

# **ECCLESIASTES**

## **A Godly Philosophy for Life**

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments:  
for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment,  
with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”  
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

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**Preliminary Reading:** I Kings 3:1-28; 4:20-34; 10:1-29; 11:1-13; Psalm 19; 39; 49; 62; 90.

**Solomon’s Proverbs Verse-by-Verse Commentary:** <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/proverbs-intro.php>.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. The name of this book of the Bible provides some direction as to its content and purpose.
1. The Hebrew title of the book, *Koheleth*, means an assembler, lecturer, or teacher.
  2. The Greek title, *Ekklesiastes*, from the Septuagint, is one who speaks in a church.
  3. The King James Version, following Greek and Latin versions, calls it, “The Preacher.”
  4. But we may gather this title or overriding theme internally (Eccl 1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8,10).
  5. Solomon was a master of assemblies, a preacher, for the people of Israel, who taught them knowledge by acceptable words of truth, including many proverbs (Eccl 12:9-10).
  6. We have no use for the apocryphal book called Ecclesiasticus, or Sirach, of the Catholics.
  7. We thank God for the divine library He has given us in the 66 books of the KJV Bible.
  8. We thank God for the poetic books of Job (patience), Psalms (praise), Proverbs (prudence), Ecclesiastes (philosophy), and Song of Solomon (passion).
  9. This book in God’s divine library is inspired philosophy for how to rise above the vanity and vexation of earthly life to enjoy it, avoid wasting time worrying, and be ready to die.
  10. Many avoid the book or fear it, since they are confused by Solomon’s natural emphasis.
- B. The book is inspired revelation from God, which means it is absolute truth and wisdom.
1. Both Jews and Christians have received it as canonical scripture, which means it is in our King James Bible of 66 books (II Tim 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; Psalm 45:1; Isaiah 30:8).
  2. Solomon knew scripture or inspiration were words from one shepherd, God (Eccl 12:11).
  3. To seek truth from your heart, mind, existence, or from the shepherd Socrates is insanity.
  4. Therefore, we trust its every word, and we know it must agree with the rest of the Bible, for there is nothing contradictory in scripture (Prov 8:8; II Peter 1:20-21; I John 2:21).
  5. The two Bible books closest to Ecclesiastes in purpose and content are Proverbs and Job.
  6. The need is revelation, nor rationalization. God has revealed truth; we cannot develop it.
  7. Solomon admitted in several ways and places truth cannot be figured out (Eccl 8:16-17).
  8. We dare not go into our depraved hearts or ignorant minds for truth, but to scripture only.
  9. We arrive naked, ignorant, and messing on ourselves, and we depart life the same way.
  10. We arrive knowing less than nothing, and only by learning wisdom will this ever change.
- C. The foundation for life is each man’s philosophy – Christian or not – and we find such here.
1. Philosophy is the framework of thinking for establishing purpose and morality in life.
  2. Men have sought to know their existence and purpose, and the devil gladly taught them.
  3. As the world rushes into paganism and atheism, there is a need for a godly philosophy.
  4. Every man and woman form a philosophy for living from parents, teachers, peers, etc.
  5. Most live by an implicit philosophy, for they are too ignorant to identify their philosophy.
  6. When the Bible is removed from life, atheism or humanism, twin theories, are the result.
  7. “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?” (Ps 11:3). Lord, help us.

8. Why do we see the truth, and the educated elite do not (Matt 11:25-27)? Lord, thank you.
9. Why is this fabulous book by a royal author ignored in philosophy and literature classes?
10. Wisdom is obtained by those rejecting self to strictly study God's revelation (Pr 18:1-2).

## **AUTHOR**

- A. The identity of the author of Ecclesiastes provides a strong basis for accepting its instruction.
- B. Solomon, son of David and king over Israel in Jerusalem, wrote the book (Eccl 1:1,12; 12:9).
  1. After Solomon, Israel was divided and ruled by kings in Samaria (I Kings 12:19; 16:29).
  2. Solomon is identified by his many proverbs (Eccl 12:9; I Kgs 4:32; Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1).
  3. Solomon taught words of knowledge and truth to the people (Eccl 12:9-10 cp Prov 1:16).
- C. The book is inspired revelation from God, which means it is absolute truth from heaven.
  1. Both Jews and Christians have received it as canonical scripture, which means it is in our Bible of 66 books (II Tim 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; Psalm 45:1; Isaiah 30:8).
  2. Solomon knew scripture or inspiration were words from one shepherd, God (Eccl 12:11); compare seeking truth in your heart, mind, or existence, or from the shepherd Socrates.
  3. Therefore, we trust its every word, and we know it must agree with the rest of the Bible, for there is nothing contradictory in scripture (Prov 8:8; II Peter 1:20-21; I John 2:21).
- D. Solomon's God-given qualifications justify our careful attention to this book of philosophy.
  1. If simple inspiration does not get your attention, then consider the great man that wrote it.
  2. God loved Solomon and gave him a great father (I Sam 13:14; I Kgs 15:1-5; Prov 4:3-9).
  3. God loved Solomon and made him king of David's sons (II Sam 12:24-25; I Kgs 1:1-53).
  4. God gave Solomon wisdom more than any man ever (I Kings 3:5-15; 4:29-34; 10:6-9).
  5. God gave Solomon riches and honor to do anything he chose (I Kings 3:13; 10:14-29).
  6. God gave Solomon total peace, so he could dedicate himself to wisdom (I Kgs 4:24-25).
  7. God gave Solomon great looks from two beautiful parents (I Samuel 16:12; II Sam 11:2).
  8. God gave Solomon a sufficiently long reign to observe and test all things (I Kings 11:42).
  9. Solomon had absolute authority, unlimited wealth, worldwide fame, and great wisdom – all of which provided the means to examine and test any human philosophical idea.
  10. Solomon had the power, capital, and wisdom to do all the things no other could do, so we should listen carefully and diligently to this divinely prepared philosopher as he writes.
  11. If a fool speaks of wisdom, we rightly laugh; if a poor man speaks of riches, we justly laugh; if a slave speaks of authority, we laugh; if a man with one wife speaks of women, we laugh; if a loser speaks of providence, we laugh. When Solomon speaks, we listen!
  12. God's divine library includes this special volume among the 66 on the shelves, and you should thank God for inspiring such a man to be your personal counselor and advisor.
- E. Solomon lived about 900 BC, and at least 500 years before Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc.
  1. If Greek or other philosophers ever said anything true, Solomon had already written it.
  2. Let us never forget that the greatest philosopher is Jesus Christ (Mat 12:42; Col 2:3; etc.).
- F. Did Solomon write Ecclesiastes before or after his wives turned him away from the LORD?
  1. Good men and able expositors have taken both sides of this issue with many arguments.
  2. If we understand the right sense, the book's timing does not affect learning or application.
    - a. The dependability or integrity of any Bible book is not by the character of the writer.
    - b. The author of every book of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, and men are but secretaries.
  3. He wrote the book after his first twenty years as king (Eccl 2:4 cp I Kgs 9:10; 6:38; 7:1).
    - a. Through that period of time we can be certain he served the Lord (I Kings 9:1-9).
    - b. The many wives he had married early turned him from the Lord later (I Kgs 11:1-10).
    - c. He had married the daughter of Pharaoh quickly after being made king (I Kings 3:1).

- d. Solomon loved many other women *together with* Pharaoh's daughter (I Kings 11:1).
- e. The mention of a thousand women in Eccl 7:25-28 does not require a late writing.
- f. In chapter 12 he refers to his wise instruction of Israel yet by the word (Eccl 12:9-14).
- 4. There is no Bible proof that Solomon ever recovered from his backsliding and apostasy.
  - a. Solomon did not repent with God's warning of judgment (I Kgs 11:11-13,31-36,40).
  - b. God waited until Rehoboam to divide Israel *for David's sake*, not for Solomon's sake.
  - c. If Solomon wrote it at the end of his life, it would have required a very great revival.
  - d. He does not write about repentance or his horrible backsliding to worship false gods.
  - e. He closed out by stating his effort to *still*, not again, teach knowledge (Eccl 12:9-10).

## **PURPOSE**

- A. The purpose of Ecclesiastes is probably stated more clearly than any other book of the Bible.
  - 1. Solomon stated his purpose early on and later (Eccl 1:1-3,13; 2:3,22; 3:9; 5:16; 6:12).
  - 2. He concluded his purpose with a summary answer and explanation (Ec 12:1,8-12,13-14).
  - 3. The last two verses must be remembered and applied to all lessons throughout the book.
  - 4. He sought to prove that no matter how great the natural achievements or circumstances of any person, human life on earth is altogether vain and vexing to the human spirit.
  - 5. He established a hierarchy of value for living on earth with fear of the Lord at the top and folly and madness at the bottom.
- B. The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to find, identify, and summarize a perfect philosophy for life.
  - 1. **Philosophy.** 1. The love, study, or pursuit of wisdom, or of knowledge of things, and their causes, whether theoretical or practical. 5. That department of knowledge or study which deals with ultimate reality, or with the general causes and principles of things. 9a. The system which a person forms for the conduct of life. [O.E.D.]
  - 2. **Philosophy** is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning existence, knowledge, moral judgments, mind, and language. Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing these questions by its critical, generally systematic approach and its reliance on reasoned argument. [Wikipedia; 07/05/08.]
  - 3. Thinking men have weighed the purpose or profit of life since God created man in Eden.
  - 4. This generation is confused by noise and activity, so most lack time and ability to think.
  - 5. It is important for us to meditate (Gen 24:63; Deut 4:39; 32:28-29; Job 37:14; Psalm 4:4; 8:3-4; 63:6; 64:9; 77:1-12; 143:5; Eccl 7:2-4,13-14; Isaiah 1:3; 44:18-19; Matt 6:28).
  - 6. Yet, any thinking outside the Bible or contrary to the Bible is an insane waste (II Thess 3:1-2; Ps 94:11; 119:113,128; Prov 15:26; 24:9; Isaiah 8:20).
- C. We should not be surprised that God and Solomon would write a short philosophy for us.
  - 1. The world's greatest "thinkers" wasted their lives to produce quite worthless conclusions.
  - 2. Their anti-God and anti-Bible premises and logic led to imaginations of folly and vanity.
  - 3. We know the origin and nature of worldly philosophy and its confusion (Rom 1:21-22; I Cor 1:19-20; 3:18-20; II Thess 3:1-2; Psalm 10:4; 14:1; 36:1-2; 94:11).
  - 4. God used Solomon, the wisest man ever, to write a philosophical work to overthrow all the hallucinations and imaginations of the world's ignorant and depraved philosophers.
  - 5. Paul warned about philosophy and vain deceit of worldly learning and tradition (Col 2:8).
  - 6. Let us never forget that the greatest philosopher is Jesus Christ (Mat 12:42; Col 2:3; etc.).
  - 7. It is the goal of scripture and preaching to condemn and overthrow man's imaginations of all kinds and dealing with all subjects (Ps 119:113,128; Jer 23:28-29; II Cor 10:5).
  - 8. Solomon admitted in several ways and places truth cannot be figured out (Eccl 8:16-17).
  - 9. The two books in the Bible closest to Ecclesiastes in purpose are Proverbs and Job.

10. The search for wisdom in Job ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/search-for-wisdom-ppt.pdf>.
11. Verse-by-verse commentary of Proverbs ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/proverbs-intro.php>.
- D. When Paul was in Athens, the center of human learning and thinking at that time (Acts 17:21), he encountered philosophers of two major schools of philosophy (Acts 17:18).
1. **Epicureanism** is a philosophy based on teachings of the Greek Epicurus (341-270 BC). We simplistically and somewhat inaccurately summarize it as *eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die*. Jesus and Paul spoke of such living (Luke 12:13-21; I Cor 15:32).
  2. **Stoicism** is a school of Greek philosophy, founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early third century BC. The core doctrine of Stoicism concerns cosmic determinism and human freedom, and the belief that virtue is to maintain a will that is in accord with nature. We simplistically refer to it as indifference to pain, pleasure, grief, or joy.
  3. By the time Paul was through with these superstitious and ignorant men, he had turned their adored wisdom into folly and laid before them coming judgment by Jesus Christ.
- E. There are numerous other schools of philosophy that are too insane to hardly comprehend.
1. **Skepticism**, or **Pyrrhonism**, refers to the teaching and traits of the Skeptikoi, a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they “asserted nothing but only opined.” It is the philosophical position that one should avoid the postulation of final truths. Turned on itself, skepticism would question that skepticism was a valid perspective at all.
  2. **Rationalism** teaches that reason is the source of knowledge or justification. It assumes the criterion of truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive. Different degrees of emphasis lead to a range of rationalist standpoints, from the moderate position “that reason has precedence over other ways of acquiring knowledge” to the radical position that reason is “the unique path to knowledge.”
  3. **Existentialism** is a philosophical movement, which posits that individuals create the meaning and essence of their lives, as opposed to it being created for them by deities or authorities or defined for them by philosophical or theological doctrines.
  4. **Idealism** is the theory of knowledge doctrine that nothing can be directly known outside of the minds of thinking beings. Or in an alternative stronger form, it is the metaphysical doctrine that nothing exists apart from minds and the “contents” of minds.
  5. Philosophies and speculations of man could be expanded upon and detailed much further, but the effort is a total waste of time like mining excrement for possible gold; preachers or commentators that spend time in that direction are vanity and vexation themselves.
- F. Solomon will show us the hopeless vanity of life and the coming terror of God’s judgment, unless we fear and obey Him, which is the whole foundation of real living (Eccl 12:13-14).
1. Hopelessness results by not knowing God and our purpose as His creatures or His sons.
  2. Vanity is the worthlessness and waste of loving or doing things that have no true value.
  3. God’s judgment will make us accountable for everything – good and bad – we have done.

## **THEME**

- A. From start to finish, Solomon warned against the *vanity* of life without God (Eccl 1:2; 12:8).
1. We need to diligently consider the word *vanity* and the concept it conveys in English.
  2. **Vanity**. That which is vain, futile, or worthless; that which is of no value or profit.
  3. Vanity describes things that are empty, profitless, wasteful, futile, pointless, hollow, etc.
  4. When we read *vanity of vanities*, we are facing superlative vanity, like king of kings.
  5. The greatest vanity in the universe is to live your life without proper regard to God.
  6. Solomon’s father taught about vanity by God’s inspiration (Ps 39:5-6,11; 62:9; 144:4).
  7. If we add all men up into nations, they are still vanity, or less than nothing (Is 40:15-17).

8. Man's fulfillment must be found in a higher end than the vanity and vexation of this life.
  9. The world has been forced to describe vanity – *life is a bitch, and then you die* (Eccl 9:3).
  10. So they commit suicide to end the pain (starting real pain!); abuse various substances, often to addiction; live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; consult false religions and the devil himself; try to legislate happiness, prosperity, and safety; do those things that are not convenient with greed, and reap the just consequences of them; etc.
- B. Consider the choice of words that are often unique to this book of God-inspired philosophy.
1. *All is vanity* occurs 6 times (Eccl 1:2,14; 2:11,17; 3:19; 12:8). Do you grasp the import of this short phrase? Think of precious things in your life – Solomon said they were vanity.
  2. *Vanity of vanities* occurs 2 times (Eccl 1:2; 12:8). Recall, this is the superlative of vanity. If we look at all the stupid and wasteful things in the universe, your life wins the prize.
  3. *Vexation of spirit* occurs 6 times (Eccl 2:17,26; 4:4,6,16; 6:9). This means that not only are things in life without God a stupid waste, they also cause much soul pain and trouble.
  4. *Vanity* occurs about another 22 times (Eccl 2:1,15,19,21,23,26; 4:4,7,8,16; 5:10; 6:2,4,9,11; 7:6,15; 8:10,14; 9:9; 11:8,10). You can also read it in Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. Solomon pours it on in Ecclesiastes that life without God is a worthless waste.
  5. *Vain* occurs 1 time (Eccl 6:12), for adjective use is very adequately covered by the noun.
  6. *Travail* occurs 8 times (Eccl 1:13; 2:23,26; 3:10; 4:4,6,8; 5:14). This word describes the pain, frustration, and trouble of things in life, which can be overcome by faith in God.
  7. *Evil* occurs 11 times (Eccl 2:21; 4:3; 5:13,14,16; 6:1,2; 9:3; 10:5; 11:10; 12:1), or difficulty and trouble from vain deeds of men and events to them, not sin or wickedness.
  8. *Evil disease* occurs 1 time (Eccl 6:2), which is the evil and travail men choose by folly.
  9. *Under the sun* occurs 29 times (Eccl 1:3,9,14; 2:11,17,18,19,20,22; 3:16; 4:1,3,7,15; 5:13,18; 6:1,12; 8:9,15,17; 9:3,6,9,11,13; 10:5), for the philosophy is for life on earth.
- C. Solomon often taught his remedy for natural life's vanity and vexation – moderate pleasure.
1. Due to Puritanical and Victorian type thinking, many slander Solomon as an epicurean.
  2. He repeated this suggestion for men throughout, and he wrote that it is God's gift to men.
  3. When understood as a natural remedy for natural vanity and vexation, it is perfect truth.
  4. Ecclesiastes is only one book of the Bible; other books will emphasize spiritual content.
- D. Solomon often taught that God's providence over all events confounds and exercises men.
1. **Providence.** The foreknowledge and beneficent care and sovereign government of God over all events of human existence; divine direction, control, or guidance.
  2. God is sovereign over man's existence (Job 23:14; Ps 76:10; Pr 16:4; Dan 4:35; Re 4:11).
  3. Due to God's rule of outside factors, human ability or effort do not determine outcomes.
  4. For much more of His sovereign rule ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.
- E. Solomon concluded with a view of God's judgment and the effect of this view (Ec 12:13-14).
1. True knowledge and virtue to him were clearly the fear of God and keeping His laws.
  2. God defines and reveals morality, truth, and wisdom; they cannot otherwise be known.
  3. These axioms were so superior to all other endeavors that they easily summarized life.
  4. All vanity, all vexation of spirit, and all evil among men could be solved by this answer.
  5. No matter what other approaches you consider, the fear of God works (Eccl 7:18; 8:12).
  6. He wrote the philosophical explanation for faith: God exists, and He rewards (Heb 11:6).
  7. The overall theme is godly and pure, but his perspective and arguments must be divided.
  8. Oh, Lord, grant us the divine and heavenly wisdom and philosophy of Paul (Col 3:1-4).

