important to listen to the cost-cutting money-creating ideas you have to offer. It may be a former friend who gossips about you and slanders you making it difficult for you to live a different life.

It may be a family member. Now Mark 6 says a prophet is not without honor except in his own town among his relatives even his immediate family.

It could be family members who refuse to believe that anything good could come out of you.

Whoever it is their sin makes life difficult makes it difficult to change to grow to bear fruit to walk in wisdom and so one sinner destroys much good.

Nevertheless, Solomon says don't give up on wisdom. Look in verse 16. He says, I say that wisdom is better than might even though the poor man's wisdom is despised.

[13:42] It's still better. Verse 17, the words of the wise heard and quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war.

Wisdom is better but it's vulnerable. In a fallen world it's vulnerable to one little sin.

Point two, a little folly can outweigh much honor. A little folly can outweigh much honor. I mean, Solomon continues from there into a few proverbs.

Look in verse 1 of chapter 10. Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench. So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

That's a vivid picture, isn't it? Dead flies are very small creatures. We all know that. We swat them. But if they get caught in perfume and die, who's going to squirt that on their body?

[14:42] You know, they immediately begin to not only just be there and decompose but to stink. And so the perfumer's ointment is precious and valuable.

Literally, if you see that parallel in the second half, it outweighs. Well, weighs there is a meaning of value. And so perfumer's ointment is very valuable.

It weighs a lot. It's worth a lot. But its value is destroyed by a tiny little fly. Now this is important. The same is true with wisdom, he's saying.

You may become wise and gain the respect and honor that wisdom brings, but one foolish act can bring it all down, can take it all away, can ruin all the wisdom of the way you've lived.

Doug Wilson says, a little folly in a wise man is far more visible than a little wisdom in a fool. That's helpful. That's what's going on. You know, like ketchup on a white shirt, regardless of how well you iron the shirt, the only thing people see is ketchup.

[15:49] So too, the respect and honor that wisdom brings is ruined by a little folly. We've seen this so many times. You've seen it in the culture. You've seen it in perhaps your life.

But many, wisdom may build you a good name and a great reputation over many years, but just a little folly can destroy it all in the blink of an eye. It's a whole lot easier to destroy something than to build something.

The principle is true. You can destroy anything in a moment. The danger, though, is not just a little folly.

The danger is that a little folly leads us on the path of folly. Look in verse 2. A wise man's heart inclines him to the right. Fool's heart inclines him to the left.

That's not a political statement by the preacher. Life is divided, he's saying, into two paths. The path of wisdom, wisdom in the path of folly. References to the right and left are emphasizing the fact that wisdom and folly are going opposite direction.

[16:54] They're not the same path. Wisdom going one way, folly going the other, but all it takes is a little folly to change everything. Just like a little leaven leavens the whole lump, so a little folly spreads and changes who you are and where you're going.

That's what he's saying. And folly goes from a little ketchup on your shirt to driving and directing your heart, the control center of life, the place from which all your hopes, fears, dreams, desires, and decisions come from, so much so that you can't tell right from left.

Do you understand? That's what he's saying. The heart is so corrupted by folly. You can't tell the right from left. Like they said of the inhabitants of Nineveh. They didn't know their right hand from their left hand.

It's not talking about what you're supposed to learn in first grade. It's talking about they didn't know good from evil, didn't know right from wrong, didn't know wisdom from folly anymore.

And that's what happens when folly gets into your heart. Worse still, perhaps, when it's in your heart, it doesn't stay there.

[18:07] Everyone knows you're a fool because you tell them. Look at verse 3. Even when there's a fool, even when a fool walks down the road, he lacks sense.

Literally, he lacks heart. And he says to everyone he is a fool. Now this is a fascinating little scenario. Are we supposed to, imagine this guy walking down the street saying, hi, I'm Tom. I'm an idiot. You know, I am a fool. I mean, it's a funny scene, but the point is he doesn't have to tell anyone. He doesn't have to say a thing.

We live and breathe and broadcast who we are. Jesus captures the same principle by the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

So the heart, this control center of life, just goes wherever you are, announcing. See, are you on the path of wisdom, path of folly, wherever you go.

[19:16] If you are a fool, folks see that. As quick as they see ketchup on your shirt. If you're wise, they'll see that too. The proverb introduces a sobering truth.

We think the path of wisdom is found in moderation. That's what we think. We think just a little bit won't hurt.

A little bit of flirting won't hurt my marriage. A little bit of tipsiness won't hurt or affect my life. A little bit of unforgiveness won't harden my heart.

