

Let's go. Ecclesiastes, chapter 3. Let me catch you up to where we were in Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes 3, most of you are familiar with this chapter because of the band, "The Byrds." They sang a song in the '70's, "To everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn..." They sang a wildly popular song, and it's word for word out of the book of Ecclesiastes. And what we said two weeks ago was that this is not just a list of things that happen to us in life but rather a list of things that God sends. So, God is responsible for both joy and sorrow, and that sorrow for God's children is not wrath but mercy. So, He heaps these things on us like ingredients. Like, nobody likes to eat flour, but everybody likes to eat cake, and no one eats cake without flour. And so, He's the one that mixes the ingredients together, and He does to to make everything beautiful in its time, to put eternity into your heart and into mine and to create mystery in life, mystery that produces faith, faith being the thing that pleases God. And so, the author of Ecclesiastes would say this, "So, what do you do in light of this? When things are good and things are going well and you've got money and food and love, enjoy life. Drink it deeply, laugh hard and enjoy life. And when things are bad and things hurt and there's no money and no food and you're eating Ramen noodles for three meals a day and there's no love, cry hard and enjoy life. Now, for the rest of Ecclesiastes, he's going to raise one of the objections for that. In fact, for the next two chapters, he's going to raise objections to this kind of line of thinking. But what he's going to do for the rest of chapter three is, he's going to say a series of statements, but then he's going to ask two questions. Here's what I want us to do with our time this morning: I want us to answer his question, alright. He's going to ask the same question twice. He's going to ask it once, reword it and ask it again. I want us to answer his question. That's the goal this morning, alright.

Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, we'll start in verse 16, "Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness." Now, here's all he's saying, "If this is true and God sends what God sends, then here's my question: What do we do when there are places that were created for goodness and righteousness but righteousness is not there? The court system, marriage, the church, what happens when there are these places that God says are safe that are there to protect us and they don't protect us and they don't end up being safe?" I'm not going to address it today; I'm going to address it next week because chapter 4 starts with the exact same problem with this philosophy of living. Look at verse 17, "I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work." He address it just very quickly by saying, "God will handle it eventually, if not in this life, after this life." Verse 18, "I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts." Here's what Solomon just said. He said, "At the bottom level of all things, we're just as dumb as the animals, and we are no better than them." If we are cornered and threatened, we will do the same thing an animal does. We will run or we will attack or if you're a guy like me, you'll slap and run, which is a hybrid of the two, alright. If I think I can outrun you, you're going to get slapped in the jugular and I'm running for it, alright. I don't really stay and fight, I don't feel like I'm a coward, I like the hybrid. So, we're no different than the animals. Verse 19, "For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity." Now, this goes contrary to what we've been taught. We've been taught that we have an advantage over the beasts. What's the advantage? Yeah, the opposable thumb. So, we have this advantage over the beasts. Here's what Solomon says, "You're going to die, and your thumb's going to rot like his claw. Who cares?" He says, "Okay, so we've got this great brain and we can fix stuff and we can build stuff. We've got all these things that we can do, and when all is said and done, you're going to die just like Bootsie the dog or Gilbert the hamster, whatever pet your kids talked you into that you currently regret." Okay, so who cares what you do, because in the end, there's no difference between you and the animal.

You both die. Now, look at the next line, "All go to one place." Now, let's sit and chat here. The one place they go is not heaven or hell. This is not talking about whether or not Bootsie in or gets judged and damned, alright. This is "all go to one place," that place, being the grave. I don't know what happens to Bootsie. Here we go, "All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?" Here's his question, "What happens to a man when he dies?" That's his question. "What happens? Does he go up? Does he go down with the beasts? What happens to a man when he dies?" Let's look. Verse 22, "I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot." Same question, reworded, "Who can bring him to see what will be after him?"

Now, let's chat a little bit about Old Testament vs. New Testament. Let me kind of talk to you about the relationship that exists between these two hunks of books. Basically what happens in this Old Testament/New Testament relationship is the Old Testament asks the question and the New Testament answers it. The Old Testament paints a picture, and the New Testament explains the picture. The Old Testament is prophecies and promises made, and the New Testament is promises fulfilled.

