

# Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.05.28

Website: oakgrovecofc.org

Facebook: facebook.com/oakgrovecofc

## Sermon recordings

Click or type the short URL, or visit oakgrovecofc.org/Recordings/.

**Speaker-AM:** Josh Vinyard

**Title:** Envyng Sinners

**Recording:**

[tinyurl.com/JoshEnvy](https://tinyurl.com/JoshEnvy)

**Speaker-PM:** Brad Bunyard

**Title:** Required Characteristics

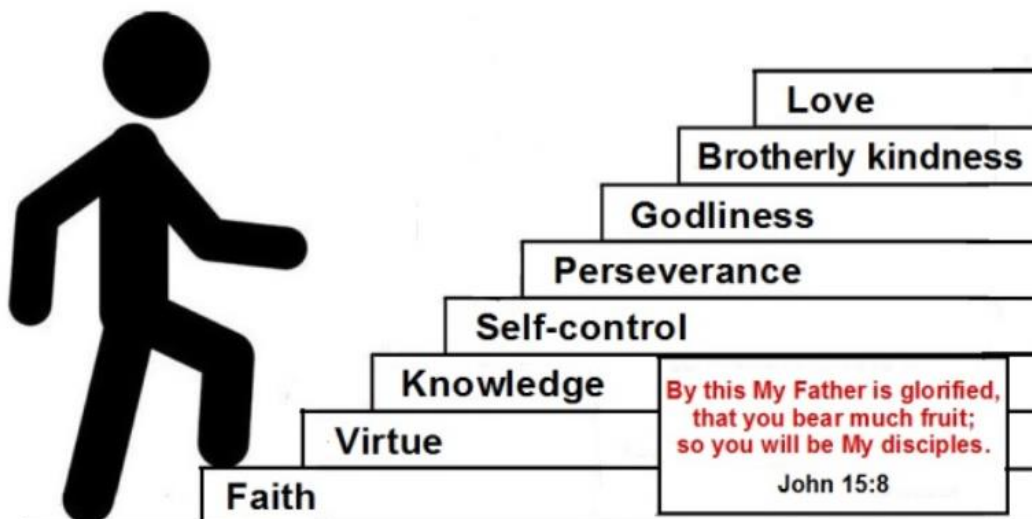
**Recording:**

[tinyurl.com/BradCharacteristics](https://tinyurl.com/BradCharacteristics)



## FRUITFUL GROWTH IN THE FAITH

2 Peter 1:3-11



### The Whole Duty of Man, 5/29/2023 by Matthew W. Bassford

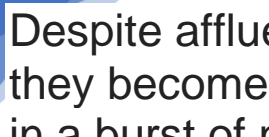
The opening chapters of Ecclesiastes are surely among the gloomiest in the entire Bible. In them, Solomon examines life under the sun and concludes that all of the usual human pursuits are futile and vain. Wealth doesn't bring lasting satisfaction. The pursuit of pleasure proves to be pointless. The accumulation of material possessions becomes wearisome.

The same thing is true of goals that seem to be wiser. For example, it seems praiseworthy to lay up treasure that will provide for your heirs even after you have departed. However, Solomon observes that your descendants may well be idiots who will squander everything that you painstakingly stored up.

Even wisdom itself isn't a path to contentment. Sure, you can go through life understanding what it's all about and making wise decisions, but no matter how wise you are, you're still going to die. They will bury you in a cemetery alongside a whole bunch of fools, and your situation will be no better than theirs.

In short, Solomon tells us that life under the sun is meaningless, continually overshadowed by the inevitability of death. No matter how clever we are, no matter how many different avenues we try, we will not be able to solve the problem. The harder we look, the more despairing we will become.

Though it was written thousands of years ago, Ecclesiastes identifies the core problem of modern American society. We have achieved unparalleled longevity, security, and abundance. However, these things have failed to satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart.



Despite affluence and ease, too many among us are so alienated that they become mass murderers, destroying others along with themselves in a burst of nihilistic fury. Such things did not happen in the America of a hundred years ago, even though the country was much poorer and life was far more uncertain.

