

Searching for Answers Amidst the Questions of Life

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Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[0 : 00] Starting in chapter 7, verse 15, we read, In my thing life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perished in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil doing.

Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time?

It's good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them. Wisdom gives strength to the wise men more than ten rulers who are in the city.

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.

Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. All these I have tested by wisdom, I said, I'll be wise. But it was far from me, the which has been as far off and deep, very deep.

[1 : 21] Who can find it out? I turn my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.

And I find something more bitter than death. The woman whose heart is snares and necks, and whose hands are fetters, he who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.

Behold, this is what I find, says the preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found.

One man among a thousand I find, but a woman among all these I have not found. See this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

Who is like the wise, and who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.

[2 : 38] I say, keep the king's command because of God's oath to him. Be not hasty to go from his presence.

Do not take your stand in an evil course, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, what are you doing?

Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. For there is a time and a way for everything.

Although man's trouble lies heavy on him, for he does not know what is to be. For who can tell him how it will be? No man has power to retain the spirit or power over the day of death.

There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. All this I observe while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.

[3 : 48] Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity, because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily.

The heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him.

But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous.

I said that this also is vanity and a combined joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

[5 : 03] When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, how night or day or 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, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you so much, Joanne. Well, good morning, everyone. Let's pray together as we look at this wonderful passage.

Heavenly Fathers, we come to your word this morning. We really want to hear you. We want to hear your word and your wisdom to us. God, as Oscar reminded us this morning, some of us are weary.

Some of us are anxious. Some of us have been searching for the good life. Some of us are discouraged. God, we pray that your word will both provoke us, but more than that will encourage us, will draw us near to you.

[6 : 13] God, this morning I pray as you draw near to us and your word, won't you help us by your spirit to draw near to you, to trust in you, to hold on to you. God, as we've prayed many times before, even my words, I pray if anything is not of you, won't they fall on deaf ears.

God, we want to hear you speak to us this morning. So come and help us, God. Give me grace to open up your word and so we can hear from you. We pray this in your wonderful name. Amen.

I wonder if you've ever found yourself sinking in quicksand. Maybe you haven't found yourself in mud, but you've gone for a hike up a hill and you find yourself in soft sand or shale and you take one step forward and it seems like you fall back three or four and you're making negative ground.

I wonder if you've ever felt that life is like grasping a handful of sand that the more you try and grasp it and hold on to it, the more it slips through your fingers and in the end you've got hold of almost nothing.

I wonder if you've ever found yourself searching for answers and the more you search, the more questions you come up with to your answers and you find yourself even more lost at the end of the search than you were before.

[7 : 33] I wonder how many of us feel frustrated or maybe exasperated by the lack of control we have over life. It seems like so much of life is really beyond our control.

Have you ever found yourself being frustrated by the injustice of the world? You find somebody who is honored and esteemed and revered and looked up to and yet trailing behind him or her is a trail of injustice and abuse and yet an upstanding, good, righteous man or woman just seems to be marginalized, trodden over and ignored.

Today as we come to Ecclesiastes 7 and 8, our teacher continues with his reflection of life under the sun. Remember Ecclesiastes, there's two authors and most of the book is written by this man who observes life under the sun.

He knows there's a God out there but it's not the God that's the covenant-keeping God of Israel. It's not the God that breaks in and is involved in his life. He observes life under the sun.

He's noticing and reflecting what does life look like if all you do is just observe the world around you. And today he's wrestling with these things that leave him frustrated and exasperated.

[8 : 50] In his search for the good life, the teacher, Kohileth, has walked into three brick walls that are in his path and have stopped him finding what he's looking for.

There's a constant refrain. I don't know if you picked it up when Joanne was reading to us. It's the refrain, I cannot find. I cannot find. He says it seven or eight times in the passage. But look at the final verse of our passage.

8 verse 17. He says, Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out.

Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. And throughout our passage, he keeps on saying, he cannot find what he's looking for. You know where this is going, right?

If the theme song of Ecclesiastes chapter 3 is turn, turn, turn, the theme song of Ecclesiastes 5 and 6 is, I can't find no satisfaction, rolling stones.