So, here's what I want us to do. I want us to answer Solomon's question this morning. What happens when a man dies? Now, there are three main lines of thinking. Number one and least popular among mankind, nothing. He dies, and nothing. It's over. It's done. You just had the days that you walked here on Earth. When you're dead, nothing happens, no heaven, no hell, no purgatory, no nothing. You just cease to exist. Now, there is a very unsilent minority that believes this, but I promise you, look up any poll or statistic that you want, and the majority of mankind all across the world does not ascribe to this. There are those that do, but they're not the majority of men and women. That's number one. The second view is that when men and women die, they come back again in various forms to try to make right what they did wrong their last time around. So, maybe they come back as a man, maybe they come back as a butterfly, maybe they come back as a flower, but they've got to right what they did wrong in the previous life. And they'll continue on this cycle until they nail it, and then they get nirvana. And that's reincarnation. So, that is more popular than nothing. And there's a great hunk in the world that believes in reincarnation or that they come back in the same form or a different form. Now, the majority of the world believes in the third model, including almost every religion out there, including vast amounts of Evangelicals. Here's what they believe. You die, I die, and we go stand in front of some deity who has these giant scales. And that deity takes all of our good works and he puts it on one scale, and he takes all of the bad things we've done and he puts it on the other scale, and he hits the button and it begins to weigh out, while we sit there whimpering to ourselves. And when the scales finish, if the good outweighs the bad, then we get some kind of reward. Now, I'm not here to talk heaven vs. hell as much as I am here to talk to you about process, alright. So, if you do more good than bad, you get some kind of reward. If instead, you do more bad than good, then you get some kind of punishment. Maybe it's eternal, maybe it's just a few thousand years, maybe it's fifteen minutes, depending on how much you were off. Were you off a pound or were you of a ton?

Now, there are massive philosophical and Biblical issues with all three of these. Here's the problem with the first idea that nothing happens. It is the largest gamble in the universe. Like, I'm a risk taker. I've had a lot of out-patient surgeries, a lot of stitches, a lot of broken bones. I've got another one slated for November. Apparently, the knee doesn't bend that way. So, I tend to just jump first and hope for the best. In leadership, I tend to be risky. "Let's do it. Let's go do it." I need to put guys around me who are a little bit more, "We should probably read the instructions first." "Give me the hammer!!!" That's how I'm wired. I am very much a risk-taker. These are dice I don't want to throw. Because if you're wrong, you're wrong.

Here's the problem with the reincarnation idea. No one remembers where they wronged last time around. So, you are stuck in a hopeless cycle of trying to nail something the first time you've ever done it. Here's what I mean. Let's say

you've never played basketball in your entire life. You've never played, you've never seen a ball. And some of you are like, "Okay, I'm with you." It would be like me throwing you the ball, walking away, not giving you the instructions and having you walk out and score 45 points with 20 assists and 6 steals. That you would play the perfect game with no one telling you the rules. Does that ever happen? No, it doesn't happen. Every once and a while you'll find the one guy that goes, "I remember exactly who I in a previous life. I was a gypsy in India, drinking tea when a ladder fell on me and killed me." Every once and a while, you find a guy that says he remembers. Most people who even believe in the doctrine of reincarnation will tell you, "I do not know what I did. I do not know who I was or what I was or what I did in a previous life." And so, you get stuck in this hopeless cycle of trying to do better than you did before without knowing what you did before. It's gut wrenching.