## **METHOD**

- A. Solomon began by pointing out the vanity of life, before giving the cure through fear of God.

1. Therefore, he will break you down before he builds you back up with the perfect solution.
2. There is wisdom to cause all men to despair of life so they will reject their own thinking.
3. Solomon himself was affected this way by his own research into the matter (Eccl 2:20).
- B. Solomon wrote most lessons from an earthly standpoint of life here with no regard to heaven.
  1. Solomon wrote some things from an exclusively natural standpoint (Eccl 3:18-20; 6:6).
  2. He wrote some things from a natural standpoint including God (Eccl 5:18-20; 9:8-10).
  3. He wrote some things from a spiritual viewpoint including God (Eccl 8:12-13; 12:13-14).
- C. Solomon did not write us a long list of dry, formal precepts, which soon exhausts the mind.
  1. He clearly and succinctly summarized the questions and problems with life in this world.
  2. He gave specific points of application to your life and powerful illustrations from life.
- D. The last two verses must be remembered and applied to all the verses throughout the book.
  1. They are not exceptional, for he stated their truth elsewhere (Eccl 5:1-7; 7:18; 8:12-13).
  2. Though Judgment Day closes the book, it was written to worshippers of God throughout.
  3. Since life under the sun, or our earthly existence is the theme, judgment is mentioned last.
- E. He did not write as a backslidden Epicurean idolater with sections like 5:1-7 included, no matter what commentators and preachers that cannot rightly divide the book may say of it.
- F. The book is primarily the evidence observed about the vanity of life on earth by the world's richest and most successful man and his inspired wisdom for prosperous living in spite of it.

## CONTENT

- A. Solomon taught on a wide variety of subjects in his pursuit of total knowledge of all things, and the following are only a sampling of the subjects dealt with in this short book.
  1. Using metaphors and euphemistic words, he taught of *anatomical decay* (Eccl 12:1-7).
  2. He taught that men and beasts differ due to man's *immortal spirit* (Eccl 3:21; 12:7).
  3. By examples and conclusions, he taught *superiority of wisdom* (Eccl 2:13; 7:11-12; 9:16).
  4. He concluded that *childhood and youth are vanity* (Eccl 11:10 cp 12:1 cp Prov 22:15).
  5. Old age should not be called golden years, for *old age is very vain* (Eccl 11:8; 12:1-8).
  6. Solomon, who observed and experienced it, saw *various evils of money* (Eccl 5:10-17).
  7. Men are reduced to common ground and responses by *God's providence* (Eccl 7:14; 9:1).
  8. He warned that *sober musing is superior to entertaining amusement* (Eccl 7:2-6 cp 12:1).
  9. He gave away by inspiration *the secret key to a successful life and eternity* (Ec 12:13-14).
  10. He warned about the *folly of religious words rather than hearing and doing* (Eccl 5:1-7).
  11. He warned that a *Day of Judgment would make all men accountable to God* (Eccl 12:14).
  12. He compared the *pleasure of a good woman and horror of bad women* (Ec 9:9; 7:26-29).
  13. He wrote of the *nature of charity and trusting God's providence* in reward (Eccl 11:1-6).
  14. He shared his observations and analysis of *proper societal function* (Eccl 8:2-5; 10:4-7).
  15. He described the *nature of eating properly*, especially for any in authority (Ec 10:16-17).
  16. He taught how to have peace when seeing *political perverting of justice* (Ec 4:1-3 cp 5:8).
  17. He warned about *delays in executing justice and the societal consequences* (Eccl 8:11).
  18. He described four very specific *benefits of human society*, starting with two (Ec 4:9-12).
- B. There is no real mention or clear implication of Jesus the Messiah, or a redeemer and savior.
  1. While folly, madness, sin, and wickedness are described, there is no mention of Christ.
  2. This need not be alarming, for Esther has no mention of the LORD or God, yet there is hardly a historical book in the Bible with more emphasis on God's merciful providence.
  3. The purpose of the book – wisdom for life on earth – focuses on the natural, not spiritual.
  4. Jesus laid claim 900 years later, and rightly so, to be greater than Solomon (Matt 12:42).
  5. Comparing 12:13-14 with 7:18 and 8:12, there is an assumed redeemer to N.T. readers.

6. Under the Old Testament, the emphasis was the fear and love of God keeping the Law.
7. Under the New Testament, the emphasis is faith and love of Jesus, who fulfilled the Law.
8. With the light of the New Testament, we can see Jesus as the perfect antidote to hopelessness, the perfect example of wisdom, the perfect Mediator for judgment, etc., etc.

### **INTERPRETATION**

- A. All the rules of Bible interpretation should be followed, for it is part of the Bible as any book.
  1. There is nothing taught in Ecclesiastes that is contrary to all other scripture (II Pet 1:20).
  2. In Ecclesiastes, this large context is important, lest atheistic hedonism is falsely endorsed.
  3. Context is important as each of about 60 lessons is taught apart from chapter divisions.
  4. His lessons must be rightly divided (II Tim 2:16) and compared to scripture (I Cor 2:13).
- B. With reminders throughout and at his conclusion, he wrote consistent with apostolic truth.
  1. Since he wrote about man's purpose in life, work, marriage, do not look for gospel truth.
  2. He knew as much as any O.T. writer that there was a spiritual realm to trump the natural.
  3. On the other hand, life in this world is not so evil or hopeless as to be totally condemned.
- C. It was not his design to drive people out of the world, or to make them live wretchedly in it.
  1. To the contrary, he taught repeatedly how to enjoy life and meet God on very good terms.
  2. He gave more than mere intellectual fascination; we want experimental application of it.
  3. Its value is to show despair of life without God and need for contentment and moderation.
- D. Division must be made between natural and spiritual wisdom for they are used differently.
- E. By carefully analyzing close context, as followed in these notes, about 60 lessons are found.
- F. For a summary of rules of hermeneutics ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/bible/scripture/knowning-the-scriptures.php>.

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“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments:  
for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment,  
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Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

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<a href="#">#5</a>	2:4-11	Materialism – pursuit of possessions – refuted.
<a href="#">#6</a>	2:12-17	Natural wisdom excels folly but is still vanity.
<a href="#">#7</a>	2:18-23	Death transfers assets and exploits to others.
<a href="#">#8</a>	2:24-26	Contented enjoyment of life is God’s gift.
<a href="#">#9</a>	3:1-15	God’s providence overrules all human plans.
<a href="#">#10</a>	3:16-17	God both uses wickedness and judges it.
<a href="#">#11</a>	3:18-22	Men are like beasts considered naturally.
<a href="#">#12</a>	4:1-3	Oppression and evil in human existence.
<a href="#">#13</a>	4:4-6	Labor must be managed to avoid vanity.
<a href="#">#14</a>	4:7-12	Value of human companionship and society.
<a href="#">#15</a>	4:13-14	Superiority of wisdom to folly for rulers.
<a href="#">#16</a>	4:15-16	Vanity and vexation of political succession.
<a href="#">#17</a>	5:1-7	Frivolous, hasty, or hypocritical worship.
<a href="#">#18</a>	5:8	Knowledge for dealing with civil oppression.
<a href="#">#19</a>	5:9-12	Vanity of riches from four perspectives.
<a href="#">#20</a>	5:13-17	Vanity of riches by loss, death, and sickness.
<a href="#">#21</a>	5:18-20	Moderate pleasure in life is a gift and goal.
<a href="#">#22</a>	6:1-2	Hoarding – excess saving – is an evil disease.
<a href="#">#23</a>	6:3-6	Missing life’s joy is worse than a stillbirth.
<a href="#">#24</a>	6:7-9	Contentment with your life is great gain.
<a href="#">#25</a>	6:10-12	Earthly life is hopelessly vain and short.
<a href="#">#26</a>	7:1	Life priorities – practical and philosophical.

<u>LESSON</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
<a href="#">#27</a>	7:2-6	Self-reflection is better than entertainment.
<a href="#">#28</a>	7:7-10	Proverbs for wise character and conduct.
<a href="#">#29</a>	7:11-12	Natural wisdom and money are good things.
<a href="#">#30</a>	7:13-15	God's providence should produce wisdom.
<a href="#">#31</a>	7:16-18	Proper fear of God leads to certain prosperity.
<a href="#">#32</a>	7:19-22	True wisdom overcomes faults and others.
<a href="#">#33</a>	7:23-29	Man's inventions, including women, are vain.
<a href="#">#34</a>	8:1	The excellency of political wisdom.
<a href="#">#35</a>	8:2-5	Submission to civil rulers as to God.
<a href="#">#36</a>	8:6-8	Man proposes, but God disposes.
<a href="#">#37</a>	8:9-11	Wisdom regarding criminal justice.
<a href="#">#38</a>	8:12-14	God's judgment is slow but certain.
<a href="#">#39</a>	8:15	Repetition of remedy for earthly vanity.
<a href="#">#40</a>	8:16-17	The inscrutability of God's providence.
<a href="#">#41</a>	9:1-3	Providence ignores character or conduct.
<a href="#">#42</a>	9:4-6	Life itself has hope for pleasure.
<a href="#">#43</a>	9:7-10	Love and live with joy and zeal.
<a href="#">#44</a>	9:11-12	Providence trumps ability and effort.
<a href="#">#45</a>	9:13-18	Natural wisdom is great but often neglected.
<a href="#">#46</a>	10:1-3	Reputation and wisdom must be guarded.
<a href="#">#47</a>	10:4	Obeys and pacify offended civil rulers.
<a href="#">#48</a>	10:5-7	Government should enforce proper roles.
<a href="#">#49</a>	10:8-9	What goes around will come around.
<a href="#">#50</a>	10:10	Professional wisdom trumps effort.
<a href="#">#51</a>	10:11-14	Speech quickly proves a fool or wise man.
<a href="#">#52</a>	10:15	Professional success is too high for fools.
<a href="#">#53</a>	10:16-17	Rulers should exemplify temperance.
<a href="#">#54</a>	10:18	Slothfulness will ruin the most secure things.
<a href="#">#55</a>	10:19	Money is better than happy feasts and wine.
<a href="#">#56</a>	10:20	Rulers and the rich deserve careful respect.
<a href="#">#57</a>	11:1-6	Ignore circumstances for charity and business.
<a href="#">#58</a>	11:7-8	Considering death enhances present life.
<a href="#">#59</a>	11:9-10	Death and judgment should direct conduct.
<a href="#">#60</a>	12:1-7	Decay and death demand youth worship.
<a href="#">Conclusion</a>	12:8-14	Fear God and obey Him before judgment.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 1

\*\*\*\*\* *The Introduction* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.***

- A. By God's inspiration, these words are important and repeated (Eccl 1:12); we cannot neglect them and miss their reminder of the writer of this philosophical treatise (Pr 30:5; Luke 4:4).
- B. Solomon was a true *preacher*, for he taught Israel inspired knowledge and truth (Ec 12:9-11).
  - 1. He was a master of assemblies that taught the people knowledge by good words of truth.
  - 2. He used many proverbs and songs as part of his instructive method (I Kgs 4:32; Pr 1:1-6).
  - 3. Preachers can learn how he caused despair before giving the cure (Eccl 2:20; 12:13-14).
- C. The *son of David* should not be lost on readers, for this was a distinct advantage (Prov 4:3-9).
  - 1. David himself had written about vanity (Ps 39:4-6,11; 62:9-10; 90:9-12; 119:37; 144:4).
  - 2. David was also a preacher, teacher, and prophet of God's church and nation (Acts 2:30).
  - 3. Solomon had witnessed all the natural advantages of his father i.e. fame, fortune, women, looks, gifts, and accomplishments; he had also witnesses some of his sins and their effect.
- D. He was *king in Jerusalem*, an exalted position and city (I Kings 4:20-25; II Chron 9:22-30).
  - 1. A king is much more fit to write about philosophy than those who lack his advantages.
  - 2. A friend at the gym or a colleague at the water fountain have nothing to offer like him.
  - 3. He had the wealth, the authority, the time, and the intelligence to test anything he chose.

### ***2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.***

- A. What an opening! No salutation! No explanation! Just the book's summary of natural life!
  - 1. Solomon opened with this exclamation, and he closed with this exclamation (Eccl 12:8).
  - 2. He broke his readers down by showing the emptiness of life before pointing us to God.
- B. What is *vanity*? It describes things that are vain, futile, and worthless without value or profit.
  - 1. A *vanity of vanities* is a superlative expression of the emptiest thing of all empty things.
  - 2. This is where you must take the things of life and put them, for your whole life is vanity.
  - 3. Everything you desire, plan, buy, taste, test, see, hear, feel, or experience is all vanity.
  - 4. Everything you get excited about that temporarily moves your body or spirit is vanity.
- C. There are three enemies that will resist you in properly viewing the things of life this way.
  - 1. Your flesh is infatuated with this life and its things (Luke 8:14; 21:34; Phil 3:18-19).
  - 2. The devil will distract you from God by bread or kingdoms of this world (Matt 4:1-11).
  - 3. The world is all the persons, things, and activities opposed to God (Jas 4:4; Matt 6:24).
  - 4. These three enemies of your soul conspire together in great unity for your ruin in life.
- D. What are some of your identifiable vanities? Body, job, hobby, money, family, marriage, house, education, children, yard, exercise?
- E. Accept this opening blast about life, its heavy use of *vanity*, and words he used elsewhere.
  - 1. *All is vanity* occurs 6 times (Eccl 1:2,14; 2:11,17; 3:19; 12:8). Do you grasp the import of this short phrase? Think of precious things in your life – Solomon said they were vanity.
  - 2. *Vanity of vanities* occurs 2 times (Eccl 1:2; 12:8). Recall, this is the superlative of vanity. If we look at all the stupid and wasteful things in the universe, your life wins the prize.

3. *Vexation of spirit* occurs 6 times (Eccl 2:17,26; 4:4,6,16; 6:9). This means that not only are things in life without God a stupid waste, they also cause much soul pain and trouble.
4. *Vanity* occurs about another 22 times (Eccl 2:1,15,19,21,23,26; 4:4,7,8,16; 5:10; 6:2,4,9,11; 7:6,15; 8:10,14; 9:9; 11:8,10). You can also read it in Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. Solomon pours it on in Ecclesiastes that life without God is a worthless waste.
5. *Vain* occurs 1 time (Eccl 6:12), for adjective use is very adequately covered by the noun.
6. *Travail* occurs 8 times (Eccl 1:13; 2:23,26; 3:10; 4:4,6,8; 5:14). This word describes the pain, frustration, and trouble of things in life, which can be overcome by faith in God.
7. *Evil* occurs 11 times (Eccl 2:21; 4:3; 5:13,14,16; 6:1,2; 9:3; 10:5; 11:10; 12:1), or difficulty and trouble from vain deeds of men and events to them, not sin or wickedness.
8. *Evil disease* occurs 1 time (Eccl 6:2), which is the evil and travail men choose by folly.
9. *Under the sun* occurs 29 times (Eccl 1:3,9,14; 2:11,17,18,19,20,22; 3:16; 4:1,3,7,15; 5:13,18; 6:1,12; 8:9,15,17; 9:3,6,9,11,13; 10:5), for the philosophy is for life on earth.

### **3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?**

- A. What is *profit* for a man? It is accomplishment, fulfillment, good, satisfaction, value.
- B. The *labor of a man* is the constant pursuit of various goals in a man's life from food to fame.
- C. Ecclesiastes is about *under the sun*, a statement unique to this book, about life in this world.
  1. We must remember that Solomon is usually viewing things from a natural perspective.
  2. Our affections and labor are to be in those things above the sun (Col 3:2; I Cor 15:58).
  3. Solomon used this expression *under the sun* 29 times in this short book of philosophy.
- D. This question has plagued all thinking men since time began. What is my purpose in life?
  1. The rest of this the book is provided to create and intensify the dilemma of this question.
  2. The rest of this book shall add more and more evidence that requires a negative answer.
- E. Compare the words of Jacob, Barzillai, and Moses (Gen 47:9; II Sam 19:35-37; Ps 90:10).
- F. Our labor is profitless ... (1) we cannot take anything with us, (2) we must leave all behind to fools, (3) nothing satisfies in any lasting or meaningful way, (4) everything is a lot of pain and trouble, (5) moths and rust corrupt it while we have it, (6) we cannot relax or sleep well worrying about it, (7) no one is going to remember a thing about us or it, and so forth, etc.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #1: All Is Vanity; Nothing Changes; Nothing New \*\*\*\*\*

### **4 One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.**

- A. Children are born and parents die, nearly together, but the planet earth continues its cycles.
  1. The earth does not notice the arrival or departure of a person and his thought-filled soul.
  2. Entire lives, full of early ambition and dreams and late pain and trouble, come and go.
  3. Man and life on earth are temporary; he comes and goes quickly, but earth is the same.
  4. One generation leaves whatever they labored for, if any of it left, to the next generation.
- B. You may think your generation important to the earth, but it does not recognize it or change.
  1. All men think their generation, usually by their presence in it, as being quite important.
  2. It is like Americans trying to find America in prophecy, but she is not important enough.
  3. No one past, present, or future cares about your generation or you or any achievements.
- C. Contentment and happiness in acquiring cannot be enjoyed, for man must leave all behind to enter the next world, which produces anxiety and fear instead of enjoyment and fulfillment.