[9 : 51] The theme song of chapter 7 and 8 is, but I still haven't found what I'm looking for, right? You too. That's what he's getting at today. I cannot find.

I cannot find. Everywhere I search and I look, I still cannot find what I'm looking for. In this passage today, the author is searching and longing for three things, three brick walls that he runs into.

The mystery of wisdom and righteousness, the illusion of control, and thirdly, the yearning for justice. Let's dive in. Now, the first one's going to be the longest.

So, if you feel like after the first one, boy, this is going to be a three-hour sermon, don't worry, we'll come into land eventually. So, firstly, the search for wisdom and righteousness.

By the way, if you need a Bible in front of you today, or a bulletin, we're going to be looking at a lot of the passages. You're going to need it in front of you. Now, in the first section, chapter 7, verse 15 to 29, he's going to talk a lot about this search for wisdom and righteousness.

[10 : 56] Wisdom and righteousness. Now, in Hebrew thinking, wisdom and righteousness always are two sides of the same coin. They always go hand in hand together.

And the reason is because they have their source in the same being. Wisdom and righteousness find their source in God, God alone. Wisdom, according to Hebrew Scripture, is the skill of right living, living life rightly.

And righteousness is loving what is right. Okay? So, wisdom and righteousness always go together. Do you remember how Proverbs says, the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

That's where you start off with wisdom. And the result of wisdom and righteousness is prosperity, abundance, and life. And conversely, wickedness and foolishness always go hand in hand together because their origin, their source, is in the same source.

The rejection of God. The rejection of God as designer and creator of life. Remember Psalm 14 says, the fool says in his heart, there is no God.

[12 : 06] And the fruit of foolishness or folly and wickedness is death, destruction, ruin. That's what the Bible constantly says.

Except our teacher, when he looks at life, that's not what he finds. He finds it the other way around. Look at verse 15 with me. He says, In my vain life, I have seen everything.

There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness. There is a wicked man who prolongs his life and his evil doing. He's grappling with the paradox of life around him.

For him, life is not working out the way that it's meant to be. Here is a righteous man and he's dying. Here is a wicked man and he's prospering. He's saying, life is not working out the way it's meant to be.

Life, for him, wisdom is disappointing. It doesn't turn out the way. It doesn't deliver what it promises. Friends, have you ever felt like this? Maybe you're at the office and you make a decision.

[13 : 08] There's a difficult situation and you choose to take the ethical decision. You're not going to do what all your colleagues do. You decide to do what's right. And what happens? You get sidelined and marginalized.

And one of your colleagues decides to cut corners, fudge the truth a little bit, not quite honest with your boss. And what happens? They get promoted. And that's what the teacher's grappling with.

What's his conclusion here? Verse 16, The teacher suggests, listen, if you want to make life work, don't be too righteous.

Don't be too good. I mean, righteousness and wisdom is good. But hey, if you need to make life work, if you need to get ahead in life, you need to dabble in a little bit of foolishness, that's okay. Just try and follow the middle road somewhere.

Now remember, the teacher is not giving us orthodox biblical teaching. Right? He's describing life under the sun. He's saying, listen, I've observed life.

[14 : 22] This is all I can see. If you want to get a life, be wise, be righteous. But don't be too wise. Don't be too principled. Sometimes you might just need to take the middle road.

He's saying, wisdom sometimes disappoints us. It doesn't give us what it promises. It doesn't lead to the abundant, flourishing life that I expected it to.

Look at the other brick wall that he runs into. He says, wisdom is limited. Sometimes it's beyond us. Look at verse 19 to 21. He says, wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers to a city.

Okay, that's good. So he's saying, wisdom and righteousness benefits a city. It's a good thing for a city, a civilization. Oh, but there's a problem. Because look at verse 20.

But surely there's not one righteous man on earth, one who does good and never sins. Here he's saying, imagine a city that is full of wise and righteous people.

[15 : 23] What a wonderful place to live. Right? All you lawyers, sorry, you're out of a job. There's no public prosecutors anymore. There's no more defenders. A city's full of people that are caring and considerate.