A little bit of prayerlessness won't deaden my soul. A little bit of making out. Just a few bases won't matter. But folly is like poison.

A half a poison pill won't kill you less. A half a poison pill will kill you just the same. In his book C.S. Lewis captures this well in *Scrutate Letters* indeed the safest road to hell is the gradual one.

[20:34] We need wisdom. Catch this. A gentle slope the soft underfoot without sudden turnings without milestones without signpost.

It's a wake up call. Solomon continues though with a surprising truth.

Look in verse 4. If the anger of the ruler rises against you do not leave your place for calmness will lay great offenses to rest. Now that's kind of odd placement.

When the ruler is angry it seems best to get out of his way. Right? To let him do his thing. Let him blow off his steam. But Solomon is saying that just makes matters worse.

He says don't leave your place. When foolishness has a stronghold and somebody who knows life when it seems like there's nothing else you can do hang in there.

[21:37] A little thing like calmness can make all the difference and lay great offenses to rest. Point 3 a little misstep can ruin much good.

A little misstep can ruin much good. Verses 5 to 11 our text continues with a case study. There's a ruler who makes an error. That's literally what the text says.

He makes an error. He promotes the wrong person. He puts the wrong man in charge. He makes a mistake. You know though all men stand before the judgment of God on equal footing everyone is not given the same gifts or abilities.

Our culture constantly talks about how the same opportunities ought to be available to everyone but that denies the reality that though everyone is created in the image of God everyone is not created the same.

Unity does not mean uniformity. The wise leader therefore must discern who the best candidate is not the one who meets the quota who satisfies the crowds and if he only does it for those reasons it will not go well even if the leader is just trying to do what's right.

[22 : 54] It won't go well. That's what happens in the case study. Look in verse 6. He says after the leader's error folly is set in high places. He's given a badge and a crown.

The rich sit in a low place. I've seen slaves on horses and princes walking the ground like slaves. What he's saying is not meant to be denigrating different roles in society. What he's saying is princes are called to lead. They shouldn't be exchanged for foot soldiers. And foot soldiers aren't fit to lead. A little unintentional error of the ruler has very negative consequences.

But the same is true in life. A little error can make things unravel. A little mishap can make life grind to a halt.

One of my favorite stories from Buddy and Judy is about their car. When they lived in El Paso, they were planning to drive across country to Ohio, but they needed to change out two tires for their road trip.

[24 : 04] Buddy was laid up from a knee surgery, so he arranged a trip to the mechanic and asked him to replace the two bald tires with two new tires.

There were two good tires, two bald tires, and they wanted two new tires to replace the two bald tires. Well, they finished up the car and they packed it up.

They headed east, I guess. They headed out of Texas and back to Ohio. Halfway through West Texas, they blew a tire. Buddy, I'm sure, is scratching his head getting out of the car.

Buddy realized the mechanic had removed the two good tires and replaced them with two new tires, leaving them with four old bald tires.

That's supposed to be funny. Here they are stuck in the middle of Texas with a blown tire and three bald tires. Now, crutches from Buddy's surgery may or may not have been thrown into the hot Texas dirt.

[25 : 12] A little error and a little mishap ruins everything. The text continues with a string of comparisons along the same thing.

Theologian Mike Tyson says everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth. Solomon adds life is like a do-it-yourself home project filled with punch after punch of misstep and mishap taking quadruple the time and all your money from Lowe's.

Look in verse 8. He says he who digs a pit will fall into it and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries a stone is hurt by them. He who splits logs is in danger by them. The point is he who digs a pit accidentally falls in. He who breaks through a stone wall unexpectedly is bit by a snake hiding in the stones.

He who quarries stones is hurt by dropping one on himself. He who splits logs is hospitalized after a run-in with his chainsaw. Life is filled with mishaps, missteps,!

[26 : 13] all you have to do is go to work to get hurt. But wisdom calls you to prepare ahead of time. Look in verse 10. He says, if the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength.

But wisdom helps him succeed by sharpening the axe. Verse 11, if the serpent bites before its charm, then there's no advantage to the charmer.

Now that's a little bit confusing, but the idea is, you know, he may have a degree in charming snakes, but if he doesn't use the charm, he doesn't get the advantage of the degree.

Does that make sense? So you've got to use the charm to not get bit. Well, what he's saying is wisdom is the same way. Wisdom unused is unhelpful and leaves you in the same place that folly does.

Derek Kidner says it like this, we're being urged to use our minds and to look a little way ahead. The person we call accident prone has usually himself to blame.

[27 : 17] He should have known. He should have taken care. Wisdom must be applied to help. The principle resonates with the rest of Proverbs.