- D. The earth abides forever on a relative basis, though the Lord will greatly alter this earth soon.
  - 1. The earth will not abide forever, so Solomon here speaks naturally and with limitations.
  - 2. Only skeptics that deny God think that earth has not and will not change (II Peter 3:3-14).
  - 3. Jesus Christ created it and will change it (Heb 1:10-12), but that is not the lesson here.
- E. Humanity is in a cycle of birth and death that accomplishes nothing noteworthy and goes nowhere ... like a mouse on a treadmill ... or like the sun, wind, water, and other cycles.
- F. Man is on a treadmill going nowhere, changing nothing, improving nothing, achieving nothing of lasting value for it to be said his existence is significantly altered for great good.

***5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.***

- A. Rather than get distracted about the sun's movements, consider that it never changes or ends.
  - 1. For the sake of this point, it does not matter if earth circles the sun or the sun the earth.
  - 2. As with spiritual armor in Eph 6:13-17, do not focus on the metaphor and miss the lesson.
  - 3. You know the sun will come up tomorrow and go down tomorrow in common language.
  - 4. The sun will rise and set tomorrow and then do it all over again ignoring any or all men.
  - 5. The sun rose before you were born; it will rise after you are dead; your life is irrelevant.
- B. Regardless of what happens to any man or all men, the sun continues in its regular circuits.
  - 1. Bible critics scoff at the sun moving, but our experts still time the sun's rising or setting.
  - 2. Days come and go continually with no change to recognize birth or death among men.
  - 3. There is no change; there is no reaction; there is no improvement; man is totally ignored.
- C. These natural comparisons further explain *the earth abideth for ever* from context (Eccl 1:4).
- D. The lesson at hand is the unchangeableness of earthly life with no new things (Eccl 1:9-11).
- E. No matter how great you think yourself or others are, all lives are irrelevant and forgotten.

***6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.***

- A. Rather than get distracted about wind cycles, consider that wind cycles never change or end.
  - 1. As with spiritual armor in Eph 6:13-17, do not focus on the metaphor and miss the lesson.
  - 2. Learning about wind cycles is not wisdom; the perpetuity of wind cycles is the lesson.
  - 3. The wind blew before you were born; it will blow after you are dead; it fully ignores you.
- B. Like the sun in the previous verse, the wind follows a course fixed for it, but it ignores you.
  - 1. You nor any ancestors or successors will ever alter a thing; you are counted irrelevant.
  - 2. Nature does not change. It is fixed in perpetual motion. Men come and go without notice.
- C. These natural comparisons further explain *the earth abideth for ever* from context (Eccl 1:4).
- D. The lesson at hand is the unchangeableness of earthly life with no new things (Eccl 1:9-11).
- E. No matter how great you think yourself or others are, all lives are irrelevant and forgotten.

***7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.***

- A. Rather than get distracted about water cycles, consider that the cycle never changes or ends.
- B. As with the spiritual armor in Eph 6:13-17, do not focus on the metaphor and miss the lesson.
- C. Like the sun and wind, water goes through its perpetual cycle without any real change at all.
- D. These natural comparisons further explain *the earth abideth for ever* from the context (1:4).
- E. The lesson at hand is the unchangeableness of earthly life with no new thing (Eccl 1:9-11).

- F. No matter how great you think yourself or others are, all lives are irrelevant and forgotten.
- G. Compare the words of Jacob, Barzillai, and Moses (Gen 47:9; II Sam 19:35-37; Ps 90:9-12).

***8 All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.***

- A. Man's labor to accomplish anything, and the attendant difficulties, cannot fully be described.
  - 1. Anything of value man wants he must work to exhaustion to get it (Prov 16:26; Eccl 6:7).
  - 2. God cursed man with difficulty in his labor (Gen 3:17-19), but that is not the lesson here.
  - 3. The difficulty and frustration of working hard to gain nothing in lasting value is terrible.
  - 4. It is hard for man to even describe how frustrating it is to work hard and die with nothing.
  - 5. No matter how hard he works (to get a thing), there is always something else to desire.
  - 6. He is so temporary that he barely learns to work well before he loses strength and dies.
  - 7. Compare words of Jacob, Barzillai, and Moses (Gen 47:9; II Sam 19:35-37; Ps 90:9-12).
- B. Regardless of the labor expended, though diligently and wisely, the results are not satisfying.
  - 1. Even when some measure of riches are obtained, they do not quench the desire (Ec 5:10).
  - 2. Regardless of the labor, man and his senses are never satisfied under the sun (Pr 27:20).
  - 3. Things will only attract man's eyes and ears for a while, then he is off to other pursuits.
  - 4. Man is on a treadmill, constantly increasing the speed, trying to find fulfillment in life; the faster he goes, he sees others going yet faster, and he is further frustrated with his life.
  - 5. Think about your last vacation – all the great dreams, expectations, hope, and thoughts you had for it – but it was less than you thought, ended too soon, and cost too much.
  - 6. God has subjected man to such vanity in order to teach His children hope (Rom 8:19-22).

***9 The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.***

- A. Forget all foolish thinking of your mind or others; there has been no invention that fits here.
  - 1. Modern man wants to list all his inventions to scorn this verse, but he still dies frustrated.
  - 2. If we travel from one place to another by foot, donkey, chariot, car, or drone is irrelevant.
  - 3. Quality of life with HVAC may have changed only slightly, but men still die frustrated.
- B. There is no new thing on earth ... *under the sun* ... that will fulfill and satisfy man's soul.
  - 1. The earth continues on like it always has without any change in it, the sun, or water cycle.
  - 2. No matter the billions of persons that have lived and their efforts for profit and purpose, there has been no improvement in man's condition or expectation, and there will not be.
- C. There are three time frames here, past – present – and future, if you keep the words straight.
  - 1. Like the sun, wind, and water already listed, man is always active, but without change.
  - 2. There is no new thing altering life's vanity, death's curse, nature of labor, frustration, etc.
- D. Our generation has things galore that were unknown to Solomon, but we are not better off!
  - 1. And he had authority, capital, peace, privileges, time, and such like that we do not have.
  - 2. There is no invention of the last 6000 years that has improved man's life and labor at all, if you look at the nature of life and labor, rather than merely the external form of things.

***10 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.***

- A. The answer to the Preacher's rhetorical question is a strong negative. See context (Ec 1:9,11).
  - 1. Listen to him! Stop boasting about inventions ... learn that life has not changed ... at all.
  - 2. There have been inventions to improve details, but other generations had inventions also.

3. There has been nothing, is nothing, and never will be anything to make his life profitable.
  4. Can you perceive that Solomon allows for inventions, but nothing to alter man's purpose?
  5. Any improvement in little things of life is ignored in the absence of altering his destiny.
  6. Man is cursed with labor and covetousness, fear and loss, and inventions do not alter it.
- B. If you want a treasure of new things ... then read God's word and look for them (Mat 13:52).

***11 There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.***

- A. With everything and everyone caught in a cycle, there is no outstanding memory of anything.
1. Each generation repeats the process of birth, labor, and death without profit for memory.
  2. Whether you die as a wise man or fool, no one will remember you for anything (Ec 2:16).
  3. Your life is worthless, for it has not altered the earth's cycles or human fulfillment at all.
- B. Note the four time frames, past, present, future, and further future ... there is nothing new.
1. You spend no time thinking about the thoughts or achievements of the men before you.
  2. No one will spend time thinking about your thoughts or achievements after your death.
  3. No one in the distant future will remember a thing about your best-trained children.
- C. Neither you nor your accomplishments are worth remembering, for you did nothing new.
1. If you have left a job, hoping they would miss or need you, you were greatly mistaken.
  2. If you think your descendants will build a memorial to you, get a life and aim for heaven.
- D. If you think this makes life quite hopeless, you are very right, and you have learned wisdom.
- E. Neither should you think things were once better, since that also is foolish thinking (Ec 7:10).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #2: *Vanity of All Human Life and Effort* \*\*\*\*\*

***12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.***

- A. Solomon did not write this book after death ... the past tense times his philosophical pursuit.
1. Being king while writing is far less weighty than having been king while experimenting.
  2. Solomon used the past tense ("was king"), because he wrote about it after the fact of it.
- B. Reigning over God's church and nation in Jerusalem was an exalted position by God's grace.
1. He was great and increased more than all before him when he began his search (Ec 2:9).
  2. A preacher that is also a king gives him many valuable advantages to discerning hearers.
- C. Having introduced the purpose of the book and the first lesson of hopelessness, Solomon then explained his life, position, and project for the sake of his readers in this second lesson.
- D. He sought the purpose of life when he had all the resources of wisdom, riches, and authority.
- E. No man has ever been so blessed as you are at this minute to have Solomon as your preacher.
1. He was most able of all to test any aspect of life that might make man's existence good.
  2. He was most able of all to analyze and determine vice or virtue from any aspect of life.
  3. He put in writing his findings about all things, from women to wine to silver and time.
  4. God inspired his writing to make sure every word was perfect, and He preserved them all.
  5. You have in the divine library of the Bible this book by God and Solomon written to you.
  6. You can in a few hours of reading and studying this book trump all men and their ideas.

**13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.**

- A. God gave him great wisdom ... natural wisdom about how to live as successfully as possible.
- B. Solomon zealously applied himself to the work of discovering the profit or purpose of life.
  - 1. This is philosophy defined – the nature of things, or why we live, and what we should do.
  - 2. He explored and assessed from every angle what man’s life reasons or goals should be.
  - 3. He gave his heart to the work, which means his passionate energy was diligently applied.
  - 4. This was no halfhearted or part-time pursuit of profitable life (Ec 1:17; 7:25; 8:9,16-17).
  - 5. If you do not put your heart into seeking wisdom, you will never find it (Pr 2:2; 3:1,3,5; 4:23; 15:28; 16:23; 17:16; 18:1-2,15; 19:3; 22:11,15; 23:12,15,17,19,26; 24:2; 28:14,26).
  - 6. He applied the wisdom God gave him to the task, so we may be content with the results.
  - 7. Solomon wrote a proverb that described the nature of truly pursuing wisdom (Pr 18:1-2).
  - 8. If you want wisdom, it requires diligence and discipline only a few ever give (Pr 2:1-9).
  - 9. His pursuit ought to satisfy our curiosity: he had both the commitment and means to do it.
- C. The confusion, ignorance, and vexation of life are designed by God to exercise all mankind.
  - 1. The *sore travail* is not labor directly, but the search to find profit (Ec 3:9-11; 7:14; 8:17).
  - 2. Due to Adam’s sin, men and women have been subjected to earthly travail (Gen 3:16-19).
  - 3. Due to our sins, God has subjected man to a life of vanity to create hope (Rom 8:19-22).
  - 4. Even the children of God are for their time under the sun bound in a state of corruption.
  - 5. The perpetual frustration of man to find any good on earth should drive him to seek God.
  - 6. No matter how hard he works, or how hard he analyzes and philosophizes, his life is vain.
  - 7. There has been no progress in man or civilization to make life purposeful and profitable.
  - 8. He has subjected us to a time of vanity, but He has also created us with hope (I Peter 1:3).
  - 9. Our vain and vexing situation here below causes earnest expectation for above (Ro 8:19).

**14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.**

- A. Solomon observed all works done under the sun, and he described them as *vain* and *vexing*.
  - 1. You are not capable of observing hardly anything, but he had wisdom to observe all.
  - 2. *Vanity* describes their worthlessness and futility, *vexation* their frustrating effect on man.
  - 3. *Vanity and vexation* spring from man’s inability to find any satisfying change (Ec 1:15).
- B. First, all works and things under the sun are *vanity* – empty, without profit or value, nothing.
  - 1. These are works of all kind, whether building projects or hallucinations of philosophers.
  - 2. The works of men are empty without lasting satisfaction or fulfillment or even memory.
  - 3. No matter achievement or accolades, they do not satisfy; more is expected; death comes.
- C. Second, all works and things here are *vexation of spirit* – frustrating, painful, troublesome.
  - 1. This vexation is also described as grief and sorrow (Ec 1:18; 2:17) and disquiet (Ps 39:5).
  - 2. Even if a man lives to 80, the assessment of life is very negative (Ps 90:10; Gen 47:7-9).
  - 3. The days of the afflicted are evil, but a merry heart makes a continual feast (Prov 15:15).

**15 That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.**

- A. God alone makes things on earth crooked or straight (Ec 7:13; Job 34:29; Isaiah 40:4; 42:16).
- B. Man cannot alter what God does or do anything without His secret will (Ec 3:14; Lam 3:37).
- C. If God makes something crooked, we should not even question it (Isaiah 45:9; Daniel 4:35).

- D. If God makes something wanting, man will not be able to add anything to it (Number 24:23).
- E. God mocked the ignorance of the ostrich as an example of a brain truly wanting (Job 39:17).
- F. Jesus mocked the simplest of tasks – adding a cubit to your height by thought (Matt 6:27).
- G. No matter what man discovers, invents, or manufacturers, God’s rules regarding it fully rule.
- H. Man cannot change anything of significance; the invention of all mousetraps is irrelevant.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #3: *Vanity of Even Great Natural Wisdom* \*\*\*\*\*

***16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.***

- A. Solomon knew by God’s blessings he had greater wisdom and riches than any before him.
  - 1. God gave Solomon wisdom more than any man before or after (I Kings 3:12; 4:29-34).
  - 2. Not only did he have wisdom, but he knew he had it and could apply and direct it easily.
  - 3. He knew perfectly that his gift of wisdom was to search out things more than ever before.
  - 4. He could like no other man meditate and muse about life in depth for perfect conclusions.
- B. In spite of exceeding great wisdom and estate, he could not alter life’s vanity and vexation.
- C. This is natural wisdom and knowledge here, which he had in abundance, for he could speak and write of all aspects of human conduct, trees, etc. (I Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-34).
  - 1. In the many lessons following there is next to nothing about sin, a redeemer, and heaven.
  - 2. By comparing Proverbs, the wisdom Solomon excelled in was natural, practical wisdom.
  - 3. Jesus and His apostles were the experts in spiritual wisdom, which Solomon barely knew.

***17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.***

- A. With his great blessings from God, Solomon stated again here his commitment to wisdom.
- B. He gave himself to observe madness and folly to better measure wisdom by opposite ideas.
  - 1. This is God’s choice of words for false opinions and theories of natural and pagan men.
  - 2. Comparing and contrasting, wisdom or madness and folly, wisdom is better (Ec 2:12-13).
  - 3. Comparing both sides of an argument often is the best way to identify and define truth.
  - 4. This is not madness in the sense of insanity, nor foolishness in the sense of wickedness.
  - 5. He was sufficiently endowed with wisdom to know that madness and folly were vanity.
  - 6. **Madness.** Imprudence or delusion resembling insanity; extravagant folly. Irrational nonsense or insane thinking; imprudence, delusional thinking, craziness.
  - 7. Scripture uses the word in this sense (Ec 1:17; 2:2,12; 7:7,25; 9:3; 10:13; Is 44:25; Jer 25:16; 29:26; 50:38; 51:7; Hos 9:7; Zec 12:4; Jn 10:20; Ac 12:15; 26:24-25; II Pet 2:16).
  - 8. Scripture also uses it for insanity (II Kgs 9:11; Pr 26:18; I Sam 21:13-15; I Cor 14:23).
  - 9. Scripture also uses it for anger (Deut 28:34; Ps 102:8; Pr 26:18; Luke 6:11; Acts 26:11).
  - 10. Compare *beside himself* (Mk 3:21; Ac 26:24) and *babbling and fables* (I Tim 4:8; 6:20).
- C. He learned that even great natural wisdom was also vanity (implied) and vexation of spirit.
  - 1. He had just written all human effort and human life were vanity and vexation (Ec 1:15).
  - 2. Now he issued his indictment against even great natural wisdom – it was also the same.
  - 3. The object of his criticism is not the comparison of wisdom and folly, but wisdom itself.
  - 4. He did not focus on all three – wisdom, madness, folly – or he would have used *these*.
  - 5. By continuing his line of reasoning into the next verse, you can see wisdom is the object.