Everyone's law abiding. Everyone's a good neighbor. Everyone is caring towards their friends and their neighbors. Everyone's thoughtful and wise. What an amazing city to live.

Oh, but the problem is no such city exists. Wherever there's people, there's sinners, he says. Surely there's not a righteous man on earth who never sins and always does good.

And how do you want to know? If you want to know that this is true, how do you know that it's true? We'll look at verse 21. Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.

He means slandering you, gossiping about you. For your heart knows that many times you've done that to others. Right? So he's saying, wisdom and righteousness, right living, good and rewarding.

[16 : 28] Its benefit to society is obvious. Better a city full of good citizens than a city full of good laws and regulations. Laws and regulations don't make a city prosper.

Wisdom does. Righteousness. How wonderful to have a city that's full of good citizens. Oh, the problem is that city never really exists because there is no city that is full of perfect people.

Friends, can I say, there's no church that is full of perfect people. Every church is full of sinners that are broken like you and like me. And he says, how do you know that?

Well, just consider the person sitting next to you. No, no, he doesn't say, consider your own life, right? None of us are perfect. The problem is who is completely wise?

Who is completely righteous? Which city or society has ever existed full of people that are completely wise and righteous? Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

[17 : 28] The limits of wisdom and righteousness. If only we could find a place where we could be like that. But it's always beyond our grasp. Even, the teacher says this, the problem with wisdom and righteousness are twofold.

One, he says, is that it doesn't deliver what it promises. But two, even if it did, none of us are completely wise and right. But look at the third thing he says here.

He says, the problem with wisdom, it's evasive. It's like trying to grasp a cloud or a mist. As soon as you grasp it, it's out of your hand.

You can never quite find it. What about the person who truly seeks wisdom? The person who truly seeks the answers to life's big questions and who's determined to find them and to live by them.

Someone who says, okay, fine, everyone else, they're a mess. The rest of the city, okay, they can do what they want. But as for me and my household, we are going to live rightly. We are going to pursue wisdom and righteousness.

[18 : 32] Well, look what he says in verse 23. He says, all this I've tested by my wisdom. I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me.

That which has been is far off and deep, very deep. Who can find it? The teacher is on a quest. To find wisdom.

To find right living. He wants to find the skill of living right and he wants a heart that loves what is right. But the problem is, he says, I can't seem to find it.

The teacher is like a deep sea diver with his goggles and his snorkel that is diving deep to try and find the Titanic on the ocean floor. And the deeper he dives, the more disorientated and lost he becomes.

Look at verse 25 and onwards. He says, I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom, to find the scheme of things and to know and to understand wickedness and foolishness and madness.

[19 : 40] But I found something more bitter than death. A woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. Fetters means like chains.

He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. Behold, this is what I found, says the preacher, while adding one thing to another to another to find the scheme of things, that which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I could not find.

One man amongst a thousand I found, but a woman amongst all these I have not found. Now, this passage is very perplexing and challenging, right?

Look at what he says. He says, I sought for wisdom and behold, I found a woman. And how does he describe her? More bitter than death.

What's going on here? Well, it's a couple of different things. Some people suggested the teacher is clearly a misogynist, right?

[20 : 41] Because, I mean, it's a thousand B.C., men didn't treat women very well. He's saying, listen, women are foolish, and if you're going to, all they're going to lead to is just trouble and difficulty in life, right?

Men, stay clear of women, they're going to lead to problems. Okay, maybe, maybe not. Some people have said, no, he's warning us against the sexually loose woman, the lure of the lustful woman, right?

Because he describes her as her heart is a net and a trap. Her hands are chains. Don't be ensnared by her. But I think that misses the point altogether.

Remember, the book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Old Testament Jewish wisdom literature. There's five books in the Bible that are part of wisdom literature. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.

And the pinnacle of wisdom literature is the book of Proverbs, right? That's kind of like the high point of wisdom literature. Well, in the book of Proverbs, chapters 1 to 9, personify wisdom and foolishness as two women.

[21 : 51] It's kind of like, you know, in Central, there's the statue of Lady Justice. She's blindfolded and she holds the scales. And it's a picture of a personification of justice.