Here's the problem with the model that most major religions and a load of Evangelicals ascribe to, the scale model. The scale model is more broken than the other two combined, I believe. If you put good here and bad here and weigh them out, that makes God unjust and wicked. Let me explain how. There is no court in the world, no matter how wicked or depraved, that would ever be able to operate like that and not get overthrown by its people. Here's why. When you break the law, let's say you're doing 92mph in a school zone, when you break the law, you incur the wrath of the lawmakers. Now, don't think "wrath" as in getting struck by lightning or something. Wrath is just opposition. That's all wrath is. The word wrath means "steadily building up opposition against." And so, when you break the law, there is opposition against you because you broke the law. Now, when you go to court, let's make it bigger, let's say you're guilty of rape and murder, the judge does not go, "Rape and murder, now let's look at the rest of your life. Okay well, you're good church folk, you haven't had any other priors, you coached little league...." And they list out all the good and then go, "Hmm. You know what, your good outweighs your infraction, so we'll let the infraction go." Would a judge who did that be just or righteous in any way? Absolutely not. In Texas, he's going to get killed. That might fly in the Northeast; you're going to get killed here. You don't go, "Well you know, outside of the murder and rape, he's a classy guy." No, the crime has to be punished. If the judge does not judge the wrong, then he is completely unjust. The scale model makes God wicked. Are you tracking with me? So God cannot just throw everything on a scale and click it and wait for everything to weigh out and then ignore the bad side of the scale. To do so makes Him wicked.

So, what happens when we die? So, how does this thing work? Because I'm telling you, a slew of Evangelicals believe exactly what I just said, that if they do enough good, they put enough good stuff on that side, that in the end, God will be happy with them. Here's what I want to do. I want to see what the Bible says about all of this. I want to see what the Bible says. We're going to jump around a little bit today to answer Solomon's question, "What happens when a man dies?"

Let's go to Romans 5. I just want to warn you very early in the sermon that here in a few minutes, I'm going to have you turn to Ezekiel. So, I'm just warning you out of the gate, alright. But for now, Romans 5. The majority of Americans believe that they are going to heaven because they're good enough, because their good scale outweighs their bad. Now, I just names on problem, and that's the problem of God being unjust. Another major issue with that is, how do you ever see what the scales are weighing at? You never know what the score is, if you will. The other major problem with this is, you should be able to look around and find somebody worse than you. I mean, if you can't, you're in prison, aren't you? I mean, if you can't turn on the TV and go, "I'm not perfect, but that guy..." You're not in here if you can't do that. And so, these are all problems. Let's look at how this thing works in Scripture. Romans 5, starting in verse 12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man.." Anyone know who the one man is? Adam. Just a little thing to think on for later on. Ever picked the fruit and ate it, who does God blame? Yeah, interesting reading, isn't it? I've heard a lot of guys who go, "Oh, you women...." God blames Adam. He didn't say, "Sin entered through Eve." Anyway, that's another sermon. "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..." So here's that happened. When sin entered into the world, through that little debacle with Adam and Eve, the DNA of the universe fractured, and it fractured so badly that to this day, it affects and infects all

of us. The DNA of the universe fractures in such a way that everyone born of Adam from that moment on is born sinful and broken. So, sin is not a state of actions that occur once you know the difference between right and wrong; sin is something you're born with, and those actions later on are a symptom of the problem.

Are you tracking with that? Because preachers love to say, "This is sin, and this is sin, and this is sin..." And those things might be sins, but they're symptoms of a greater reality and that's the fractured DNA. Now, if you're not a believer in Jesus and you got suckered in here, someone's like, "Come to brunch with me," and then brought you here and gave you a little packet of Little Debbie donuts or something, and here you are and maybe you don't believe me and maybe you do, let's talk about it this way. The entire world, every talk show, every magazine is trying to solve, fix or work through the fact that something's gone wrong in humanity. And listen, if this was not true, Larry King would not have a show, Oprah would definitely not have a show. Every magazine you buy is a step study on how to do life better because you aren't working right. There wouldn't be any book stores, because 80% of all bookstores are self-help books. So, if you don't want to say, "Okay, Adam and Eve bit into an apple and that's why we're all messed up," that's okay, but you've got to admit that something's gone horrifically wrong here and that everyone's trying to fix it, mostly to no avail. Okay, here we are, in 2006, after the age of Enlightenment, how are we doing on solving that whole war issue? Not well, it's really bad right now. It's gone really wrong everywhere. So, Adam brought sin into the world and fractured our DNA so that you and I are born broken. And we'll talk more about that and I'll give you some evidence about that in a little bit.