6. Wisdom is better than madness and folly of course, but wisdom itself has its drawbacks.

### ***18 For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.***

- A. We ordinarily measure wisdom as completely good without any downside or bad features.
  1. The wisdom here is natural, practical wisdom, not spiritual wisdom that has no negatives.
  2. Natural, practical wisdom is indeed a great thing, for Solomon wrote of it in his Proverbs.
  3. However, natural wisdom, no matter how much is possessed, cannot make life fulfilling.
  4. Wisdom is truly better than madness and folly (Ec 2:13), but it does not solve all issues.
  5. A wise man cannot extend his life any longer than the fool; both will die alike (Ec 2:15).
  6. Memory aspects by which he mocked effort (Ec 1:11) apply to natural wisdom (Ec 2:16).
  7. Spiritual wisdom trumps both natural wisdom and folly, but here is natural wisdom only.
- B. Ignorance is bliss in a natural way, for wisdom and knowledge will bring grief and sorrow.
  1. The wisdom here is natural, practical wisdom, not spiritual wisdom that has no negatives.
  2. We watch children play with all their might and then sleep soundly in just minutes ... for they have no thought or worry of things five minutes or five years or five decades away.
  3. Greater knowledge of things reveals more clearly the insanity of man and his existence.
  4. Greater knowledge of things reveals more clearly your inability to change things in life.
  5. Knowing how things could or should work causes frustration to see them otherwise.
  6. Knowing consequences of actions causes wise men greater apprehension of coming evil.
  7. Knowing the superiority of wisdom to folly leads to greater mistrust of all foolish men.
  8. An increase in knowledge shows further fields of study for more weariness (Eccl 12:12).
  9. Increasing in natural knowledge causes greater comprehension of one's great ignorance.
  10. Knowing the right and profitable behavior for an action brings greater responsibility.
  11. An increase in knowledge causes envy and hatred by those that have not obtained any.
  12. An increase in knowledge requires an equal increase in memory to keep it useful.
  13. Nature has no recognition of wisdom to deliver men from disease, trouble, or even death.
- C. Solomon's much natural wisdom brought grief and sorrow; it did not bring profit or value.
  1. It is hard to grasp unless a clear distinction is made between natural and spiritual wisdom.
  2. How to make money, marry well, and avoid gluttony is good, but that man will still die.
  3. Spiritual wisdom has no real negatives, not enough in kind or quantity to criticize it at all.
  4. In the lessons that follow, he will declare various angles that make natural wisdom vain.

### **Conclusion and Application**

1. David wrote, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.
2. All that is said in this chapter and the other chapters must be understood in light of 12:13-14.
3. If you put the Lord first, as all true Christians do, then life can be a win-win situation (Eccl 5:18-19; Acts 14:17; I Tim 6:6,17; Matt 6:32; Ps 104:28; I Cor 15:19; Rom 15:13; etc., etc.).
4. The most delightful and satisfying *relationship* is with God and of any *things* are His words.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 2

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #4: Epicureanism – Pursuit of Pleasure – Refuted \*\*\*\*\*

***1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.***

- A. Having learned vanity and vexation of natural wisdom, Solomon tested pleasure (Eccl 2:1-3).
  - 1. **Mirth.** Pleasurable feeling, enjoyment, gratification; joy, happiness. Gaiety of mind, as shown in jest and laughter; merriment, hilarity; in early use, jocularly, fun, ridicule.
  - 2. Compare Genesis 31:27; Isaiah 24:11; Jeremiah 7:34; Hosea 2:11; Eccl 8:15 for meaning.
  - 3. Mirth need not be ungodly levity (Neh 8:2). But mirth includes idiocy of fools (Ec 7:2-6).
  - 4. His wisdom was still with him (Ec 2:3,9), so his pleasure and mirth were not sinfully evil.
- B. This is the philosophy of Epicureanism Paul encountered in Athens' market (Acts 17:16-18).
  - 1. Epicureanism simply put as a lifestyle – eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.
  - 2. **Epicureans.** A major philosophic sect of Greece and Rome founded by Epicurus (341-270 B.C.). The purpose of life is to enjoy pleasure, whether physical or intellectual. They had no place for a creator God, His providence, or judgment after death.
  - 3. This is the choice of the rich man described by Jesus that woke up in hell (Luke 12:19).
- C. This is the philosophy of most of the world today, though generally incapable of defining it.
  - 1. They are obsessed to maximize pleasure at the cost or loss of most everything else in life.
  - 2. They are obsessed with amusement (no thinking) against the musing of David (Ps 143:5).
  - 3. As Paul warned, even Christians would love pleasures more than love God (II Tim 3:4).
  - 4. As Moses once chose, Christians should reject the pleasures of sin (Heb 11:25; Titus 3:3).
  - 5. Reveling and partying like the world are sinfully wrong (Luke 21:34; Gal 5:21; I Pet 4:3).
- D. Solomon's quick initial summary of the vanity of pleasure will be expanded on in the lesson.

***2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?***

- A. Solomon concluded immoderate laughter and mirth are madness and will not satisfy the soul.
- B. There is a time to be merry and rejoice in God and blessings (Prov 15:13; 17:22; Phil 4:4).
- C. Excessive laughter is the obvious noise of a fool – showing his folly (Eccl 7:2-6; Eph 5:3-5).
- D. God wants serious thinking, not riotous living without fear (Is 22:12-14; Am 6:1-8; Jas 4:8).

***3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.***

- A. Solomon continued to search for a purpose that would give human life fulfillment and value.
  - 1. He reminded his readers of the specific purpose of his labors and writing (Eccl 1:3; 2:22).
  - 2. This is one more step along the road of discovery to the true purpose of man (Eccl 12:13).
- B. He explored and tested all kinds of pleasure, folly, and mirth to find the goals for human life.
  - 1. This is the fuller explanation of his initial inquiry and conclusion stated above (Eccl 2:1).
  - 2. We do not see Solomon here testing the depths of Satan in all kinds of diabolical folly.
  - 3. We do see Solomon here enjoying culinary pleasures and assessing folly mixed with it.

4. He analyzed epicureanism with wisdom and folly to find the right balance (Prov 25:16).
- C. Wine is used here as synecdoche for pleasure eating. Good eating involves wine (Ec 10:19).
  1. Solomon did have a great menu for daily eating and that of his servants (I Kgs 4:22-23).
  2. God had described Canaan pleasantly as a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8).
  3. Eating out to enjoy the good life with vacations and related pleasures is common today.
  4. Solomon inquired, Is the good life of pleasure and mirth the proper goal for existence?
- D. The rich man that woke up in hell thought epicureanism was perfect for his life (Luke 12:19).
- E. Solomon had already summarized his conclusion against epicureanism at the start (Eccl 2:1).
  1. He observed that pursuing pleasures of all kinds and folly and mirth are not good goals.
  2. Pleasure has its place, even with wine, but in its place (Ec 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7).

\*\*\*\*\* *Lesson #5: Materialism – Pursuit of Possessions – Refuted* \*\*\*\*\*

***4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:***

- A. Solomon built and acquired vast possessions to see if they gave lasting purpose (Ec 2:4-11).
- B. He made great things and pools (I Kgs 4:33; 7:1-2,8; 9:15-19,26; 10:18-20; Song 7:4; 8:11).
- C. While details could be supplied for each phrase, the issue is real property here (Eccl 2:4-6).

***5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:***

- A. Some think gardens and related outdoor projects with nature are higher purposes than others.
- B. No one ever had gardens, orchards, or fruit trees even coming close to what Solomon made.

***6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:***

- A. Some think a swimming pool will make their family happy, but they miss Solomon's lesson.
- B. Solomon built waterworks that would produce the best trees for his grand building projects.

***7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:***

- A. He had servants and cattle (I Kings 4:26-28; 9:20-23; 10:4-8; Ezra 2:55-58; I Kings 4:22-23).
- B. He had unprecedented domestic staff and the means of life in herds of various cattle breeds.
- C. His menu for his daily eating and that of his servants was very great indeed (I Kgs 4:22-23).
- D. Many think such an estate with cheap labor and means of production would bring fulfillment.

***8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.***

- A. Solomon gathered gold and silver (I Kgs 9:14,26-28; 10:10,14-15,21-22,27; II Chr 9:13-19).
- B. He received many unique gifts from kings and princes (I Kgs 4:21; 10:10,22; II Chr 9:23-24).
- C. He gathered male and female singers and musical instruments (II Chronicles 7:6; Amos 6:5).
- D. David, the great and gifted musician of Israel, had invented many singers and instruments.

**9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.**

- A. His acquired possessions got him unprecedented greatness (I Kgs 3:13; 10:7,23; I Chr 29:25).
- B. These things he had in abundance did not go to his head to corrupt his wise analysis of them.
- C. Many would gladly do anything to have this lifestyle of the rich and famous, but it is vanity.
- D. Jesus blasted the idea a man's life should be measured by his possessions (Luke 12:15-31).

**10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.**

- A. Solomon did not practice any restraint in pursuit of possessions; he acquired all he wanted.
  - 1. He came behind no man in testing the value of possessions, and he rejoiced in all he did.
  - 2. If possessions provide profit for life, then Solomon had more of them and enjoyed them.
  - 3. There was nothing left in the catalog for his eyes to see that he did not get for himself.
  - 4. There was nothing left in his desires or imagination that he did not acquire for himself.
- B. As he explained shortly, no other man could test possessions like he did in his test (Ec 2:12).
  - 1. Other men have not had the capital or wealth to obtain all their desires in eyes or hearts.
  - 2. American folly says, He that dies with the most toys wins. They know better after death.
- C. Most think if they could have everything their sight and heart want would make them happy.
- D. Enjoying possessions is not sin, but it is not the primary joy or the fulfilling purpose for life.
- E. True success in life is learning to be content with the things you have (I Tim 6:6; Heb 13:5).

**11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.**

- A. When Solomon finished acquiring and building, he realized that possessions did not satisfy.
- B. As he wrote twice in context, he still had wisdom to properly assess these things (Ec 2:3,9).
  - 1. Most men would be corrupted by the abundance of things and unable to properly assess.
  - 2. Most men would be corrupted by the achievement of labor and unable to properly assess.
  - 3. However, Solomon by inspiration and preservation was able to give a very true analysis.
- C. He concluded the purpose of life was not to be found in acquiring or building great things.
  - 1. He found that these great achievements and possessions were worthless and profitless.
  - 2. He also found these things brought great vexation of spirit in getting and keeping them.
  - 3. This is a great indictment and condemnation of America's obsession about possessions.
- D. He will elaborate on the various factors that make all this labor and all these things worthless.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #6: Natural Wisdom Excels Folly but Is Still Vanity \*\*\*\*\*

**12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.**

- A. Solomon had exceeded all men in possessions, so he tested wisdom and folly (Eccl 2:12-17).
  - 1. Any man coming after his test of possessions could only be a very inferior test of things.
  - 2. You cannot get close to Solomon in achievements or possessions, so trust his conclusion.
- B. Solomon observed natural wisdom, madness, and folly to identify which was most profitable.
  - 1. The wisdom he considered was not spiritual wisdom, but rather natural wisdom of man.

2. This distinction must be considered each time the word wisdom is found to rightly divide.
  3. Spiritual wisdom to know God, His Son Jesus, heaven, judgment, truth, etc. is different.
  4. Solomon observed this natural wisdom; it was not what he had internally by regeneration.
- C. Natural wisdom is much of Proverbs, from risk avoidance to a virtuous wife's housekeeping.
1. Many aspects of wisdom taught by Solomon in Proverbs are practiced by worldly men.
  2. There are indeed rules of spiritual wisdom in Proverbs, but they are a relative minority.
  3. Worldly men cannot and do not have spiritual wisdom at any time e.g. fear of the LORD.
  4. Natural wisdom is from politics to finance to marriage to wine to speech to child training.

***13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.***

- A. Solomon did not test wisdom or folly directly; he beheld (2:12), saw (2:13), perceived (2:14).
- B. He identified this kind of observation of wisdom and folly in Proverbs (Pr 24:30-32; 7:6-7).
- C. His conclusion is dramatic and powerful – natural wisdom annihilates natural folly of man.
1. In ranking perspectives and philosophies of life, natural wisdom is far superior to folly.
  2. Natural wisdom is a tremendous advantage, trumping folly like light transcends darkness.
  3. Darkness is worthless; light is life in contrast; light destroys and drives darkness away.
  4. There is a tremendous, inherent superiority of wisdom to folly in living life under the sun.
- D. A man with natural wisdom, the kind taught in Proverbs, is far better off in life than a fool.
- E. Natural life here faces many snares and offers opportunities, but only to the naturally wise.

***14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.***

- A. A wise man knows the purpose, plan, profit, or risk of things, but a fool is ignorant of them.
1. Wisdom causes a man to see things good and bad and adjust his conduct accordingly.
  2. Folly blinds a man to miss seeing snares of life and also the opportunities, costing him.
  3. A wise man handles life and challenges with daylight; the fool stumbles in ignorant night.
  4. A natural man applying the natural wisdom of Proverbs will be happy and successful.
  5. A natural man rejecting the natural wisdom of Proverbs will be punished and destroyed.
  6. Truly, natural wisdom is far superior to natural folly like light is far superior to darkness.
- B. Yet, as Solomon observed, life events happen to wise men and fools without discrimination.
1. Consider acts of God – abilities, birth, chance, disease, famine, opportunities, etc., etc.
  2. These powerful factors on a man's purpose and profit under the sun are out of his control.
  3. Only dependent results, by the difference of wise or foolish choices, make wisdom better.
  4. In the final analysis, the independent events (acts of God) far outweigh dependent events.
  5. If this is true, events happen alike to both, then natural wisdom is hardly worth pursuing.
  6. Solomon wrote in the next verses to elaborate on the factors equaling wise men and fools.
- C. Therefore, in life under the sun, there is a true measure in which wisdom and folly are equal.
- D. Solomon did not indict with his vanity and vexation indictment, but he will (Eccl 12:15,17).

***15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.***

- A. Solomon's observation – wise men and fools suffer alike – reduced natural wisdom to vanity.
- B. Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness, but it does not alter the greatest events of life.
- C. There are many acts of God that drastically affect human life that ignore wisdom and folly.
- D. Therefore, a life spent acquiring natural wisdom is a vain effort in light of life's big events.

***16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.***

- A. Solomon observed – wise men and fools are forgotten – reducing natural wisdom to vanity.
  - 1. Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness, but it does not produce a lasting reputation.
  - 2. A man with great natural wisdom will be forgotten as soon as he is dead, so why be wise.
  - 3. All that is highly esteemed now while a wise man lives will be forgotten after he dies.
  - 4. In the ordinary course of life, a burial marker is all that both wise men and fools will get.
  - 5. If a man naturally wise will be forgotten after death, then why stress about acquiring it.
- B. Solomon observed – wise men and fools die identically – reducing natural wisdom to vanity.
  - 1. What does natural wisdom actually profit a man at his biggest test? He dies like the fool.
  - 2. If natural wisdom is superior to naturally folly but cannot help at death, then it is vanity.
  - 3. The great enemy of life under the sun – bodily death – is not altered by wisdom or folly.
- C. If life events, including death and its theft of memory happens alike, wisdom is not worth it.
  - 1. Wisdom is vanity, because it turns out to be profitless and worthless in the big life events.
  - 2. Wisdom is vexation of spirit, because it requires great effort and restraint to fully live it.

***17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.***

- A. Here is one of many intermediate conclusions – life on earth is vain and vexes man’s spirit.
- B. No matter what a man tries to find good, purpose, and/or fulfillment in life, it is all worthless.
  - 1. He can try to make his existence good and worthwhile by mirth and pleasure (Eccl 2:1-3).
  - 2. He can try to make his existence good and worthwhile by many possessions (Ecc 2:4-11).
  - 3. He can try to make his existence good and worthwhile by natural wisdom (Eccl 2:12-17).
  - 4. But the conclusion was obvious to Solomon and should be to you, all three are but vanity.
- C. Life is terrible, because no matter what you try to make it worthwhile, it will only grieve you.
  - 1. Any that deny this fact about life are too stupid to see the facts staring them in the face.
  - 2. It has been said by some and with a measure of truth, *Life is a bitch, and then you die.*
- D. Wise men ask questions about life with great honesty to correctly assess its utter vanity.
  - 1. Fools never ask questions about life or answer those questions, because they are stupid.
  - 2. Wise men ask and answer these questions as Solomon did to help guide their priorities.
- E. Solomon’s conclusion is correct – there are things far more important than ordinary pursuits.
  - 1. Those things are not identified here, but they are in his philosophy course lessons ahead.
  - 2. Men with spiritual wisdom will let Solomon lead them to the truth of vanity and vexation.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #7: *Death Transfers Assets and Exploits to Others* \*\*\*\*\*

***18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.***

- A. Solomon concluded lessons so far with hated of life for its vanity and vexation (Ec 2:18-23).
- B. Here he explained that he hatred all his labor in life with a new reason – some else will get it!
  - 1. He looked back on great efforts, planning, and labors to achieve and acquire (Ec 2:4-11).
  - 2. Death would transfer the results of those efforts, plans, and labors to another’s ownership.

- C. Death strips a man of everything he achieved or acquired in life to leave him as he was born.
  1. We bring nothing into life, and we can take nothing out of it (Job 1:21; Ps 39:6; 49:6-17).
  2. Therefore, worrying about the junk of life is grievous folly (Luke 12:15-21; I Tim 6:7-9).
  3. This fact that strips man of all things of this life should cause us to despise such things.
  4. No one wants to think about death, because it exposes the vanity of all their great efforts.
  5. Whether pleasure, wisdom, strength, or riches ... it matters not ... all is stripped away.
- D. If a person is wise enough to pass Solomon's philosophy course, he will hate life and labor.
  1. Seeing life for what it is will turn a man's joy in achievements or acquisitions to hatred.
  2. Thus, Solomon will teach in future lessons the value of funerals over parties (Eccl 7:2).
  3. If you do not hate life and labor from the lessons so far, then you are foolish or rebellious.
- E. However, there is something else to be added to the terrible fact of death to make it worse.
  1. He looked back on great efforts, planning, and labors to achieve and acquire (Ec 2:4-11).
  2. Death would transfer the results of those efforts, plans, and labors to another's ownership.
  3. He would be stripped of all possessions; someone else would get them and their benefits.