Well, Proverbs says the same thing. It personifies wisdom and foolishness as these two women. Lady wisdom and lady foolishness. And Proverbs says both of them stand on the street corners, lady wisdom and lady foolishness, and they call to passers-by to come and dwell with them, to come and live with them.

But the problem is lady wisdom and lady foolishness have two very different characters that lead to two very different consequences. And so the whole point of Proverbs 1 to 9 is beware of lady foolishness.

That's going to lead to death and destruction. Set your heart on lady wisdom. Okay? So that's what's going on in the background here. So look at what the teacher says here.

I turn my heart to seek and to find out and to search for wisdom. But what happens? That which my soul has thought I could not find. I have found one, a man in a thousand, but a woman amongst all these I have not found.

[23 : 01] The teacher is searching for lady wisdom but all he does is he finds lady foolishness wherever he goes. It's like a man who knocks on a hundred different doors and every time he knocks on the door who opens the door?

Lady foolishness. And he goes to another door and he opens the door and he says maybe life and prosperity and wisdom is found here and he opens the door. No, it leads to death.

And he says maybe life and prosperity and contentment and abundant life will be found here and he opens the door and all it is is lady foolishness. Look what he says verse 27.

This I found while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things. What he means is by observation. I looked here, I searched there, I searched there, I've added all my observations together and what have I found?

I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Friends, by searching for wisdom with only human wisdom and human observation, what he finds is the opposite of what he's looking for.

[24 : 08] He is searching for lady wisdom for life's answers to questions but all he finds is more questions. He finds foolishness.

Friends, I wonder if you can relate to the teacher. Maybe you've been searching for the good life. You've been searching for the answers to life.

Looking for contentment and hope and deep peace and the abundant life. Maybe you've gone and you've knocked on the door of love and romance and you've downloaded the dating app and you've tried one date and you've tried another date and you've tried another date but all of them have not, you haven't found the deep abundant life that you've been looking for.

Friends, maybe some of you feel like the problem is not with those people out there, the problem is with me. Maybe I'm the wrong gender. Maybe if I change my gender that will be the answer to deep contentment.

Then I'll find peace. Then I'll find, I'll finally be at peace. And so maybe you've gone a knocking on that door. But as the door's open, you haven't found the contentment or the peace that you're looking for.

[25 : 25] Whereas maybe some of us have knocked on the door of career success and you think, if I can get on that management trainee program and I can get that extra qualification, finally I'll make it into the broad and wide road and then my life will be set.

Then I can sit back and life will finally be made. And as you've progressed through your career one step into the other, you still have not found what you're looking for. And the lesson that the teacher wants us to find is this.

If you go looking for ultimate answers to life's big questions by your human understanding and your wisdom alone, you will tire yourself out. Because you will never find the answers that you're looking for by human wisdom.

The answers that you're looking for, the deep peace, the deep contentment, the abundant life that you're looking for is not found by looking within yourself and is not found by exploring all the things out there.

Those, the answer, the revelation must come to you from outside of yourself but it's got to come to you. The answer to life's questions don't come from within, they come from another source to us.

[26 : 35] And how do we know that? Well, look at verse 29. Because the preacher doesn't find the answer he's looking for but he does find something else. He says this, See this alone I have found that God has made man upright but they have sought out many schemes.

The teacher has noticed that God has designed mankind with a moral compass. He says that there's a compass within us, there's a navigation system inside of us that is meant to lead us to the truth but the problem is our navigation system is broken.

It's been corrupted. There's something wrong. He says, God has made man upright, that means virtuous, but we have sought out many schemes. His searching has revealed that the wisdom and the righteousness, the truth and the goodness are not merely social constructs, they're not merely tools of economic oppression as Karl Marx would have us believe.

They are lodged deep within us, they're part of our DNA, they're hardwired into us. But the problem is that a corruption has set in so we can't find the way that we're meant to.

It's kind of like he says the navigation tools of our heart are corrupted and broken. The problem, says the teacher, is that mankind keeps on missing wisdom and he cannot find it out.