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who's hasty comes only to ruin. No one lives a wise life who doesn't plan to.

Wisdom doesn't come by osmosis or by app updates. Wisdom comes by bowing and listening. You know, to be wise, you must plan for it. You don't get out of debt without a budget. You don't get happy. You don't get a happy marriage without intentional time. You don't enjoy home projects without preparing ahead.

You don't become content without daily devotion to the Word of God. You don't become wise by living in the moment flying by the seat of your pants. If that's all you're doing, don't be surprised wisdom doesn't come.

[28 : 22] That's what he's saying. Wisdom must be applied. Wonderfully, there's a promise here. Wisdom then is not innate.

It's not a spiritual gift. It's not an intellectual endowment. You know, it's not something you receive in your hard wiring.

Wisdom is received, learned, put into practice by anyone. Anyone can become wise. And becoming wise and planning ahead ensures you aren't ruined when the missteps, mishap, and mistakes happen.

Because they will. Point four, a little word can reveal much madness. madness. A little word can reveal much madness. Our text continues with a few proverbs on words.

Look in verse 12. The words of the wise man's mouth went in favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. That's just striking. Literally, consume there means to chew him up and eat him.

[29 : 30] That's why it switches from the words of the wise to the lips of the fool. Because the lips, the words, the place from which the words come, is doing the consuming, not of someone else or some food, but of yourself.

The words of the wise man went in favor, but the lips of a fool consume his life, wreck his life. Look at verse 13. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness and the end of his talk is evil madness.

There's that word evil again. It's recurred throughout this book. The words, the fool's mouth and the fool's words begin with foolishness. It's not talking about being dull or dense or slow on the uptake.

The fool's words, what he's saying, they don't begin with the fear of God. They don't begin with bowing to listen and to hear. Thinking about what God thinks and what he wants.

the fool rather begins with himself. Man is the measure of all things. The fool begins there. If we laughed at him earlier walking down the street announcing that he's a fool, we're not laughing anymore because the fool's words begin in foolishness but end in evil madness.

[30 : 47] Tragic delusion is another translation. The idea is just a real insanity brought caught on by his foolishness.

What begins with ungodly wrong thinking ends in senseless madness. What begins in foolish questioning ends in a fog of delusion thinking that he knows what is right, that where he's going is right but not realizing he's completely wrong.

The fool is caught in a fog of delusion. I remember hiking up several years ago up Huckleberry Knob, top of Terahala Skyway and a massive fog just landed on us.

You know, that was an eventful trip for a number of reasons I can't go into right now but this massive fog moved in and we couldn't see anything. Barely see your hand right out in front of you.

That's what he's saying the fool is. He lives in a fog. What he thinks he knows, he doesn't know. What he thinks he understands, he doesn't understand.

[31 : 59] He's deluded and deceived but he doesn't stop talking. That's the sad reality. Look in verse 14, a fool multiplies his words so no man knows what is to be and who can tell him what will be after him.

He's the fool like James 4, we'll go to this town and do this. You know, but doesn't say if the Lord wills, he's deceived, he doesn't know what's to be. I mean, Proverbs made that very clear, no man knows what is to be, what's to come, what is going on, what will be after him, but he keeps talking and talking and talking and talking though he doesn't know what he's talking about.

In C.S. Lewis' book, the magician's nephew, the magician is Uncle Andrew, he's a brilliant man, a profound student, a great thinker, powerful magician, and he knew it.

But what he didn't know was what was plain to everyone else, that he was a feeble coward, a greedy fool, a dishonest man.

One of the characters said about him, the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider is that you really are, than you really are, is that you very often succeed.

[33 : 19] And that's what the fool does. Becomes more and more stupid in the biblical sense.

His life just continues to unravel. Look at verse 15, the toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city. The toil of his life, the toil of this evil madness wears him down and wearies him so much so, he doesn't really know anything anymore.

He's a type of man who would get lost if you put him on an escalator. Because that's how blind he is to life.

And Solomon is warning, it all began with his words. It all began with his mouth. Who knew something so small could cause such destruction?

Something so little could cause great damage. James 3 says the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire.

[34 : 30] And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, standing the whole body, setting on fire the whole course of life, and set on fire by hell.

James compares it to a rudder, to a bridle, and a horse's mouth. Why? The only reason you can do that is because the tongue is connected to the heart.

It's just expressing what's going on. And so this little foolish mouth is directing you into all sorts of foolishness. Point five, a little king can cause much destruction.

A little king can cause much destruction. Our text concludes with a cluster of verses about a good king and a bad king. Verse 16, Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, your prince's feast in the morning.