***19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.***

- A. Death alone is bad enough, for it will totally strip you of all achievements and acquisitions.
  1. You brought nothing into this world; you will not take a single thing out of this world.
  2. You will be tossed like a sheep into a grave to rot in the earth with reputation forgotten.
- B. However, there is something else to be added to this terrible fact to make it even worse.
  1. He looked back on great efforts, planning, and labors to achieve and acquire (Ec 2:4-11).
  2. Death would transfer the results of those efforts, plans, and labors to another's ownership.
  3. He would be stripped of all possessions; someone else would get them and their benefits.
- C. The person getting all his achievements and possessions, would they be a wise man or a fool?
  1. Consider it! Solomon's natural wisdom and labors would be used by a wise man or fool.
  2. It would not matter if wise or foolish, assets would transfer by inheritance or other way.
  3. Inventions and acquisitions Solomon accomplished would be used to benefit another.
- D. This is aggravated vanity. Not only does death strip wise men, but fools likely get their stuff!
  1. No wonder he hated life. All his wisdom and labors to accumulate would end at death.
  2. But even worse, some idiot coming after him, like a foolish son, would get everything.
  3. Thus, the rich in the world go to great lengths for detailed wills to govern the transfer.
- E. Solomon's fear was well justified, his great assets went to a fool, Rehoboam (I Kgs 12:1-17).
  1. He had a great multitude of sons by his 1000 wives and concubines like leeches to blood.
  2. Rehoboam got the throne and followed foolish advice to an immediate 83% loss (10/12).
- F. Consider. It is very wise to consider death and its effect on your thoughts, labors, and things.
  1. Thus, Solomon will teach in future lessons the value of funerals over parties (Eccl 7:2).
  2. If you do not hate life and labor from the lessons so far, then you are foolish or rebellious.

***20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.***

- A. The philosophy book of Ecclesiastes was Solomon's effort to find purpose (Ec 1:12-14; etc.).
  1. His reflection on lessons just covered caused his heart to despair of finding value in life.
  2. The only conclusion from these lessons – life and labor on earth are hopelessly insane.
  3. Not only is life's laborious efforts vain and vexing, it is a great evil others inherit assets.

- B. Despair is a good thing – a good result – if it is against an earthly, natural view of existence.
  - 1. Meditation on life should cause despair for anyone seeking ultimate good in natural life.
  - 2. Preaching should cause men to despair, just like this book does, of life without God.
- C. If not in despair yet, add problems of laws, partners, taxes, competition, recession, rust, theft, devaluation, missed opportunities, trends, rumors, others winning, etc., etc. (Matt 6:19; etc.).

***21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.***

- A. Death alone is bad enough, for it will totally strip you of all achievements and acquisitions.
  - 1. You brought nothing into this world; you will not take a single thing out of this world.
  - 2. You will be tossed like a sheep into a grave to rot in the earth with reputation forgotten.
- B. However, there is something else to be added to this terrible fact to make it even worse.
  - 1. He looked back on great efforts, planning, and labors to achieve and acquire (Ec 2:4-11).
  - 2. Death would transfer the results of those efforts, plans, and labors to another's ownership.
  - 3. He would be stripped of all possessions; someone else would get them and their benefits.
- C. The person getting all his achievements and possessions, would they be a wise man or a fool?
  - 1. Consider it! Solomon's natural wisdom and labors would be used by a wise man or fool.
  - 2. It would not matter if wise or foolish, assets would transfer by inheritance or other way.
  - 3. Inventions and acquisitions Solomon accomplished would be used to benefit another.
- D. This is aggravated vanity. Not only does death strip wise men, but fools likely get their stuff!
  - 1. No wonder he hated life. All his wisdom and labors to accumulate would end at death.
  - 2. But even worse, some idiot coming after him, like a foolish son, would get everything.
  - 3. Thus, the rich in the world go to great lengths for detailed wills to govern the transfer.
- E. Solomon's fear was well justified, his great assets went to a fool, Rehoboam (I Kgs 12:1-17).
  - 1. He had a great multitude of sons by his 1000 wives and concubines like leeches to blood.
  - 2. Rehoboam got the throne and followed foolish advice to an immediate 83% loss (10/12).
- F. This real fact – the stripping nature of death and transfer of assets to others – is a great evil.
  - 1. Why should a rebellious fool (son) get the results and benefits of his wisdom and labor?
  - 2. This is close to theft, but never viewed as such, for it is the common end of all assets.

***22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?***

- A. Even ignoring death, there is no commensurate reward equal to the grief of acquiring assets.
- B. The planning, labor, and worry of getting and keeping those assets exceeds the joy they give.
- C. Not only are things – even Solomon's great estate – trouble in the getting, death steals them.
- D. What does man have when he counts up all his assets? justified fear of death and inheritance.

***23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.***

- A. Before he knows it, he has obsessively worked hard to acquire things, and then life is over.
  - 1. The popular idea of a workaholic (though oft praised) is this vain and vexing obsession.
  - 2. Please forgive this carnal, earthly, wise song ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54gNizQj3HY>.
- B. A rich man obsessed with advancement and possessions cannot ever truly rest, even at night.
  - 1. The pursuit of wealth is disquieting work (Ps 39:6). We must work quietly (I Thess 4:11).
  - 2. Pursuing wealth is a losing proposition from every angle; reject it (Pr 23:5; I Tim 6:6-10).

- 3. He must worry about getting, keeping, costs, risk, next investment, and many other fears.
- C. So materialism is vanity both in the acquisition of things and in their distribution after death.
- D. Life on earth without God is both vanity and vexation of spirit both during life and at death.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #8: *Contented Enjoyment of Life is God's Gift* \*\*\*\*\*

***24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.***

- A. Solomon summarized a natural and wise way to live in light of death and heirs (Ec 2:24-26).
- B. It is important to understand that this verse has its limitations – it is only part of the solution.
  - 1. This is natural betterment, for there are spiritual things far better than eating and drinking.
  - 2. The natural choice here is to slow down and smell the roses lest consumed with vanity.
  - 3. It is a choice to be content after ordinary labor and leave the rest up to God (Ps 127:1-2).
  - 4. God allows pleasure in life to even the wicked (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; I Tim 6:17).
- C. Choosing contentment allows the pleasure and joy above (I Timothy 6:6; II Samuel 13:1-2).
  - 1. It is a choice, for Solomon wrote it is something a man can make his soul do for himself.
  - 2. It is a known fact some of the poorest people on earth are the most contented and joyful.
- D. But the greatest blessings of contentment are God's gift (Eccl 3:12-13,22; 5:18-20; 6:1-2).

***25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?***

- A. Solomon, though acquiring more assets than any man, knew contentment from God was key.
- B. Even with his abundance, he knew good depended on divine gifts of contentment, joy, peace.

***26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.***

- A. The ability to wisely acquire assets and also ability to enjoy are God's discriminating gifts.
  - 1. The combination of wisdom, knowledge, and joy allow success and the enjoyment of it.
  - 2. The transfer that men should fear, from their wise labors to foolish heirs, is reversed here.
- B. Only God's elect have any ability to do good, which He rewards by blessing them in this life.
- C. God leaves worldly men to vain travail to acquire, invent, and improve things for the elect.
- D. It is a further vanity and vexation of the natural world that God transfers assets His own way.
- E. Here is a strong hint about the conclusion of the book – good men in God's sight (Ec 12:13).

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 3

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #9: God's Providence Overrules all Human Plans \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:***

- A. Every thing that can happen to a man or every thing a man can do has its own season or time.
  - 1. We understand the following list to exalt God's choice of season or time for every event.
  - 2. We understand this list to be circumstances God providentially sends to exercise man.
  - 3. Time and chance are under God's control and rule, and they affect man greatly (Ec 9:11).
  - 4. God, ruler of heaven and earth, changes the times and seasons, not man (Dan 2:20-21).
- B. A very important issue of interpretation is found here – does man pick the time, or does God?
  - 1. Is this a list of opposite events God allows man to pick the time he thinks is appropriate?
  - 2. Is this a lesson in wisdom, learning when it is appropriate to do one thing or its opposite?
  - 3. Such an interpretation violates the context and purpose of the book and its clear lesson, which is to show there is no natural profit for man, and fearing God is his whole duty.
  - 4. Such an interpretation tends toward exalting man's choices over God's sovereign choices.
- C. Or is this a list of things God sovereignly works to cause travail to exercise men to fear Him?
  - 1. The first two things – birth and death – are beyond man's control or will, but not God's.
  - 2. The list is described in context as a list reducing man's laborious work to futility (Ec 3:9).
  - 3. If man chooses the events as he pleases, then Solomon's summary is confusing (Ec 3:9).
  - 4. The list is described in context as God Himself giving travail to exercise men (Ec 3:10).
  - 5. The list is described in context as God performing a work men cannot grasp (Ec 3:11).
  - 6. The list is described in context without good, but men can yet joyfully do good (Ec 3:12).
  - 7. The list is described in context as letting men choose a contented life of good (Ec 3:13).
  - 8. The list is described in context as things God does and man cannot alter them (Ec 3:14).
  - 9. The list is described in context as things God does to cause men to fear Him (Ec 3:14).
  - 10. The list is described in context as things that have afflicted and will afflict men (Ec 3:15).
  - 11. Similar language is used for God allowing wickedness and then judging it (Ec 3:16-17).
  - 12. We understand this list to be those circumstances of God's providence to exercise men.
  - 13. Solomon taught God's providence for man's humility often (Eccl 7:13-14; 9:1-3,11-12).
- D. This list does not teach that things occur in such a way that man is passively not responsible.
  - 1. While there is a time to die, you may also die before your time (Eccl 7:17; Prov 10:27).
  - 2. Man's will is operative in using means to his own happiness, but God's will rules man's.
  - 3. A man may exercise his will to pursue business, but God's will gives gain (Jas 4:13-16).
  - 4. God expects us to prepare horses for battle, but God must protect (Prov 27:12; 21:31).
  - 5. God blessed Abraham with victory, but he had trained servants to fight (Gen 14:14,20).
  - 6. While God gives his beloved sleep (Ps 127:2), too much brings poverty (Prov 6:6-11).
  - 7. The Lord builds houses and keeps cities, but so do responsible men (Psalm 127:1-2).
  - 8. God teaches men how to farm, but they must do the work (Isaiah 28:23-29; Prov 20:4).
- E. God sovereignly makes opposite things beautiful by providence in exercising men (Ec 3:11).
  - 1. God wills and works the seasons and times that make all things and purposes beautiful.
  - 2. Though men counsel and plan devices, the Lord's counsel rules (Ps 33:10-11; Pr 19:21).

3. God identifies Himself as the One Who does all His pleasure from eternity (Is 46:9-11).
  4. God's counsel includes the wicked actions of men (Acts 2:23; 4:28; Ps 76:10; Eph 1:11).
  5. God overthrows the purposes of the wicked to create fear (Psalm 64:7-10; Job 23:13-17).
- F. The American rock band, The Byrds (1964-1973), popularized these words in a song, "Turn, Turn, Turn," taken from the KJV Bible and composed by activist Pete Seeger, who added his own words, "I swear its not too late," at the end after writing, "A time of peace."

## ***2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;***

- A. This is not a time for birth or death that you choose, but rather the time God chooses for you.
  1. You do not have existence at all of any kind without His choice of time for your birth.
  2. Your dreams, plans, and labor all end without recourse at His timing choice for death.
- B. Your *birth* is one of the most sovereign acts of Almighty God in the history of the universe.
  1. He did not consult you as to when, to whom, where, or with what you would be born.
  2. He chose all the aspects of your birth without the least regard to your parents or to you.
  3. Yet these choices above affect your life enormously and cause much travail in your life.
  4. How many young men were born in the time of war and never saw beyond age 20 or so?
  5. How many young men were born in societies that offered them no real opportunities?
  6. How many young men are born with room temperature IQ's, keeping them from success?
  7. How many young women are born with average looks or less, bringing Mr. Average?
  8. How many young women are born to negligent fathers, so they end up marrying a pig?
  9. You cannot add to or alter God's work in any real way ... so fear Him today (Ec 3:14).
  10. God has done this since Eden, and He will yet do it ... get ready for judgment (Ec 3:15).
  11. From a philosophical perspective, God's choice in this matter exceeds all your choices.
  12. There is only one sane option for man, choose contentment and enjoy life (Ec 3:12-15).
- C. Though women desire sons, God gives *birth* (Gen 17:21 cp 21:1-2; I Sam 2:5; Psalm 113:9).
- D. Though men guard against *death*, yet God brings it anyway, and its effects on men are very great, and it cannot be stopped (Ecc 8:8; Gen 38:6-11; Exodus 1:8; Num 20:24-29; Ruth 1:1-5; II Sam 14:14; I Kgs 22:28-40; Psalm 82:3; 90:10-12; 109:12; Luke 12:20; Acts 9:36-39).
- E. God works the opposites of *planting and plucking* (Ecclesiastes 2:5; Jeremiah 26:18).
  1. God arranges by His providence when you will plant or pluck up and if either will work.
  2. God blessed Isaac's sowing and cursed others' (Gen 26:12; Deut 28:33; Judges 6:3-6).
  3. God's judgment on Moab included Israel cutting down all their good trees (II Kgs 3:25).
  4. And metaphorically, God also plants and plucks up nations and rulers (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

## ***3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;***

- A. God works the opposites of *killing and healing* (Ex 21:13; Deut 32:39; I Sam 2:25; Isaiah 38:5; Mark 5:20; Luke 4:25-27; 13:1-5; John 5:1-9; Acts 12:23).
- B. God works the opposites of *breaking down and building up* (II Sam 7:13; II Kgs 25:9; Psalm 102:16; 127:1; Isaiah 44:28; Matt 24:2; Luke 19:44).

## ***4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;***

- A. God works both *weeping and laughing* (Gen 16:1-2; 21:6; Job 34:19-29; Ps 137:1; 126:1-2).
- B. We would seldom choose a season or time to weep, but God brings circumstances to cause it.
- C. God works both *mourning and dancing* (Ex 2:23; 15:20; Job 2:11-13; II Sam 6:6-9,14-19; Ps 30:11; Mark 6:14-29).
- D. We would rather dance, but circumstances out of our control reduce us to mourning anyway.

**5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;**

- A. God works both *casting stones away and gathering stones together* (Josh 10:27; II Kgs 3:25; Neh 4:2; Matt 24:2 cp I Kgs 5:17; 7:9-12).
- B. God works both *embracing and refraining* (Genesis 45:15; Prov 16:7; I Sam 28:1-2; 29:9).
- C. Marital embracing is good and honorable, but it is not always time (I Cor 7:5,26,29,38,40).

**6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;**

- A. God works both *getting and losing* (Gen 26:12; Deut 8:17-18; Haggai 1:5-11; Jas 4:13-15).
- B. If you want an illustration about getting and losing, watch a stock quotation of an active stock, or read about the rise and fall of investment fortunes, or read about Enron Corporation.
- C. God works both *keeping and casting away* (Exodus 12:35-36; II Kings 7:15; Jonah 1:5).

**7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;**

- A. God works both *rending and sewing* (Genesis 37:3,29,34; II Samuel 1:11; I Kings 11:30-31).
- B. God works both *silence and speaking* (Lev 10:3; Job 2:9,13; Jer 8:14; Num 22:28).

**8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.**

- A. God works both *love and hatred* (Gen 37:4-5; I Sam 16:21; II Sam 13:15; Esther 2:17; Ezek 16:8,59).
- B. God works both *war and peace* (Ex 34:24; Josh 11:20; I Kgs 4:25; 5:4; 11:14; 15:6; Job 1:17; Dan 8:24-25).

**9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?**

- A. If the previous eight verses were a lesson in discretion, this verse would not make any sense, for there should be much profit for those that labored and worked in choosing the right time.
- B. A very important issue of interpretation is found here – does man pick the time, or does God?
  - 1. We understand this list to be circumstances God providentially sends to exercise men.
  - 2. We understand God to be Disposer of time, seasons, and chance (Ec 9:11; Dan 2:20-21).
- C. With God working all the things listed above, how much is your laborious work affected?
- D. With God working all the things listed above, how weighty is your desire for any purpose?
- E. With God choosing the season or time for things, how well can you plan or prosper yourself?
- F. No wonder you are to pray, “If the Lord will ...,” for you cannot choose gain (Jas 4:13-15).
- G. You must not miss the continued lesson that there is no profit under the sun (Ec 1:3; 3:9-11).
- H. Consider a few examples of setbacks that men experience to make their labor futile and vain.
  - 1. You may set your love upon another person, but they may never set their love upon you.
  - 2. A ruler or nation may seek peace, but God may stir up an adversary (I Kgs 11:14,23,25).
  - 3. A diligent man may prosper at one time in his life and lose at another time in his life.
  - 4. The emotional or melancholy can quickly go from mourning to dancing and back again.
  - 5. If man tries to find profit in things, God may cut his life short and/or corrupt his heirs.
  - 6. If man tries to find profit in friends, God may turn their hearts to hate him wrongly.
  - 7. If man tries to find profit in laughter, God may work circumstances to cause weeping.