The same sense of alienation appears in the trans movement, in which miserable people reject the truth of their own bodies in a desperate search for fulfillment. Though gender dysphoria did not exist in ancient Israel, Solomon would have had no trouble diagnosing its causes or predicting its outcome. With a moment's thought, all of us could identify many other symptoms of the same disease.

Of course, Solomon's conclusion in Ecclesiastes is not the counsel of despair. Instead, in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, he urges his readers to fear God and keep His commandments. Solomon does this for two reasons. First, it is the whole duty of man. A life that is focused on God will find meaning in meaninglessness and hope in hopelessness.

Second, Solomon reminds us that God will bring every act to judgment. Thus, even though earthly life appears futile and vain, it really is anything but. The key question of our existence is not whether we can find rest for our souls under the sun. We can't. Instead, it is whether we will live under the sun in such a way that we can find rest for our souls forever in the presence of God.

Our lives are not meaningless. Rather, they are terrifyingly meaningful. Every day that we live, eternity hangs in the balance. Every day, we take one step closer either to stupendous success or ruinous failure. Every day, we choose whether we will be numbered with the enemies of God or with His friends.

We live in a society that is drifting, aimless, and purposeless. However, we must not allow it to obscure our purpose and our aim. Yes, life under the sun is pointless, but a life devoted to God is not. Let us lay hold of the hope that is set before us, and let us appeal to everyone around us to do the same.




## When I Am Old and Gray Headed, 5/28/2023 by Kent Heaton

The infirmity of old age is the burden of a fleshly temple ravaged by time through disease and increasing weakness of mind and body. Solomon spoke of the descent into the difficult days when the affliction and sadness burdened life; the arms and hands tremble; the legs bow down; teeth are few and the eyes grow dim; hearing is lost and the voice is softer; the “almond tree blossoms” and the appetite fails. Death is swallowed up as the loosing of a silver cord or the golden bowl that is broken and the pitcher shattered at the fountain (Ecclesiastes 12). Old age is looked upon as a time of great difficulty and sometimes despair sets in. The thought is that life for all its good is over and there is nothing left to do.

The author of Psalms 71 is unknown. What a wonder their name would be to declare to all generations but in God’s will the name remains silent. Vibrant in this Psalm is the spirit of someone who has found that old age is not the end but a continuation of what they had sought to do all their lives. Psalms 71 is a declaration of trust and hope in the Lord – not an end of things. Trust is proclaimed in verses one and five with hope the surety of faith (Psalms 71:5,14). The author does not express giving up but rather there is much work to be done.

His faith in the Lord is as secure as a “strong habitation,” a “rock” and a “fortress” (Psalms 71:3). He is oppressed by the wicked but will not allow them to destroy his faith in the blessings of Jehovah God (Psalms 71:4). The love of His Lord has guided him from youth (Psalms 71:5-6) and his life is a testimony of Jehovah’s grace. His enemies marvel at his faith and the longevity of his trust in Jehovah. He begs that Jehovah not forsake him “in the time of old age” (Psalms 71:9).



The aged author is not ready to give up serving the Lord. He is doing everything he can to reaffirm his willingness to establish righteousness, obedience, praise, and honor to the God he has served so faithfully. His mouth will not be silent but “tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day” (Psalms 71:15). His body may have weakened by the passing of time but he declares that he will “go in the strength of the Lord God” (Psalms 71:16). Can you see the gleam in his eye? Can you feel the strength in his voice to tell the old, old story? His work is not over – it continues.

He cannot quit telling people about the praises of His God. The Lord has been his teacher from youth (Psalms 71:17) and he must tell every generation about the wondrous things Jehovah God has done in his life. He writes, “And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come” (Psalms 71:18). There are stories to tell, lessons to teach, souls to touch and work to be done. The generations after him must hear the good news. The ‘young folk’ must know of the power of Jehovah God. His life is a living testimony to the strength and power of God.

“O God, who is like You?” (Psalms 71:19). He knows the Lord will care for him and give him the strength to carry on. He praises Him for His faithfulness, redemption, and righteousness (vv22-24). There is a lot of spark left in this aged man. There is a lot of work to be done – even when we are old and gray-headed. May we never stop serving the Lord until the time comes to lay our armor down – then – rest!