[27 : 57] It's like the navigation systems of our hearts have gone wonky. Imagine you're on your phone and your GPS system is broken down, right? And you're trying to find that place you go to. So it says go one direction and suddenly it says go another direction and suddenly you've got to turn.

You can't find what you're looking for. He says God has made man upright virtuous. He's made man with an assistant to find the right way to live but the schemes of man we've broken, we can't find our way.

This I observe, God has made man upright but they have become corrupted by seeking out many schemes. And the teacher's onto something here. He says ultimately the problem with our minds is ultimately a problem with our hearts.

He says that sin has corrupted the compass of our hearts. The reason we can't find, we can't live right is because we don't know what is truly right.

The reason we can't find ultimate truth is because our hearts have been magnetized by sin. You know if you have a compass and you hold a magnet to it it messes up the compass? That's what sin has done to our hearts.

[29 : 01] And so just because something feels right doesn't mean it is right. We long to do what feels, we long to, we seek what we want but we want all the wrong things.

And the reason we stumble in our search for what is true and right and good is because we cannot find what's true and right and good. Because our truth seeking instruments of our hearts are off kilter.

And so the question is this, where are we going to find one who will bring us wisdom and righteousness? Where are we going to find one who truly is a righteous man? Who never sins and has done good on the earth?

Where are we going to find that outside revelation that's going to come in and lead us back onto the paths of righteousness? Well the answer is Jesus Christ did come and to be our wisdom and to be our righteousness and to lead us and to be our redemption to bring us onto the paths of righteousness.

There's a fascinating verse in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 Paul writes and he says the wisdom of God is wiser than the foolish no, let me get that right.

[30 : 11] He says even the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man. Even the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of man. And he goes on and he says God has made God has shamed the strong things of this world through his own weakness.

And he's talking about Jesus' death on the cross. And then he says this, he says Jesus Christ came to be our wisdom and our righteousness and our redemption. Paul is saying this, the way to true wisdom and righteousness, the way to find truth and life, the way to living the right life is not through self-discovery, it's not by diving deep into philosophy and to the many things of life, it's not by searching out wisdom and truth on your own by your own observation, revelation, it's found in a person.

It's found in revelation coming to us from outside of us. And what is the ultimate revelation of God? It's the person of Jesus. Jesus Christ came to show us wisdom and righteousness.

Jesus Christ came to be for us wisdom and righteousness. Jesus Christ came to us so that all those who trust in him and look to him may not find every answer in life, but he will lead us on the paths of righteousness and wisdom.

Psalm 119 says this, Your word is a lamp to my feet. Well, Jesus Christ is the ultimate word made flesh. Those who trust in him, those who follow him, will not find every path lit up, but they will find the light to their feet leading them and guiding them.

[31 : 49] Jesus said, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the path to life. Friends, Jesus doesn't promise that if you follow him, suddenly all your questions will be answered.

Jesus doesn't say, follow me and I'll give you the cheat sheet to life. I'll give you the secret code book and you'll know everything you need to know. But he does promise you to light up your path. He does promise to guide you in the way of wisdom and righteousness.

Jesus came to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our redemption, that those who trust in him are no longer left floundering in the dark looking for the answers to life.

The teacher is searching for wisdom and righteousness. Okay, does that make sense? Okay, thank you, Oscar.

The second thing, the second brick wall that the teacher runs into is the illusion of control. The teacher wants to find, he walks into the brick wall of human control and he discovers that he's not quite in control of his life as he thought he was.

[33 : 01] Look at chapter 8 verses 2 to 4. He says here, I say, keep the king's command because of God's oath to him.

Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil or rebellious cause for he does whatever he pleases for the word of the king is supreme and who may say to him, what are you doing?

Now, the basic idea here is that all of us are under some kind of authority, some kind of authority over our lives that we are not the supreme authority of our lives.

the basic idea here is that if you try and bend the authority that you sit under to your will, you are going to encounter some strict limits in your ability to do that.

He says, who can say to the king, what are you doing? The king is an authority over you. So for instance, if your boss has rejected your proposal to him and you keep on harping on about that proposal, it's not going to serve you very well in the long haul.