***10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.***

- A. When man has excellent plans or applies diligent effort, God overrules by His providence.
  - 1. The list above includes every event from birth and death to planting or not embracing.
  - 2. God changes the times and seasons of all kinds of events by His sovereign providence.
  - 3. Man finds circumstances constantly changing and out of his control to have full success.
- B. God sovereignly works providence for man's travail to be exercised by it (Ec 1:13-14; 2:26).
  - 1. God continually frustrates designs of sinful man to bring him to bow before his Creator.
  - 2. As he explained next, there is no man that can know what God will do or why He does it.
  - 3. Adam and Eve should have run to God in Eden and repented for their bad predicament.
  - 4. All men should seek God by repentance and worship for the hopelessness of earthly life.
  - 5. Creation reveals that God has eternal power and Godhead to be worshipped (Ro 1:18-25).
  - 6. Providence in sun, rain, and fruitful seasons producing gladness also testify (Acts 14:17).
  - 7. Conscience knows superior laws of the Supreme Being written in the heart (Ro 2:12-16).
  - 8. Before scripture or spiritual revelation, man has been shown enough to repent (Ro 1:32).
- C. Solomon, by his great wisdom and opportunity, observed this phenomenon more than most.
- D. Job and Mrs. Job were both exercised differently by God's sovereign travail in their lives.

***11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.***

- A. Every event of time is perfectly chosen, planned, and arranged by His sovereign providence.
  - 1. He is responsible for the timing of all events without the exception of any. Glory to God!
  - 2. Each events occurs at precisely the right time to be beautiful in His overall providence.
  - 3. Of course, man cannot and will not see the beauty of God's timing, for it differs from his.
  - 4. God wills and works the seasons and times that make every thing and purpose beautiful.
  - 5. Though men counsel and plan devices, the Lord's counsel rules (Ps 33:10-11; Pr 19:21).
  - 6. God identifies Himself as the One Who does all His pleasure from eternity (Is 46:9-11).
  - 7. God's counsel includes the wicked actions of men (Acts 2:23; 4:28; Ps 76:10; Eph 1:11).
  - 8. God overthrows the purposes of the wicked to create fear (Psalm 64:7-10; Job 23:13-17).
- B. God has a beautiful design in providence that proud, depraved, blind man cannot appreciate.
  - 1. Consider the beautiful design of getting Joseph as the ruler in Egypt (Gen 45:4-8; 50:20).
  - 2. Consider how God manipulated Pharaoh's heart by plague and release (Ex 2:7-11; 9:16).
  - 3. God made everything for Himself, and thus everything is beautiful (Pr 16:4; Rev 4:11).
  - 4. God is higher than man by His secret things; man cannot know them (Ec 8:17; De 29:29).
- C. God has turned man over to this world and its things, so he obsesses about his little role in it.
  - 1. God drove Adam out of Eden to till the ground and impregnate his wife for worldly lives.
  - 2. God put a flaming sword to keep Eden and His presence inviolate; He gave man the rest.
  - 3. Man is obsessed from birth to death with this physical and metaphorical world and life.
  - 4. The idea of commentators that God put eternity in every man's heart is not taught here.
- D. Man's obsession about life in this world blinds and restrains him from heavenly thoughts.
  - 1. He is so preoccupied with survival and success on earth that He cannot recognize God.
  - 2. Though God's providence is beautiful in every aspect of it, man cannot and will not see.
  - 3. The word of God, including this section right here, teaches us the beauty of God's rules.
  - 4. This is our worldview, quite different from the ignorant and rebellious worldview of man.
- E. Only in heaven will we know the perfect beauty of the patchwork quite of God's providence.
- F. While we may see some connects of providence now, it is only by the Spirit and/or scripture.

**12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.**

- A. What is *them*? Man and his worldly plans and labors from his heart, subject to providence.
- B. What is *good*? His providence is beautiful, so it is man's worldly ambitions that are not good.
- C. What is the lesson? Contentment to accept God's providence and do good to God and men.
- D. This lesson of contentment with providence has already been taught before (Eccl 2:24-26).

**13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.**

- A. This lesson of contentment with providence has already been taught before (Eccl 2:24-26).
- B. Paul confirmed the lesson to both pagans and to rich Christians (Acts 14:17; I Tim 6:17).
- C. Any success obtained through the vicissitudes of life should be appreciated and enjoyed.
- D. Any ability to be content and enjoy those things allowed by providence is the gift of God.

**14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.**

- A. Here is the absolute government of God by providential rule over all your life circumstances.
  - 1. God does according to His will in heaven and earth and no one can resist (Daniel 4:35).
  - 2. God restrains all human activities to those that will praise Him, so submit (Ps 76:10-12).
- B. God's providence affects life back and forth (in the list of examples) to make men fear Him.
  - 1. The proper response in affliction is to examine yourself and worship God (Job 1:20-22).
  - 2. The proper response in prosperity is to humble yourself and worship God (Ps 116:1-9).
- C. For God's dominion over all things ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.

**15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.**

- A. Events opposed to one another as listed above are coming again by the providence of God.
  - 1. Good and bad events of all kinds occurred to men before, and they are happening now.
  - 2. Good and bad events that will occur in the future already occurred to other men before.
  - 3. Therefore, as taught in this lesson, submit to His providence and enjoy simple pleasures.
- B. Do not presume a great change in argument and reasoning in the last clause of this verse.
  - 1. There is no need to run to eternal judgment and bring 12:14 to bear before we get to it.
  - 2. Past circumstances we wish to avoid will come again by His providence requiring them.
  - 3. Therefore, as taught in this lesson, submit to His providence and enjoy simple pleasures.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #10: God Both Uses Wickedness and Judges It \*\*\*\*\*

**16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.**

- A. This is a new and different angle on life under the sun by Solomon's choice of *moreover*.
- B. With the strong description of God's sovereign rule of the world (Ec 3:1-15), what about sin?
- C. Life on earth shows human sin corrupting civil and religious institutions (Eccl 4:1; 5:8; 8:9).
  - 1. The branches of government in America have united to defend and support abortion.
  - 2. Churches in ignorance often require spouses to avoid divorce and stay in cruel marriages.

3. Examples of corruption of judgment and righteousness are many; some could be listed.

***17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.***

- A. God's sovereign dominion of all events includes corrupt governmental institutions and men.  
1. God's purpose was to chasten Israel by Sennacherib and then destroy him (Is 10:5-15).  
2. The LORD God Jehovah hath made all things for Himself, even the wicked (Prov 16:4).  
B. All sinful men will be judged; they will not escape by providence (Eccl 5:8; 10:8-9; Ps 12:5).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #11: Men Are Like Beasts Considered Naturally \*\*\*\*\*

***18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.***

- A. Solomon observed and wrote – man dies like animals – so he should humble himself to them.  
B. Analyzing life and human ambition, humility can result from considering death (Ps 49:1-20).  
C. Wisdom to assess a situation must identify its reality – the reality is that men die like beasts.  
D. Educated men today think and teach that they descended from monkeys and there is no God, absolute truth, or any afterlife, yet they have greater pride than generation before them.

***19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.***

- A. From a natural standpoint, observing the estate of mankind, this is exactly the way it appears.  
B. Since man cannot take any more with him than an animal does, his life obsessions are vanity.

***20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.***

- A. This refers only to the body; the bodies of men and animals returns to the dust of the earth.  
B. Solomon taught in the next verse that the spirits of men go up and animals down (Ec 3:21).  
C. But since the spirit cannot be seen going up or down, then men and animals do look alike.

***21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?***

- A. From a natural standpoint and by natural or “scientific” methods, this flight cannot be known.  
B. Solomon taught spiritual truth, while admitting that from a natural view it cannot be known.  
C. He will make this distinction about body and spirit again when dealing with death (Ec 12:7).  
D. Animals do not go to heaven, Jack and Rexella ... <http://www.all-creatures.org/book/r-anheav.html>.

***22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?***

- A. This is Solomon's wise summary, which he has given before (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 3:12-13).  
B. This is Solomon's wise summary, which he will give us again (Eccl 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10).  
C. Enjoying simple pleasures allowed in God's providence should end distress about the future.  
D. Solomon did not diss or ignore heaven here, but he stuck to his proof of earthly hopelessness.  
E. He will make a statement about work and the grave that is intended the same way (Ec 9:10).

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 4

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #12: *Oppression and Evil in Human Existence* \*\*\*\*\*

***1 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.***

- A. Solomon used “return” to describe further exploration of man’s life on earth (Eccl 4:7; 9:11).
- B. Men have asked and cried, and they still do, about the evil done between men in the earth.
  - 1. Despotic rulers hurt their own people; ambitious rulers hurt the people of other nations.
  - 2. Husbands abuse wives; fathers and/or mothers abuse children; wives abuse husbands.
  - 3. Masters abuse servants; magistrates abuse citizens; teachers abuse students; and so forth.
  - 4. Consider abortion, where little babies run from the suction wand of murderous doctors.
- C. With readily accessible information about many events in the world, this cry is much louder.
  - 1. Internet access in all parts of the earth allows evil news from all other parts of the earth.
  - 2. Due to this proliferation of evil news of oppression, there is much social outcry against it.
  - 3. With greater visibility, thinking persons are regularly oppressed by news of oppression.
- D. Solomon made oppression a lesson, because it is part of whether life can be fulfilling or not.
- E. Oppression raises philosophical questions – why is there evil in the world? How do I view it?
  - 1. Why is there evil? If God exists, why does He allow it? Why do men abuse one another?
  - 2. How can I ever have peace and pleasure in a world where men hurt each other so often?
  - 3. There are simple answers for the existence of evil, but Solomon does not give them here.
  - 4. Remember that his purpose other than short directives to God is to make earthly life vain.
  - 5. He used oppression to make life so vain that death or no existence is better (Eccl 4:2-3).
- F. There is no human answer for the dilemma, for man cannot end, grasp, or explain the pain.
  - 1. Men try to legislate it away, but abuse, divorce, murder, etc. continue on without pause.
  - 2. Men try to educate it away, but teaching self-love and human psychology has not helped.
  - 3. Men try to explain it away, but they have no answers, for they do not understand life.
- G. God is the answer and has the answer, though Solomon does not explain the answer here.
  - 1. Solomon has given the answer, and he will give the answer again (Ec 3:16-17; 5:8; 8:9).
  - 2. God is the avenger of all the helpless, needy, poor, and weak (Deut 10:18; Psalm 68:5).
  - 3. God requires persons at all levels to help the oppressed and weak (Ex 22:22; Deut 24:17-21; 27:19; Psalm 82:3; Prov 23:10; 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17; Luke 10:25-37; James 1:27).
- H. More about the topic of evil in the world ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/problem-of-evil.pdf>.

***2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.***

- A. Here is a natural reason that the day of your death is better than that of your birth (Eccl 7:1).
- B. From a natural view without accounting for sin and the sovereign providence of a holy and just God, the oppressions done through the earth are enough to cause one to despair of life.
- C. The view is a natural one without consideration of spiritual comfort and eternal blessings.

- D. We are prone to believe that being alive is far better than death, but there are events and problems in life that can make death and the grave a place of protection and refuge for some.
- E. Many have lived short or long lives of pain and trouble, and they might easily wish for death.
- F. There is even rest and safety for the righteous, if their deaths are viewed rightly (Is 57:1-2).

**3 *Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.***

- A. Solomon compared three groups of men – the dead, the living, and those who have not lived.
- B. There are two groups who benefit from death ... the oppressed, and those viewing their pain.
- C. One of the aspects of life that is vexing is to see oppression and know that it need not occur.
- D. However, if you go into the sanctuary to learn the truth, there are benefits of the afterlife that exceed the pain or trouble we endure during life (Psalm 4:10-24; Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:16-18).
- E. Solomon is not atheistic, confused, or a false teacher – he piled up the vanity of natural life.
- F. Not only is oppression a terrible blight and evil in life, there is also the envy of others.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #13: *Labor Must Be Managed to Avoid Vanity* \*\*\*\*\*

**4 *Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.***

- A. Labor – or working – takes more of life than anything but sleep. Philosophy must address it.
- B. These three verses are related to give four valuable lessons about a right philosophy of labor.
  1. Labor is travail – hard work that is difficult and exhausting – and success demands labor.
  2. Even when a man works hard and faithfully in a profession, others will envy his success.
  3. But the opposite course of foolish slothfulness will destroy life by the trouble of poverty.
  4. So the wise conclusion is moderate ambition and effort to avoid travail and vexation.
- C. Let it be declared – the Christian work ethic taught in the Bible is far superior to all others.
  1. Solomon praised and required diligence by both men and women in his book of Proverbs.
  2. Diligence – hard and persevering labor – is a very good thing in all aspects of every life.
  3. The Bible does not allow charity for those that are either slothful or wasteful in finances.
- D. But a part of the vanity and vexing nature of life is the resentment by others of your efforts.
  1. The previous lesson was oppression by those with power over those without it (Ec 4:1-3).
  2. This lesson is envy by average men or losers of hard workers who live right (Eccl 4:4-6).
  3. In both cases, from very different viewpoints, natural life in this world is vain and vexing.
- E. The first main lesson to learn is that hard work to get ahead will cause others to envy you.
  1. Man’s proud heart will not allow another to make progress without envying his success.
  2. Colleagues resent promotions; neighbors resent purchases; laborers resent authority.
  3. The poor resent the rich without seeing the labor and risk of the rich to give the poor jobs.
- F. Financial or professional success should never cause envy in a Christian, but rather rejoicing.

**5 *The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.***

- A. But there is no relief or profit in the opposite course either, for slothfulness is destructive.
- B. It is ridiculous when fools as described above will envy or resent the success of diligent men.
- C. Fools clasp their hands behind their heads for naps, fold them together for sleep, hide them against their chests under folded arms, clasp them in a center pocket of a sweatshirt, etc.
- D. Solomon mocked sluggards with such language in his proverbs (Pr 6:9-11; 19:24; 26:13-16).

E. Hard work brings envy of others, and slothfulness brings poverty, both vanity and vexation.

**6 *Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.***

- A. Moderate and modest goals properly balanced are superior to vexing ambition or being lazy.
- B. There is a balance between extreme ambition and sinful sloth – convenient meat (Pr 30:7-9).
- C. Godliness and contentment are great gain, though covetousness and greed promote ambition.
- D. Solomon used many priorities (Eccl 4:9,13; 5:5; 6:9; 7:1-8; 9:4,16,18; Prov 8:11; 15:17; etc.).
- E. For the priority of Proverbs 15:16 ... [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/15\\_16.php](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/15_16.php).
- F. For many more comparative priorities ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/priorities2.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #14: *Value of Human Companionship and Society* \*\*\*\*\*

**7 *Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.***

- A. Solomon used “return” to describe further exploration of man’s life on earth (Eccl 4:1; 9:11).
- B. He is about to take up the third lesson in this chapter ... the vanity and value of good friends.
  - 1. The vanity of good friends is those without them, for they have no reward for their labor.
  - 2. The value of good friends is those with them, for they have the four benefits that follow.
- C. Loneliness is a curse in many lives, making their labor even worse without ability to share it.
- D. There are solitary souls that work hard all their lives and never enjoy the pleasure of sharing.

**8 *There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.***

- A. Here is a greedy, single person – working hard for himself and rejecting all companionship.
  - 1. There is no other person in his life – not child or brother – neither by chance or choice.
  - 2. As life demands, and as he chooses to live, he works constantly to acquire and heap up.
  - 3. He is so caught up in himself and pursuit of riches that he cannot and will not back off.
  - 4. He is so caught up in himself and pursuit of riches that he does not consider sharing them.
  - 5. He loses sight of the great pleasure of sharing rewards and success with others he loves.
- B. Solomon identified this a great error of labor – a vanity and sore travail to work for yourself.
  - 1. This is one more observation of vanity and sore vexation in a natural life under the sun.
  - 2. Wise men defeat this vanity and vexation by learning to give and share like Christians.
- C. In the next four verses, he will give four reasons why companionship and society are good.
  - 1. Companionship and society are wonderful things, and the inspired philosopher tells why.
  - 2. Loners are stupid, insane, worthless, and usually selfish – harming themselves and others.
  - 3. This insane and selfish fool needs to learn the lesson of the desert locust (Prov 30:27).
  - 4. Lesson of the locust ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/church/lesson-of-the-locust/sermon.php>.

**9 *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.***

- A. Companionship and society are wonderful – the inspired preacher explains why (Eccl 4:7-8).
- B. Loners are stupid, insane, worthless, and certainly selfish – harming themselves and others.
- C. Here is a rule of inspired wisdom – *two are better than one* – sharing makes life worth living.
- D. God created Eve to be an appropriate helper for Adam; it was not good for him to be alone.

- E. The first benefit of companionship and society is sharing the benefits of daily hard work.
  1. A person who keeps his successes to himself is a fool and sinner sacrificing great joy.
  2. What a pleasure to let others participate in your life, in your successes, in your joys, etc.
  3. A married man is able to share promotions, raises, and checks with wife and children.
  4. A great dinner is always better when friends are present to share the joy with a person.
- F. The four benefits of companionship aggravate the vain choice of solitary persons (Ec 4:7-8).