So, let's look at how God fixes it. "If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" Okay so, sin enters through Adam, fractures the DNA, creates a groove in the soul of man that only eternity will fill. So, in order to take care of the bad side of the scale, something has to absorb that wrath. If you watch Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" and saw the brutality of what happened to Jesus, what you were witnessing was Jesus absorbing God's wrath towards the bad side of the scale, so that for those of us who believe in Christ, what's on the bad side of the scale is removed or rather covered by the shattered broken body of Jesus Christ. And so, for those who believe in Christ, all of this culminates on the day of judgment.

Now, this is where you get your church words, "heaven" or "hell." Listen, heaven is very much a mystery. I'm always nervous about people who think they've got it down, specifically when the text says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." And so, you've got this heaven thing that all I know is the expanse and fullness of God being known. And people ask, do I think hell is this burning lake of fire that an angel throws you in, where you cook for billions and billions of years. I don't know, but here's what I do know about it. The Scripture's very, clear that hell is the absence of God and everything good and perfect comes from God. That's what we do know. Now, this is big picture.

Here's what I want to do with you very, very quickly. I want to take you within the process of how this thing happens. In order to do that, I need you to go to Romans 8. So you and I were born sinful and born broken. Just to continue harping on this idea, how many of you have children? Alright, you absolutely know I'm right then. Here's my examples. My daughter, these are the ones I always use with you, when my daughter turned two, all of a sudden, any time when she got frustrated or didn't get what she wanted, she bit people. I mean, full on, you could see it in her. She would grab and bite until...I mean, some kids would bleed. And so, here's the deal. Where did she learn that? Because I can tell you, Lauren and I have had a lot of arguments over things, and it never ended in me pouncing on her and biting her until she bled. So, what happened? Because I want you to understand the root that's going on in my two-year-old's heart. My two-year-old is saying, "I'm not getting what I want and the solution to that is violence." And who put that in her heart. Because I've never sat her down in front of "Lethal Weapon 4" and let her drink that in. She watches a lot of "Dora the Explorer" and "Pinky Dinky Doo," and there has been nary a day where there's an attack sequence in those two cartoons. So, who

taught my two-year-old that violence is a solution? Who taught my daughter that it's acceptable to take things that aren't hers? She didn't have to get taught this, it's intrinsic. It lays in the very depths of her soul. "Rebel," it whispers to her every day. "Rebel...rebel...rebel...rebel..." Even this week, mom said, "Pick up your shoes." My daughter said, "You pick them up." So, I turned away because I don't want to testify in court against my wife. In case she started beating her, I was like, "I didn't see nothing, alright."

So, you're born sinful, born broken, fractured DNA it's gone horribly wrong, let's go Romans 8. There are some big ideas in here that I'm not going to be able to get to, but I'll tell you where to get to them. Look at verse 30. So, let's start. You're broken, you're sinful, we're all messed up, I'm messed up, we're born that way, it's not a series of things that happen later, it's how you're born. Now, look at verse 30, "And those whom he predestined..." Now, this is a big catch word among most Evangelicals. A lot of people go, "Well, predestined doesn't mean predestined; it means something else." That's not true; it means predestined. If you want to know what we believe on this subject and where we land on it, you can go to the website, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net>, click on listen, and on that, you'll find a two-hour teaching by me called "Are There Two Wills of God?" And if you'll click on that, it's about two hours long, it has a .pdf file that comes with it, you can hear where we land on this word. This word is a piece of the puzzle, but it's not the piece I want to address this morning. Look at this next one, "And those whom he predestined he also called." Okay, you and I are sinful, we're broken, we're fractured, the DNA of the universe, shattered, Christ comes, dies on the cross, is justification and life, you and I, somewhere in the middle of life, hear the gospel call. Here's what it means. Basically, someone tells us about Jesus. Maybe it was at church, maybe it was a buddy, maybe it was a book we stumbled onto, maybe someone gave us one of those goofy cartoon tracks that we read through, maybe it was a guy we saw on television, maybe it was our parents, but the gospel call goes out. Someone tells us about Jesus, about the cross, about forgiveness, about repentance, about faith. Someone tells us, the gospel call goes out. Somewhere, somehow, we hear about Jesus. Millions of people hear it, but some people really hear it.