Happy are you, O land, when your king is a son of nobility, and your prince's feast at the proper time for strength, not for drunkenness. There are few greater blessings, biblically understood, than good leadership, than leaders who work when they're supposed to be, who roll up their sleeves, who do the unseen but very important things that need to be done.

[35 : 50] There are few worse things than poor leadership, than a little king. Go read Judges. You want to read what happens when leadership is withdrawn.

All you get are these little kings, little leaders. Feast in the morning, rest during the day, party through the night. That king, that man, he's just a boy.

That's what Solomon's saying. He's just a boy. Then he continues, verse 18, through slaw, the roof sinks in, through indolence, the house leaks.

Bread is made for laughter, wine gladdens life, money answers everything. A little king fails to do what needs to be done, and the roof sinks in.

It's meant to be a hilarious image, or hilariously sad image. Roofs in those days were flat, covered with material like lime that needed constant attention to keep from leaking and decaying.

[36 : 58] Nothing but inattention. It's not hard work. Nothing but inattention causes him to leak and decay.

And that's what the king does. He fails to give just attention. Nothing but inattention is only needed, or nothing but inattention is needed to bring down a kingdom, a business, a house, a marriage, and yet inattention is what all too common among little kings, little leaders, and little men and women.

Bread is made for laughter. Wine makes life better. Money answers everything. Now, I think we're supposed to almost laugh there. Money answers everything.

The idea is he's intentionally overstating things. Bread and wine, as we studied last week, are tremendous gifts. Money too is a gift, but all of them are empty in the hands of little kings who eat too much, drink too much, and think money will solve all their problems.

Then it concludes verse 20, be careful what you think or say about this little king. Even in your thoughts don't curse him, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.

[38 : 29] We like to say the little bird he told me. Maybe that's where it came from. Even in your thoughts don't curse him, lest the little bird he tell the matter.

So watch out. It's easy, so easy, for a little folly to wreck wisdom's blessing. Now what do we take from all this? Taylor and I were laughing this week.

I think every passage of Ecclesiastes, some commentator says this one is the hardest one. I think I've said that like five times, you know, from this pulpit, but this one, I read that about this one, and I think, you know, it's a rat race, you know.

There's all sorts of hard ones. But what do we take from this? In his classic film, Lawrence of Arabia, Lawrence finally has an honest conversation with his friend Ali about what he's really facing deep inside.

Lawrence said to Ali, Lawrence wants a man of pride and indomitable will. He said, I've come to an end to myself, Ali. Ali said, a man can be whatever he wants.

[39 : 45] That's what you said. Lawrence said, I'm sorry, I thought that was true. Ali said, but you proved it, you proved it with your life, you proved it was true. Lawrence opening up his shirt and grabbing the flesh of his chest, said, look, Ali, that's me.

There's nothing I can do about it. There's nothing I can do about it. Ali said, a man can do whatever he wants. You said it yourself.

Holding his chest, he said, he can, but he can't want what he wants. He can't want what he wants. This is the stuff that decides what he wants.

On the one hand, this passage says we must not be foolish. on the other hand, this passage says we must not just be wise because folly is always at hand.

Folly is bound up in our hearts. Viewing these verses from all of Scripture, I think the way to live is not found in following the principles of wisdom or avoiding the pitfalls of folly.

[41 : 00] The answer is found humbly by following a person. Jesus Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He alone can change what we want. He alone can change our hearts. He alone can make us new and lead us into a wise and godly life.

I think the preacher leaves it intentionally gray so that we might find the answer not in a rule book or not in throwing away a rule book but in following a person, Jesus Christ.

God does not want you to clean your act up. God doesn't want you to offer a sacrifice. God does not want you to rededicate your life. God wants you to say, I need help.

I need wisdom. wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, not because you fear something, but because you finally start to listen. You'll say, I can't do it.

[42 : 09] I can't change me. I need to be made new. I need a savior. I don't care who you are or where you are or what is going on. The promise of wisdom and the promise of wisdom, capital W, is Jesus Christ and he's offered out to you this day.

wonderfully, though he was rich, he became poor. Wonderfully, though he was great, he became little.

Wonderfully, though he was mighty, he became weak. Much like our little problems seem to be, but the weakness of God is stronger than men.

So that all who believe in the little word of the gospel, might be made new and promised an inheritance when the kingdom comes in full. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, thank you for these words. Thank you for the person of Jesus Christ. It shows us wisdom and rescues us from chasing or from striving to hold our life together on the right or the left.

[43 : 22] gives us the fear of God. We pray that you'd help us now. Give us grace.

In Jesus' name, amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

Thank you,