***10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.***

- A. Companionship and society are wonderful – the inspired preacher explains why (Eccl 4:7-8).
- B. Loners are stupid, insane, worthless, and certainly selfish – harming themselves and others.
- C. Here is a rule of inspired wisdom – *two are better than one* – sharing makes life worth living.
- D. God created Eve to be an appropriate helper for Adam; it was not good for him to be alone.
- E. The second benefit of companionship and society is having others close by to help in trouble.
  1. Friends help with discouragement, depression, criticism, sickness, accidents, losing a job, failing at a business, blowing an interview, death of friend or family member, etc.
  2. Real friends are not fair-weather friends; they are born for the adversity of life (Pr 17:17).
  3. Such special friends are to be valued above your own family in time of need (Pr 27:10).
- F. The four benefits of companionship aggravate the vain choice of solitary persons (Ec 4:7-8).

***11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?***

- A. Companionship and society are wonderful – the inspired preacher explains why (Eccl 4:7-8).
- B. Loners are stupid, insane, worthless, and certainly selfish – harming themselves and others.
- C. Here is a rule of inspired wisdom – *two are better than one* – sharing makes life worth living.
- D. God created Eve to be an appropriate helper for Adam; it was not good for him to be alone.
- E. The third benefit of companionship and society is synergism produced by mixing abilities.
  1. Synergism comes from two Greek words combined to mean working well together.
  2. Synergism – two or more working together to produce what they could not separately.
  3. Synergism – combination of persons when the value is greater than the sum of both parts.
  4. Two people will survive longer in bitter cold by holding their bodies tightly together.
  5. Marriage provides wonderful complementary abilities and perspectives over both alone.
  6. A human body or a church benefits by all joint and parts combining for great leverage.
- F. The four benefits of companionship aggravate the vain choice of solitary persons (Ec 4:7-8).

***12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.***

- A. Companionship and society are wonderful – the inspired preacher explains why (Eccl 4:7-8).
- B. Loners are stupid, insane, worthless, and certainly selfish – harming themselves and others.
- C. Here is a rule of inspired wisdom – *two are better than one* – sharing makes life worth living.
- D. God created Eve to be an appropriate helper for Adam; it was not good for him to be alone.
- E. The fourth benefit of companionship and society is the stronger defense provided for each.
  1. Nations enter military compacts with other nations, though they may hate the nation.
  2. A spouse can stick by you against an enemy, and a large family or clan can do even more.
  3. A threefold cord closes the lesson; two are better than one opened it; society has value.
- F. The four benefits of companionship aggravate the vain choice of solitary persons (Ec 4:7-8).

**13 Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.**

- A. Because Solomon was a king, some of his observations of vanity pertain to political science.
- B. Typical of Solomon's comparisons and parallelisms, we must identify all points to compare.
  - 1. A child is young in age and lacking in education, experience, dignity, and standing; this one is also poor and of an obscure origin; but he is wise in natural wisdom for reigning.
  - 2. An old king would be educated, experienced, and knowing the office well; he would also be rich; but this one is foolish in natural wisdom for reigning, rejecting admonition.
- C. Consistent with Solomon's comparisons and priorities, he exalted wisdom far above folly.
  - 1. He gave folly every advantage, but it was still inferior to wisdom held by an inferior.
  - 2. He had already taught that wisdom is superior to folly as light is to darkness (Eccl 2:13).
- D. Accepting admonition is no fault or weakness of a ruler, but a virtue for himself and citizens.
  - 1. A multitude of counselors provides safety for citizens and kings (Pr 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).
  - 2. A very great flaw of character is unwillingness to take advice, correction, or warning.
  - 3. A very great virtue of character is the willingness to take advice, correction, or warning.

**14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor.**

- A. Because Solomon was a king, some of his observations of vanity pertain to political science.
- B. Who comes from prison? The wise child comes from obscurity, like Joseph, to become king.
  - 1. The cream rises to the top, and a wise child though poor and persecuted, will soon reign.
  - 2. Joseph, known to Solomon, did exactly what is described here. So did David and Daniel.
  - 3. Solomon had taught similar results for wisdom in his book of Proverbs (Pr 17:2; 29:21).
- C. The king, though born with official rights to the throne, ruins his reign by folly and dies poor.
  - 1. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, did exactly that described here – losing his kingdom by folly.
  - 2. Saul did the same thing, as the nation watched a little shepherd boy entirely surpass him.
- D. This is called reversal of fortune, and it is the ordinary benefit and result of learning wisdom.
  - 1. The comparison is extreme and motivating. David had taught, Get wisdom (Prov 4:1-9).
  - 2. Not every man learning wisdom will become king, because there are other factors at play; but all other things being equal, a man with wisdom properly applied will certainly rise.
  - 3. What will you do with wisdom? Get it! Buy it! Trade for it! Separate yourself for it!
  - 4. How diligently do you study the book of Proverbs and the natural wisdom taught there?

**15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.**

- A. Because Solomon was a king, some of his observations of vanity pertain to political science.
- B. Due to Solomon's use of *considered*, we believe he here entered on a new lesson of wisdom.
  - 1. A study of philosophy would be incomplete without observations of political science.
  - 2. As a king himself, Solomon had more reason than most to include this issue of existence.
  - 3. Even reigning as a king had vanity and vexation of spirit by the difficulty of succession.

- C. All living under the sun is plural, yet the *second child* shall stand up in his (singular) stead.
  - 1. The contrast here is all living citizens of a nation and the successor to an existing ruler.
  - 2. The second child is heir apparent to any throne or rule, which we would understand quickly, if the wording were second ruler, second man, second in command, etc.
  - 3. The second child is not second of two children but the king's child that is second in line.
  - 4. If this child is successor to the child king of 4:13-14, the interpretation remains the same.
  - 5. By use of second child, we grasp the ordinary course of a king's son being the next king.
- D. The issue here is political succession based on the words ... *that shall stand up in his stead*.
  - 1. Solomon considered his generation's attitude toward a new ruler to replace one they had.
  - 2. He had warned that the crown does not endure to all generations in Proverbs (Pr 27:24).
  - 3. He had warned about political activists and those who meddle with them (Pr 24:21-22).
  - 4. Solomon knew about the attempts on the reign of his father by Absalom and Adonijah.
  - 5. Solomon knew about the rapid change of sentiment in matters politic (II Sam 19:9-10).

***16 There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.***

- A. There are three groups of people – all the people, those before them, and those after them.
  - 1. The population of a nation may be counted at any time and censuses added together.
  - 2. The combination of those before, those present, and those coming is impossible to satisfy.
- B. The citizens of a nation considered at large are nearly innumerable when measuring opinions.
- C. The lesson is indicated by the words *shall not rejoice in him*, or political succession of rulers.
- D. Though a ruler does well, changing constituents mean varying popularity for him and his son.
  - 1. As citizens of every nation know, it is hard for a good ruler to maintain his popularity.
  - 2. With monarchy succession, it is even harder, for the constituents must like the new king.
  - 3. Memories are short – a true idiom describes citizens – what have you done for me lately?
  - 4. In large numbers of citizens there are always the implacable and impossible to please.
  - 5. In a long reign there are both the changing of the citizens and their changing vicissitudes.
  - 6. In a succession, there are those that loved and trusted the king, but they die and are gone.
  - 7. In a succession, there are those that will not like the king's choice, preferring their own.
  - 8. In a succession, there are those that will rejoice in a new king and then grow cold to him.
- E. Rehoboam was a fulfillment of this lesson, a disastrous succession plan by God's judgment.
  - 1. Though the nation had loved many things about Solomon, they quickly rejected his son.
  - 2. Rehoboam brought the disaster upon himself by refusing the good advice of old advisors.
- F. Even reigning as a great king had vanity and vexation of spirit by the difficulty of succession.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 5

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #17: *Frivolous, Hasty, or Hypocritical Worship* \*\*\*\*\*

***1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.***

- A. Solomon did not write as a backslidden Epicurean idolater; here he is godly and righteous.
  - 1. Since we have no record of repentance and reformation, we assume he died an idolater.
  - 2. But this warning here is not that of an idolater, for he is protecting Jehovah's worship.
  - 3. A godly philosophy, or how to live successfully, includes worship acceptable to God.
- B. Why is this section of positive instruction here? Solomon had observed much vain talking.
  - 1. Many vanities occur in the worship of God, which was a huge part of Israel's daily life.
  - 2. An easy vanity that is outwardly observable is to speak or worship foolishly or hastily.
  - 3. His purpose in Ecclesiastes is to find man's purpose or profit in life, including worship.
  - 4. Why should a man be a fool in the house of God and lose all profit in the rest of his life?
  - 5. Another vanity of life is to be a hypocrite by folly, haste, or excess in worship of God.
- C. The lesson here is a warning against frivolous actions, or rather speech, in the house of God.
  - 1. A successful life must include gravity and righteousness about the public worship of God.
  - 2. Though all other parts of life are maintained well, failure here will bring God's judgment.
- D. It is your *foot* you need to keep, for your feet carry you places either hastily or cautiously.
  - 1. While we could simply describe this as synecdoche or metonymy, we can perceive more.
  - 2. Part of the preparation for worship, which may be done on the way there, is to remind yourself of the solemnity of the place and occasion, and seal your mouth before arrival.
- E. It is a rule to be doers more than hearers, but also hearers more than speakers (Jas 1:19,22).
  - 1. Therefore, we come prepared to hear and learn before opening foolish mouths to speak.
  - 2. Therefore, we come prepared to hear and learn so as to modify our conduct accordingly.
  - 3. Fools want to discover (reveal) their hearts to others, which must be avoided (Prov 18:2).
- F. What is the sacrifice of a fool? Saying things or giving things to God without a righteous life.
  - 1. Inspired sacrifices without righteousness are nauseating to God (Isaiah 1:10-20; 66:1-4).
  - 2. Flattering words from a sinful life are also (Mk 7:6-13; Eze 33:31; II Tim 3:5; Tit 1:16).
  - 3. Professions or promises you do not keep also qualify here, as the following verses show.
- G. Preparation for worship is a subject in and of itself, and all should esteem it highly, always.
  - 1. God has not changed in the N.T. about the gravity of worship (Heb 12:28-29; Deut 4:24).
  - 2. Consider the care Jacob practiced and Moses commanded (Gen 35:1-3; Ex 19:10-15).
  - 3. The attitude and actions of those in Ezra's day is precious to read (Nehemiah 8:1-12).
  - 4. Jesus warned by the parable of the sower to make efforts at good hearing (Luke 8:18).
- H. What habits have you instituted in your life to keep your foot when you go to God's house?
  - 1. Cut off the carnal and worldly things of life at an appropriate time the night before.
  - 2. Prepare yourself by confession, reading, singing, and prayer to be spiritually sober.
  - 3. Get up early and prepare yourself on Sunday morning to be spiritual ready for worship.
  - 4. Get there early and relaxed to meditate on the things of heaven without carnal chatter.
  - 5. Beg God to keep you from the natural, foolish impulses of your heart, flesh, and tongue.

**2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.**

- A. One great vanity of life, and a very dangerous one at that, is to worship God hypocritically.
- B. Here we have impulsive worship under consideration, as indicated by words *rash* and *hasty*.
  - 1. Worship includes words spoken by mouths in prayer, singing, profession, teaching, etc.
  - 2. Worship also includes expressions of the heart, some of which are released via the mouth.
- C. The authority, glory, and power of God should get our attention at all times to keep us sober.
  - 1. David had it right, though God's friend, by writing, "Stand in awe, and sin not" (Ps 4:4).
  - 2. How long did it take Isaiah to be convicted about his speech in God's presence (Is 6:1-7)?
  - 3. How long did it take Job to shut and cover his mouth in godly dread (Job 40:3-5; 42:1-6)?
  - 4. "The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab 2:20).
- D. The heart does not literally utter words, but the mouth only utters what the heart conceives.
  - 1. From the heart come the words that easily condemn a man before God (Matt 12:34-37).
  - 2. The gracious speech of great men is from pure hearts (Pr 10:20; 15:28; 16:21,23; 22:11).
  - 3. However, men do say things to God in their hearts that never come out of their mouths.
- E. Consider how easy it is to sin in the house of God with our mouths by being rash and hasty.
  - 1. You sing a song loudly and enthusiastically for others to hear and see ... in hypocrisy!
  - 2. You read a psalm with the rest of the congregation with a loud voice ... in hypocrisy!
  - 3. You volunteer or are asked to pray in public before the church and do so ... in hypocrisy!
  - 4. You give a thanksgiving or make a prayer request for God's deliverance ... in hypocrisy!
  - 5. You have conversations with saints where you speak boldly of godliness ... in hypocrisy!
  - 6. You are ordained or not and use pulpit privilege to declare God's glory ... in hypocrisy!
- F. One simple conclusion is to greatly limit your words, lest you overcommit your soul or life.

**3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.**

- A. Solomon slips in a rule of life he had observed about the effect of much business on dreams.
  - 1. A man with much mental business (not mere manual labor; Eccl 5:12) will dream much.
  - 2. Dreams can relate to activities and concerns of business, but they are worthless (Ec 5:7).
  - 3. Dreams have no value and can be troubling, and they arise from all the cares of business.
- B. A fool is easily identified and the rule is certain – listen for the man talking most and loudest.
  - 1. While this rule of human nature applies to any talking, it applies here to religious vows.
  - 2. Solomon taught this rule over and over (Eccl 10:12-14; Proverbs 12:23; 13:16; 15:2,28).
  - 3. Fools adore the thoughts they have on every subject, and they speak incessantly of them.
- C. The great danger and vanity here is to allow foolish or hypocritical speech in God's worship.

**4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.**

- A. The vows here are those freewill offerings and extra commitments and sacrifices to God.
  - 1. Whether made in trouble or in times of great success, your vows must be paid to God.
  - 2. The character of the righteous that stand before God is to pay regardless (Ps 15:4; 24:4).
  - 3. Vows are good things – they are part of fervent worship – but they must all be fulfilled.
  - 4. While a vow itself is a matter of personal liberty, not paying it is a presumptuous sin.
- B. If you choose to shoot off your mouth in vows that you do not keep and pay, you are a fool.
- C. If you foolishly promise things to God in worship, He is not pleased and will curse you.

- D. Therefore, no matter what effort you put forth in the rest of your life, He will blow against it.
- E. Therefore, why do you foolishly open your mouth in private or public to God or about God?
  1. Have you kept your baptismal confession? Have you kept your covenant of membership?
  2. Do you live worthy of every “Amen”? Do you live according to the songs you sing?

***5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.***

- A. Since these vows are freewill and voluntary acts of worship that are not required by God’s law, avoid them unless absolutely necessary and/or soberly convicted to make them.
- B. God cares less that you do not vow (while obeying Him), than to vow anything and not pay.
- C. Yet, great men like David made vows and planned exceeding magnificent things for God.
- D. A father or husband could disannul a daughter’s or wife’s freewill vows (Number 30:3-16), since freewill offerings were not required and the woman in either case was under male rule.

***6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?***

- A. Your mouth makes vows, but your flesh or body must perform or pay the vow in most cases.
- B. We assume the *angel* here that you justify your sin before is a literal angel and not the priest.
  1. Some commentators understand angel here to be God’s messenger the priest (Rev 2:1).
  2. God is angry here, not the judge, minister, or priest ... so we may assume a literal angel.
  3. Did the judges or priests or Levites keep a mental or written record of all vows to God?
  4. And we have a reference from Paul indicating angels in a similar sense (I Cor 11:10).
  5. Angels are always about us in every place witnessing our words and actions (Ps 34:7).
  6. In either case, it is human nature to explain or justify why men do not keep their vows.
  7. In either case, God is angry at the cheater and will destroy his efforts in other directions.
- C. Therefore, we see the connection clearly with vanity in life ... foolish words bring a curse.
- D. Frivolous approach to God’s worship will bring judgment in your life of vanity and vexation.

***7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.***

- A. Just as dreams resulting from much business are worthless, so are excessive words of fools.
  1. Dreams cannot and will not help you run a business, so recognize them for their vanity.
  2. Lots of words, especially in the house of God, are also to be recognized for their vanity.
  3. Comparing words to dreams is good – maybe you can catch the mockery of much talking.
- B. Solomon warned elsewhere that a multitude of words will by nature include sin (Prov 10:19).
- C. The fear of God is our sober reverence of Him that should slow down our hearts and mouths.
- D. Here is one of those sections of Ecclesiastes leading us to our final conclusion (Ec 12:13-14).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #18: Knowledge for Dealing with Civil Oppression \*\*\*\*\*

***8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.***

- A. One of the great vanities and vexations of life is to hear, see, or read about civil oppression.