Let me show you what I mean. Go over to Acts 16. Our boy, Paul, is sailing out from Troas and heading out to Thyatira. He gets to Thyatira (and we've all vacationed there), and he starts preaching to the masses. And I want you to see what happens, because the gospel call goes out to everyone, but I want you to see what happens here. Because something very, very, very significant happens here. We'll pick it up in verse 14, "One who heard us was a woman named Lydia..." So, he spoke to this massive crowd, and now they're talking about one lady. "One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God." So, here's what we know. She is going to the tabernacle, going to the temple and that she is a very wealthy woman. She's dealing in purple goods, which back in the 1st Century were very, very rare. Now, look at the next line, because the next line is huge. "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." So, Lydia finds herself in a room just like you are today, and Paul, instead of me, is up preaching the gospel and he's talking about Jesus. And he's talking about how Jesus works and what He's done and how He saves and what He can do. He's talking about this, and Lydia does not find her mind wandering, she does not feel tired, she is not a skeptic. For whatever reason, God puts it into her heart, the text says, "opens her and gives her the ability to deeply pay attention to what is being spoken." And what happens in this moment where, all of a sudden, you can pay attention to is a process that theologians call "regeneration."

Let me show it to you in another place. Go over to John 1. So, we're born broken, born evil, DNA is fractured, we're living life, somebody throws out the gospel. Somebody starts talking to us about Jesus, somebody starts talking to us about God, someone starts talking to us about the cross, what happens when we submit our lives to Him, what it means to repent, what faith is. They start unpacking that, and for some of us, we hear it and we're completely unmoved by it. Others of us hear it, and something clicks inside of us. Let me show you what this looks like. And this is frustrating to so many people, because all of us, at the very core of who we are, are control freaks. The artsy musician shows up 50 minutes late for the same reason the anal-retentive shows up 50 minutes early, control. Alright, "I will control." The

artsy one's going, "You won't control me. I'll show up whenever I want." That is in itself, control. And the anal-retentive is going, "Something might happen to the car, we might be late, we'll leave two hours early and get there," alright. It's the same exact deal. Now, let's look here, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,..." So, watch this. For those who heard the gospel message and responded to it, here's how it works in verse 13, "...who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." So God, as the gospel goes out, opens the heart of a man or woman to pay attention and to grasp it and to begin to wrestle. I don't think, at this moment, that we're talking about conversion. It's simply talking about, all of a sudden, our spiritual appetite begins to increase and things we were indifferent about historically, all of a sudden, we begin to really, really wrestle with.

Like, I'll give you my story. I heard the gospel a million times before I heard it. I mean, people told me from since I was little. My mom was a devout believer in Christ. She would constantly talk to me about who Jesus was and what He did for us. And I heard it but I never heard it. Are you tracking with me? Now, when I'm a sophomore, a guy named Jeff Faircloth walks up to me on a Saturday morning watching films for football, and he begins to to me about Jesus Christ, and for whatever reason, something clicks in me and what I had been indifferent towards, if not even at times hostile towards, all of a sudden, becomes unbelievably interesting to me. Like, to this point in history, I would just play this game. I would go, "Okay, so you're saying that a virgin gave birth to God in the flesh, who then prays to Himself later on. He lives a perfect life so they kill Him. Three days later, he comes back to life and floats up to heaven, where one day, He's coming back to pick me up on a horse. Do I have all the pieces? Because I feel like I'm missing some pieces. Do I have all the pieces? No, that's all of them? Cuckoo!" I mean, come on. The horse threw me off. I could get the virgin birth, but the horse thing threw me off. The white horse...it's the day of the car. I mean, come on, alright. And so, I was antagonistic if not completely indifferent towards it, and then in an instant, God does something in the heart. Now, all of a sudden, spiritually, I feel anemic, anorexic and starving. And so, I began to ask questions, I began to read, I began to frequent all the time. Now listen, I want to be very clear. Not because I thought they were right, but because I couldn't figure it out and it was starting to drive me crazy. Whereas, historically, I had been indifferent, now all of a sudden, I'm asking questions, I'm reading books, I'm trying to wrestle, I'm trying to disprove., all the while, being, thank God, invited in by some very godly young men who let me be a pain in the tail for two years. Because this regeneration process was a very long period of time for me. Because I want to solve everything. For me, the why has to be a precursor to the what, man. So, the gospel call goes out, God begins to open the heart, regenerate the heart, and all of a sudden we care. Where historically you didn't care, all of a sudden, you care and you want to figure it out.