[34 : 11] Sometimes you just got to realize he's the authority and I've got to listen to him. If you argue with the traffic officer about the laws of parking in Hong Kong, you can argue as much as you want but that's not going to change your illegal parking ticket that you just received, right?

If you argue with the judge about the outcome of the case, it doesn't matter how much you tell the judge whether you like his ruling or not, he is the judge and you are not. There are certain limits to your authority or your ability to control the outcome of life according to your will.

Does that make sense? So he's saying you are not sovereign in life. You are not ultimate authority in what happens. You are under authority in this life. But now, he says the word of the king is supreme.

Kicking against the limitations of human sovereignty is like punching a brick wall. Only one of you are going to come off second best and it's not going to be the brick wall. But you ask, but what about the king?

Is the king under any authority? I mean, especially, you know, 1000 BC, the king is supreme, right? His word goes. Whatever he says happens. So what about the king? What about billionaires?

[35 : 25] What about those world leaders that sit on top of the world? I mean, they are not subject to any authority. Surely they can do whatever they want. Well, look at verse 8. He says, no man has power to retain the spirit or power over the day of death.

He says, you think of yourself as all power without any constraints? You're destined to be disappointed because no matter how much power or how much authority you possess in this life, there are some things that even kings and billionaires have no control over.

The most powerful leaders in the world, they've got control over nuclear bombs and military arsenals and economic levers and parliaments and political powers. Even dictators have great power.

There are some things that even the most powerful dictators in the world have no control over, like the day of their death. No man has power to retain the spirit or the day of his death.

Look at the second half of verse 8. there is no discharge from war. He says, when that final battle comes that each one of us are going to have to fight, you can't call in sick on that day.

[36 : 36] There's no sick leave on the final battle that you've got to fight. You can't call in the substitutes. You can't say to your coach, hey, I'm injured, call in the subs. You can't tap out of that final battle.

There is no discharge from war, he says, nor will the wickedness deliver those who are given to it. He says, even those who thought that they could strike a deal with the devil will not be delivered from that day.

Ultimately, he says, every human being, sovereignty is limited. You are not God, he says. And the point that the teacher is making this is, think of yourself as sovereign over your life, as the captain of your fate, the master of your destiny.

That's an illusion that is soon going to be shattered. You are not in control of your life any more than you are in control of the weather or the wind. Friends, I wonder how many of us can relate to that.

How many of us feel frustrated by our lack of control in life? Maybe you're here in Hong Kong and you've got parents that are abroad and they're sick and you desperately want to go visit them and COVID hits and regulations and quarantines and you're stuck here and you want to get to go see elderly parents but you just cannot get to them.

[37 : 53] Friends, maybe you've got a career path for yourself and you think I'm going to do this, I'm going to study, I'm going to go abroad, I'm going to get some experience, I'm going to jump on that management path and my career is going to be set.

And every step of the way there's one setback after another after another and your life just can't get moving. Friends, maybe you have a child and you hear of and your child is sick with COVID and you think I don't care what they say, I will not be separated from my child when I go to hospital and you go to hospital and you just realize there's just a limit to how much you can put your foot down.

Friends, you see what the Bible is telling us? You are not in control of your life. It doesn't matter how much authority you have, how much power you have, how much money you have, the limits of your sovereignty will eventually, you will run into that brick wall.

And so what is the resolution? there is one who is truly sovereign. There is truly one who is Lord of all creation, who lives beyond the limits of time and space, the limitations of our world.

There is one who Isaiah says, for him, the nations of the world are like dust on a scale. One breath and they're all gone. There is one who truly brings galaxies and stars and universes and multiple universes into existence and being.

[39 : 20] Friends, there is one who sets up kings and removes kingdoms, who sets up empires and can blow them over in a day. There is one who is truly sovereign over all creation.

Do you remember the words of the disciples when they're in the boat with Jesus? They said, who is this man that even the wind and the waves obey his voice? Friends, there is one who is sovereign even over the grave, over life, and death because the tomb that he was put into 2,000 years ago stands empty and he lives and he reigns.