And this process was prophesied about thousands of years before Jesus showed up on the scene. Remember how I told you the Old Testament makes the promise and the New Testament fulfills it? Watch this. Go to Ezekiel. Let me show you this process in a little bit different language. Ezekiel 36, verse 6 reads like this. Now, see if this doesn't sound familiar to exactly what we just said. "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." Now, are you following me with this? This is exactly what we were just talking about, that all of a sudden, there's been like this change in your heart. All of a sudden, you're wondering. All of a sudden, you're searching. All of a sudden, you start going to church where maybe historically you hadn't, you start asking questions of buddies who are religious, you just start trying to figure things out. I'm guessing that a lot of you if not all of you are in here this morning because either you know Jesus or you're somewhere in the middle of this regeneration process. Otherwise, I don't know why you would be here. You've got to, at some level, be wondering, unless your neighbor just pestered you until you said "yes." And maybe you're the ones that kind of get passed this and you're like, "No, no." But listen, you're still in here, you're hearing the gospel call this morning. So, you're somewhere in this line, and I'm trying to get you to find where you are. So, let's finish reading the rest of this. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." All of a sudden, the gospel call goes out to sinful men, God opens our heart to be able to hear it, we begin to search, we begin to wonder, and somewhere in

the middle of this process of regeneration that can happen in an instant or can happen over a long period of time, all of a sudden, we begin to want to please Him and want to walk in His ways. And all of a sudden, we're doing the right things and we don't even know why we're doing the right thing. We don't quite understand the fullness of it, but all of a sudden, out of nowhere, we want to please Him.

And that process of regeneration leads us to what Christians call "conversion." Let me explain conversion to you. Regeneration leads us to a place where we understand sin, sin creates sorrow, sorrow leads to repentance and faith. Let me try to explain repentance to you, because I think it's been done really badly. Like, how many of you have heard this, "Repentance is a military term that means to change from walking one way to walking the other way." Anybody ever hear it spelled out like this? Well, if that's the definition of salvation, I'm in a lot of trouble. Because Christ kind of enacted in my heart and woke up my heart, and man, for the last thirteen years, I've been turning the other way, taking three or four steps and with my long gangly arms, reaching back there and grabbing stuff. Is it just me? No, liars, you too. So, if the definition of what is required for salvation is to go 180° and walk this way and never touch anything back there again, I'm out. So, what is repentance then? Here's what I think repentance is: repentance is a sorrow over our sin that creates an earnestness and a ferocity to know Jesus deeply. And when that's the pursuit, you're running towards Jesus, this stuff starts fading away. But when you go, "I've got to stop doing this and quit moving on that," did you just hear what we read in Ezekiel? "I'll put it in your heart. You come to Me, I will put My statutes in your heart."

But let me be really clear with you here because here at the Village, one of the things you're going to hear us say over and over again is "this is an okay place to not be okay." The only thing that we don't accept around here is you pretending. So, if you struggle, welcome. I ain't wearing a cape. I can tell you that right now. You shoot me in my chest, blood everywhere. I'm not wearing a cape, I struggle, I have dark nights of the soul just like anyone else. The older I get, I tend to not trust people who haven't. This is an okay place to not be okay. But here's the thing when you preach like that and you create that kind of culture of "you need to confess your sins, you need to come clean, you need to not pretend, you need to fess up where you really are," what ends up happening is, some guys and some girls, they'll get into this game of making the confession be the end of it. But it's not, it's the beginning of it. And so, for you to come to home group or Bible study ever week and go, "I blew it again, yeah. Whew, I feel better. Now that I've got that off of my chest," but not do anything to heal, to take steps towards Jesus to walk away from that sin, means that you're off the rails, man. Repentance in the faith that Jesus can save.

Okay, dead in our trespasses and sins, fractured DNA, the gospel call goes out, God awakens the heart, regeneration leads to conversion, repentance and faith. And then, in that moment, you're justified, you're right before God, God just calls you righteous. And then, you start this process called sanctification where, for the rest of your life, God will chisel away at you. Good times.

Now, let me be really honest about what happens next. One of two things happens next. Number one, Jesus comes back...on the horse, to get us or you die. Every generation since Christ ascended believes that their generation is the last one on Earth. And all of them have pointed towards the Middle East to prove it. He could come back tonight, but I think there's a good chance that you and I are going to die. We're going to fight for breath, the body's going to give up the fight and we're going to die. Now, maybe I'm wrong, maybe the Apache helicopter is the locust in Revelation 6. Maybe I'm wrong. Because eventually somebody's going to point to the Middle East on why this whole thing's going to end and they're going to be right, because He will come back. So eventually, one generation will nail it, but I think you're probably smarter for getting a history book and knowing it's been a mess since Ishmael, which is the book of Genesis. It is. Study history. I promise you. "We need to bring back peace." Peace was never there. I hope peace will come.

Now, this brings us full circle to Solomon's question. What happens to a man when he dies? John 5, let's answer the question. DNA is fractured, gospel call goes out, God awakens the heart to regeneration, to hear, to care, to move, that leads to repentance and faith and salvation, and then the process of sanctification begins until we die. Let's pick it up in verse 25. There's going to be a little line in here that seems wildly confusing because of all of the things we've said today, but hang with me and I'll explain it. Verse 25, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Now, He's not talking about physically dead people; He's talking about what I've just preached on the last 40 minutes. That spiritually dead people would hear his voice, would hear his gospel and they would be made alive. Let's read on, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." Verses 28 & 29 are where we answer the question "What happens to a man when he dies?" "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice..." So now, we're not talking about spiritually dead people, we're talking about dead dead people. "...all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." Okay, so here's what happens. There are a lot of people who have a lot of question on this subject. Usually, it revolves around a chronological time line. Like, "The moment when your eyes close, are you in heaven or do you wait for a little bit and then you come out of the tomb?" One of the big philosophies that's really popular is the sleep philosophy, like when you go to bed every night, the alarm seems to go off in just a few minutes but you were asleep for nine hours. So, some people go, "No, it's kind of like that." Let me tell you to just be really weary of any of those things. Here's why. God stands outside of time. He is not inside of time, operating under the rules of time. There are no boundaries for God, no rules for Him. You and I operate in the past, the present and the future. Our past and our present shape our future. That is not the way it is with God. He is already in tomorrow, waiting on you. So, it becomes really difficult to cognitively get your head around a chronological time line when the God of the universe doesn't have to obey it. Are you tracking with that?

The book of Mark says that before your eyes close in death, basically it says that the righteous will not die. And what I think happens there is, that second right before death for those who believe in Jesus, Jesus shows up and goes, "Hey, you wanna get outta here? Let's get outta here. I conquered the whole death thing, so you don't get to die. And death's coming, so why don't you and I get out of here before it hits? Yeah, alright, come on." And the second before death, I think Christ shows up and goes, "Let's go home." So, that's time line. That's what I believe the time line operates on. Now, He says that when that instant occurs, there are two resurrections and two judgments. And let me explain how it works. For those who are believers in Jesus, at the resurrection, God walks over to the scale and looks first at the bad side of the scale and, for those who believe in Christ, He sees no sin, no error, no screw-ups, only the battered, bloody body of Jesus Christ saying "Paid in Full." And so, since He has nothing to look at on the bad side of the scale, He walks over (not that God needs to walk) to the good side of the scale, and He looks at the good. And this is what happens in the big parable of the sheep and the goats, where Jesus says that "you fed me..." He's looking at the good side of the scale because there's nothing on the bad side of the scale, because the blood of Christ absorbed the wrath of God towards sin. So, He judges the good. This is why it says He judges those who have done good. It's not the scale because there's nothing on what's bad.