And he says that for those who trust him, those who come to him, those who surrender to him, even the final, the one thing that is beyond all of our control, death itself, even that he has conquered and mastered.

And so the apostle Paul writes in Corinthians and says, death, where is your sting? Death, where is your victory? Even the one battle that none of us can beat, it has been beaten because there is one who is truly sovereign and Lord of will.

There is one king to whom every king and empire and dictator and sovereign will one day bow the knee. Jesus Christ is truly sovereign and Lord.

[40 : 35] And so friends, when you run to the brick wall of time limits and the limits of your authority and your autonomy, when you come to the end of yourself and you can do no more, Jesus Christ stands ready and saying, come and turn to me.

Come and trust me. Jesus doesn't promise that he will make you sovereign. He doesn't promise that he will overcome all the limitations of your life. Jesus doesn't promise to give you every answer and to solve every frustration.

But he does promise that if you come to him, he will give you a peace. He will give you a wisdom. He will give you an understanding that will transcend even the roadblocks of this life.

Come to him. Now friends, the third part of our passage, I'm going to skip over, we're not going to get to it. It's the yearning for justice. And in this passage he says, I went to a funeral and I saw this man and everyone honored him and esteemed him and praised him and everyone said about what a wonderful man he was, but actually he was a scoundrel.

Where is justice? And then ultimately he says, oh, there is one who has got to bring justice to bear. Friends, in this world of paradox, searching and injustice, you may never find the answers to your questions.

[41 : 47] But there is one who has true wisdom, who has true righteousness, who is truly sovereign, who truly administers justice and mercy, who truly holds the keys to righteousness, who has come that we may no longer need to walk in our own wisdom.

Friends, this week you will run into the brick wall of your wisdom and righteousness. You will come to the end of yourself. And when that happens, turn to Jesus, the one who is wisdom and is righteousness and who is justice.

Friends, this week you will run into the brick wall of your sovereignty and your control over matters of life. And when that happens, turn to Jesus, the one who truly is sovereign and truly is control.

Friends, this week you will run into the brick wall of injustice and things will happen and you will think, where is the justice in that? And when that happens, turn to the one who truly brings righteousness and justice and mercy to it.

The one who will come and judge the living and the dead. Friends, don't trust in yourself. Don't trust in your ability to find the answers in life. Don't trust in your ability to make it in life.

[42 : 52] Don't trust in your ability to get through life. Turn to Jesus, the one who came from outside of this world into this world to save us, to rescue us, to give us what we need.

And to lead us on the paths of righteousness. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus Christ, this passage is challenging, but it's inviting.

God, you confront us with our own limitations. The limitations of our own wisdom. The limitations of our own control of life.

But God, that confrontation invites us to come to you. God, I pray for my friends, my brothers and sisters, I pray for myself. Lord, I pray that this week, God, when we run into the brick wall of our own limitations, may we in that moment turn to you.

God, may we come and bow our knee to you. May we surrender freshly to you. God, may we for you. Maybe this morning you feel the frustration and the exasperation of having run into one brick wall of another.

[44 : 05] Maybe you've knocked on a hundred different doors looking for the answers to life, looking for the answers to right living. And every time the door's been opened and it hasn't satisfied, it hasn't given you the answer that you're looking for.

Friends, why don't you freshly come to King Jesus this morning? Why don't you come and surrender to Him and hand over your life to Him? Friends, maybe you're a Christian this morning, but actually, if you're honest, you've lived like an agnostic.

You've lived by your own wisdom and your own understanding. Why don't today you change that? Why don't today you freshly come and surrender to King Jesus? Friends, maybe you're here this morning and you're not a Christian.

Jesus Christ says He came to this earth to die on the cross and to rise again. so that you don't need to save yourself, that you don't need to have all the answers for your own life. Jesus came to bring ultimate truth and revelation and wisdom to save you.

Come and bow down to Him this morning. Lord Jesus, come and have Your way in our lives, we pray. Today, God, come and have Your way. We hand over our lives.

[45 : 17] We surrender. We bow down to You. In Your wonderful name we pray. Amen. Amen.