For those outside of Christ, the good is never considered, because in order to be just and right, the issue is what's been done wrong. So, in the same way that for the believer in Christ, the bad is not considered because of the blood of Jesus, so with those outside of Christ, the good is never considered because the judge's job is to judge the infraction that brought wrath. Wildly unpopular, I know, but this is what the Bible says.

So, here's my question for you as you head off to lunch. Where are you on the line of things here? I mean, you've heard the gospel message. I know that you've heard it at least once. Is the heart stirring, wanting to know more, wanting understand more? Has there been regeneration occurring? Listen, the other thing I would tell you is that there used

to be this other line of thinking that if you couldn't tell the exact moment, the exact day that you got saved, then you probably weren't. Because, "How could you know know?" I mean, it sure didn't happen to me that way. I mean, I know a slew of guys that I run with that cannot in any way, give you the date. They can give you around the time frame. Like, "I don't know, somewhere around June of '03." But where are you? Okay, are you just hearing the gospel call? Has the process of regeneration started? Are you in that place of repentance, of sorrow over sin, headed towards Jesus. Where are you on the line of things? I think this is one of those things that has to be answered. Somebody handed me Jack Welch's book, "Winning." Jack Welch rebuilt in to just an economic power house. It's a phenomenal read, but in the end, near the back, there's these reporters asking him questions, and one of the questions is, "Do you think you'll go to heaven when you die?" And he goes, "I haven't even thought about it." How can this guy, who's one of the best leaders and entrepreneurs since the industrial revolution, how can he not even consider?

So, where are you? Maybe you think I'm crazy. Listen, it was just thirteen years ago where I sat out there going, "Here's the horse thing again." Trust me, you're in a really dangerous spot if you keep coming around. That's God wooing you. If you disagree but you keep coming back, that's God wooing, that's God romancing, that's God wooing. Here's what I want you to do. If you're not a believer in Christ, you're just hanging out with us, I love that you're here. You're always welcome to disagree. You can even scowl at me while I'm preaching. It's not going to bother me. Here's what I'd ask you to do though. Somebody brought you here. Maybe a friend a friend told you about us, maybe you're sitting next to them, maybe your neighbor, maybe somebody brought you here, maybe your wife finally got you in here, maybe your husband finally got you in here, talk to them about what we talked about. Say, "Well, I think I just heard the gospel calling and I'm still kind of indifferent to it." That's okay, that's alright. That's okay to be there. Maybe you heard something and it's stirring in you. Okay, so go, "I think I'm in that regeneration. All of a sudden, I'm interested. I don't know. Maybe I'll go back with you next week or I'll never go back again." Whatever. Maybe you're going, "That's what it means? I've done that. It doesn't look exactly like yours looks or his looks, but I've done that." That's okay too. It doesn't always look alike. But I pray that you'd wrestle some and talk some and try to see where you are on the line. So, what happens to a man when he dies?

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for these men and women, and I thank You for their stamina. I know we've gone long today. And I know we're all over the board in here. I think that's probably my favorite part of this place. I know that some of us already have loved ones with you who are looking forward to the day they get to see them again. I know some of us, this is the first time we've ever really heard the gospel, and we really don't know what to make of it and we really don't know what to think of it and it just kind of seems new and and weird. Father, I pray You would do that thing You did with Lydia and You would do that thing you were talking about in John 1, where You kind of just kind of open our heart to want to work on it and think about it and wrestle with it. I pray for those who have been wondering and questioning. I know, for the longest time, I was looking for some kind of intellectual validity to be programmed in until You finally just overcame that. So, maybe today the intellectual barrier of coming back on a horse or whatever gets overtaken by Your Holy Spirit. I thank You that in the end, we are not stuck trying to accumulate enough good deeds, never knowing whether or not we did enough. But instead, pin all our hopes and all our pleading to the death of Christ. I pray that we would wrestle and think and it wouldn't be easy to turn all of this off. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."