1. Unlike in Solomon's day, we are exposed to political corruption in all nations on earth.
  2. Learning about political corruption and civil oppression crushes the spirit like a weight.
  3. The more natural wisdom you have from scripture, the more their perversions anger you.
  4. Every time you are exposed to further perverting of true justice can be cause for despair.
  5. Because of the daily bombardment of the news, we are constantly faced with this vanity.
  6. Those who feed themselves on sources of such things are foolish and self-destructive.
  7. There is no value in knowing such political things; there is nothing you can do anyway.
  8. The world is getting worse due to sin and God's judgment, so the vexation is also worse.
  9. Thus we must deal with transgender insanity of all sorts, rebellion against authority, hate allowed only against Christians, rights transferred from owners to servants, etc., etc., etc.
- B. Solomon the Preacher told you right here to not marvel – wonder or worry – about it at all.
- C. This text is one of the most commonly needed and used in the Bible for helping Christians properly deal with civil government and national news, which reveals more perversion daily.
- D. There were large or world empires in the O.T., where distant rulers created provinces and deputies to run them that could easily abuse their power in occupied states ... 127 in Persia.
- E. The existence of evil, including seats of justice (Ec 3:16), should not cause us to marvel from a philosophical or worldview perspective, because (1) men are inherently corrupt, depraved, and selfish; (2) God never misses a single item of injustice; and (3) He will certainly judge.
- F. There is no mention here about becoming an activist in politics, demonstrating, rebelling, etc.
- G. No matter what conspiratorial theory you fall for, the Lord Jesus Christ must humble Himself to look down far enough to see their impotent plans of oppression and violence (Ps 113:5-6).
- H. The highest level of authority and evil in the universe is the devil and his angels ... as in the case of the devils behind the Persian and Greek empires (Dan 10:13,20) ... yet they cannot even drown a pig without express permission from the Captain of our salvation.
- I. God will judge all violations of civil justice and judgment (Eccl 3:16-17; Job 20:19-29; 27:8-23; Psalm 12:5; 58:10-11; 68:5; 82:1; 140:11-12; Ezek 22:6-14; Amos 8:7; Micah 2:1-3; 3:9-12; 6:10-13; Zech 9:7-13; Mal 3:5; James 5:1-7).
- J. Recall Bible stories of Haman and the Jews, Pharaoh oppressing Israel, Daniel's peers and lions, Ahab and Jezebel for taking Naboth's vineyard, vengeance for Jesus' crucifixion, etc.
- K. Blood will be required of America for the innocent blood shed in its many abortion clinics.
- L. Pray for rulers ... like the Jews in Babylon (Jer 29:4-7) ... like Paul for Rome (I Tim 2:1-3).
- M. For more about understanding political oppression ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/marvel-not.pdf>.
- N. For more of understanding political oppression ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/living-under-obama-2.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* *Lesson #19: Vanity of Riches from Four Perspectives* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.***

- A. Here is a new lesson about vanity of financial ambition and greed, corrected by four views.
1. Solomon began a new lesson by use of *moreover* after his cure for civil injustice (Ec 5:8).
  2. Greed and obsession for riches is vanity and vexation of spirit, no matter how popular.
- B. The vanity of riches includes the fact that both kings and lowest slaves eat from the ground.
1. To survive, they are both subject to the labor required and the inherent risks of farming.
  2. This is one of many places where the rich and poor meet together ... at supper, for the earth and field here are describing the needed things we eat and drink (see Eccl 5:18-20).
  3. The commonly perceived lowest and highest roles depend on each other in the cornfield.

4. Consider the vanity ... the poorest slave may partake of what is necessary to every king.
  5. Rich and poor meet together in [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/22\\_02.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/22_02.php).
- C. The earth if cultivated can produce such returns that sustenance and profit can be achieved.
1. The king depends on the field ... he must eat, his family must eat, his army must eat.
  2. While the peasant or slave may depend on the king for protection, the king depends on the man with the shovel or scythe to feed the nation and produce its wealth by exports.
  3. The profit of the field, produced by laborers, provides for the expenses of government.
  4. All rulers, whether a republic, democracy, or dictatorship, depends on the use of fields.
- D. Governments do not produce directly, though they protect and promote means of production.
- E. Crown and riches are not forever, for the earth must be cultivated, monitored, worked, etc.
- F. A dairy farm can be a great cure for frustration with office politics and professional vanity.

***10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.***

- A. The vanity of riches includes the fact that gain and success do not satisfy; more must be had.
1. No matter how hard natural man runs on the treadmill of life, he must increase the speed.
  2. No matter what rewards he gets for running on it very hard, he must increase the speed.
  3. A goal achieved, no matter how hard or long, often becomes the floor for the next one.
  4. This is a terrible indictment of human nature – it is covetous, greedy, and discontented.
  5. This is a perverse vanity – no matter what you achieve – you will obsess to achieve more.
- B. Contentment is one of the great secrets of life, but a man with ambition can hardly learn it.
1. Contentment is learned behavior, for it is not part of man's nature (Phil 4:11; I Tim 6:6).
  2. It requires knowledge of the spiritual to truly rest on moderate things now (Heb 13:5-6).
  3. This applies to all other things in life as well, including a man's wife's body (Prov 5:19).
- C. The ambitious man is loath to pick a level of income or assets at which point he will be content, for the target is always moving by success of other men, his own success, pride, etc.
- D. It is a great lesson of vanity to realize that once we set our affections on earth, we will be driven on and on to acquire better and more in an effort to find the impossible – happiness.
- E. Children and youth prove this rule of life every time they are given a toy, car, clothes, etc.
- F. Adults prove this rule of life every time they get a spouse, a job, a house, a car, etc., etc.

***11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?***

- A. The vanity of riches includes the fact expenses grow and leave only an income statement.
1. First, there is the propensity to consume, which means the greedy man spends it himself.
  2. Second, others will gravitate to the producer by necessity or malice to live off his labors.
  3. Third, expenses like taxes, insurance, maintenance, accounting, and such also increase.
  4. A fine example of this combined phenomenon is professional athletes reduced to poverty.
  5. A huge contract is made, but by the time the leeches get done with him, he has little left.
  6. It is amazing to see how many family and friends love an athlete while making millions.
  7. They tend to disappear when his playing days end and all that is left is the athlete himself.
- B. An income statement with more and more revenue is vanity and vexation of spirit, if there are more and more expenses, leaving the same or smaller bottom line and net profit margin.
- C. Many rich athletes end up paupers by paying agents, accountants, bodyguards, chauffeurs, doormen, housekeepers, nutritionists, public relations, trainers ... and sycophantic leeches.
- D. The lesson ... the more you make, the more expenses you will have ... leaving little or no profit ... again reminding you that the ambition to be rich is a foolish and vain goal for life.

E. The solution is to be content with moderate success and size to avoid foolish overexpansion.

***12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.***

- A. The vanity of riches includes the fact that rich and successful men cannot relax with wealth.
  - 1. He worries at all times about competition, the economy, taxes, theft, market share, etc.
  - 2. He cannot relax in bed, for his mind is filled with ideas to get more and keep what he has.
- B. A man who works hard all day in manual labor does not worry much about his diet – he will still sleep well on a modest and simple meal at the end of the day – for he is physically tired.
- C. In contrast, a rich and ambitious man worries about his income, investments, and assets to such an extent that he cannot sleep well after having the finest of meals possible.
- D. The more tired you are, the better you sleep; but the richer you are, the less tired you can get.
- E. The rich claim to enjoy the good life, but their sleepless worry is hidden in gated mansions.
- F. Solomon in these four verses has destroyed excessive financial or professional greed of men.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #20: *Vanity of Riches by Loss, Death, and Sickness* \*\*\*\*\*

***13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.***

- A. This lesson covers all five verses, for it is only by the complete context that we identify it.
  - 1. We perceive a new lesson by his openings words here, *There is a sore evil under the sun.*
  - 2. The specific evil that the inspired preacher warned us about is especially in Eccl 5:16-17.
- B. The vanity of riches includes the facts that rich men experience losses, die, and worry much.
  - 1. Whatever aspect of finance Solomon indicted here, he measured it a sore and hurtful evil.
  - 2. Whatever aspect of finance Solomon indicted here, he had seen it in observations of life.
  - 3. Saving has its place, but it is a minor, possibly dangerous, potentially vain use of money.
  - 4. If you are more concerned with saving than enjoying, then you have crossed the line.
- C. Of course, those who do not save a portion of all income are foolish men on the way down, because the Preacher also taught savings as required wisdom (Proverbs 6:6-8; 21:20; 30:25).
- D. The fool here is a hoarding miser, who thinks savings is the most important use of money.
- E. Riches kept, obsessively or excessively, lead to hurtful trouble in several different respects.
  - 1. Riches kept in this context are an ambition to be rich that puts far too much emphasis on wealth as the measure of a man and the source of happiness, both are popularly touted.
  - 2. Riches kept may cause fear, worry, expenses to rise, tempt thieves, create family division by greed, are vulnerable to corruption, are exposed to God's providence, incur taxes, etc.
  - 3. But the sore evil intended here is anguish, pain, and trouble by losing a hoard (Ec 5:14).
- F. The blessed God of heaven is the only source of true moderation in all the matters of life.
  - 1. There are those who do not save, and they are fools and destructive in another direction.
  - 2. But God through the Preacher also warned against focusing too much on saving money.
  - 3. Every man must examine himself before God ... am I a foolish spender, a hoarding miser, or a wise man who saves some but enjoys the good of his labor and sharing it.
  - 4. A good foundation in the Day of Judgment is giving your money away to others and/or being ready to do so (Matt 25:40; I Tim 6:18-19; I John 3:16-19; III John 1:5-8).
  - 5. Giving is a great way to keep riches in their place ... and make them grow (Pr 11:24-26).
  - 6. Your choice will do good to your soul and family, or you will hurt both (Prov 11:17,29).

**14 *But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.***

- A. It is vain to put your confidence, joy, and measure in riches, for they cause three problems.
- B. The disjunctive *but* contrasts the reality of losing money with the goal to keep it (Eccl 5:13).
  - 1. There are three evils in this lesson, for the indicator *also* shows up twice (Eccl 5:14-17).
  - 2. Therefore, the disjunctive *but* shows three ways that riches hurt rich men fond of them.
- C. Losing riches is not unlikely, no matter what precautions might be taken (Prov 23:5; 27:24).
  - 1. Jesus warned about moths, rust, and thieves, and they are tokens for many other causes.
  - 2. Think about other ways to lose riches e.g. stock market crash, competition, confiscation, labor union, fire, tax law changes, lawsuits, regulatory agencies, patent infringement, etc.
- D. His son, whom he intended to provide for as a gentleman and nobleman, now has nothing in the way of capital or an estate and must learn to dig or acquire another profession to work.

**15 *As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.***

- A. It is vain to put your confidence, joy, and measure in riches, for they cause three problems.
  - 1. The previous verse described business or financial losses that take the riches from a man.
  - 2. The lesson here is the painful consequence of death, which strips man naked altogether.
- B. Why in the world work yourself to death to get riches and worry to death to keep them?
  - 1. It is a fact of life and death, that you arrived with nothing and will leave with the same.
  - 2. Wise men know this and modify their conduct accordingly (Job 1:20-22; I Timothy 6:7).
  - 3. Foolish men should know this but do not modify conduct accordingly (Psalm 49:10).
- C. Riches cannot help the rich man in the day of wrath of God's judgment (Prov 11:4; Ps 49:7).

**16 *And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?***

- A. The *also* here must indicate that the Preacher has two aspects of financial vanity in his mind.
  - 1. The sore evil of 5:13-14 is the evil caused by hoarding money and losing it while alive.
  - 2. The sore evil in this place is that affecting the miserly hoarder when he dies (Ec 5:15-16).
  - 3. A further evil of holding riches will be introduced in the next verse with its own *also*.
- B. *Laboring for the wind* is a good metaphor to describe the pursuit of what one cannot hold.
- C. What is the big benefit of hoarded wealth at death? You did not enjoy it. You cannot take it.

**17 *All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.***

- A. The second *also* here (one in 5:16 as well) distinguishes business loss, death, and soul grief.
- B. The vanity of hoarded riches in this verse is soul anguish they cause by holding on to them.
  - 1. Note the inspired language about hoarding – *Darkness! Much sorrow! Wrath! Sickness!*
  - 2. There are many negative events and forces in a sinful world to wreak havoc on hoarders.
  - 3. His mind is active every day, so he must fret and worry every day about keeping wealth.
  - 4. In fact, his mind is active at night, so he cannot sleep like a laboring man can (Eccl 5:12).
- C. The benefit of money is to spend it and obtain pleasure from so doing for yourself and others.
  - 1. Look at money as stored labor, so you can enjoy and share that labor by spending money.
  - 2. God required Israel to spend 10% of gross on an annual family celebration (Deut 14:26).
  - 3. When scattered wisely, God blesses givers by increase to replace it (Pro 11:17,24-26,29).

- D. Solomon will have more to say about the evil of hoarding – excessive saving (Eccl 6:1-2).
- E. The sickness is covetousness and evil ambition by a heart set on holding riches and wealth.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #21: Moderate Pleasure in Life Is a Gift and Goal \*\*\*\*\*

***18 Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.***

- A. This last lesson of the chapter is best understood by the *sickness* described (Eccl 5:13-17).
- B. The best use we can make of labor and money is to spend for modest pleasure without greed.
- C. *Behold* gets our attention. *Good and comely* commends the action. *Under the sun* is the view.
- D. Solomon is not a backslidden, pleasure-mad Epicurean with the hedonistic view of an atheist.
  - 1. Due to an unscriptural, Puritanical, and monastic view of life and pleasure, it has been easy for some to condemn these sections of Ecclesiastes as from Solomon the pagan.
  - 2. This advice is given throughout the book and is always in an immediate context of God's blessing or fearing God (Eccl 2:22-26; 3:12-13,22; 8:15; 9:7-10).
  - 3. This advice is consistent with what we are shown and taught elsewhere in the inspired scriptures (Deut 14:26; II Sam 6:19; Neh 8:9-12; Acts 14:17; I Tim 6:17).
  - 4. Therefore, the advice is for God-fearing saints to enjoy rather than serve carnal pleasures.
- E. Of course, there is another perspective of things altogether, the spiritual, but not in this place.
  - 1. Unspoken here, but God's saints have their greatest affection above the sun (Col 3:1-4).
  - 2. Unspoken here, but God's saints are full of joy even without things to eat (Hab 3:17-19).
  - 3. Unspoken here, but by four clear references to God, do not abuse pleasure (I Cor 7:31).
- F. God gives man a portion – a compensatory reward – for all his hard work – pleasure in life.
  - 1. This pleasure is not his god, nor does he abused it in any way, but it is God's solution.
  - 2. Moderate enjoyment of good things by spending money is a satisfying reward for labor.
  - 3. A fine meal with spouse and/or children and/or friends is one way included in this verse.

***19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.***

- A. By the Spirit's use of *also*, we have a further distinction for another aspect of the lesson here.
  - 1. The lesson was introduced in 5:18 as applying to all men, even of poor or modest means.
  - 2. Here the lesson is extended to successful and prosperous men with riches and wealth.
- B. Riches and wealth have their own associated evil as we have learned in context (Ec 5:13-17).
- C. Solomon in the next chapter described a rich and wealthy man that could not enjoy his life.
  - 1. He stated this evil of covetous greed or miserly hoarding is common with men (Ec 6:1-2).
  - 2. God either gives or withholds the ability to cheerfully and sensibly spend for enjoyment.
- D. Beware reader! You are either blessed or cursed by God, depending on your spending habits.
  - 1. Choose to be blessed by humbling yourself before God and eating up some of your labor.
  - 2. For those with God's view, they can clearly see this "gift" shows God's great kindness.
  - 3. If you overspend and do not save as well, you are fool and none of this applies to you.
- E. This is not godless or pagan Epicureanism – this is Christian moderation and enjoying life.
  - 1. You slander God, if you modify this repeated exhortation by monastic ideas from Rome.
  - 2. Moses required 10% of gross for it (Deut 14:26). Paul taught it to Timothy (I Tim 6:17).

3. Other godly saints showed the practice of it (II Sam 6:19; II Chr 30:24-27; Neh 8:9-12).

***20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.***

- A. What days? The vain and vexing days of travail and labor he endured to provide for a family.
  1. Solomon has spent much of the book so far showing the grief of hard work through life.
  2. If you enjoy modest and simple pleasures each day, you will forget the labor to get them.
  3. Sharing them with your wife is an even more perfect reward for labor (Eccl 4:9; 9:7-10).
  4. A woman can and will forget labor and travail of delivery holding her child (John 16:21).
  5. The wicked rich (Ec 5:13-17) cannot enjoy life, for sorrow and wrath are their portion.
- B. God gives us the days of our lives, successes in our labors, and the enjoyment of pleasures.
- C. The blessed God sends His sun and rain on men for food and gladness (Matt 5:45; Ac 14:17).
  1. You slander God, if you modify this repeated exhortation by monastic ideas from Rome.
  2. Wicked men may also enjoy life's pleasures, but it adds to their judgment (Rom 1:20-21).
  3. For a righteous man, God's answers much differently with heart joy (Rom 5:5; 8:14-17).

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 6

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #22: Hoarding – Excess Saving – Is an Evil Disease \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:***

- A. The broad subject has not changed from the warning about miserly hoarding (Eccl 5:13-20).
  - 1. Solomon left direct dealing with hoarding at 5:17 to give the righteous cure in 5:18-20.
  - 2. Here he returned to the subject for those God withheld from enjoying life (Ec 5:19-20).
  - 3. The folly or slavery that keeps a man from enjoying good in life is evil (Eccl 5:13,16-17).
  - 4. You cannot justify saving more than a modest amount, because God wants you to spend.
  - 5. It is a sick mind that thinks a more conservative position – like more saving – is wisdom.
  - 6. Every road has two ditches, and a conservative ditch is not better than a liberal ditch.
  - 7. This is an evil under the sun, for Solomon recorded earthly observations in Ecclesiastes.
  - 8. This is an evil under the sun, so you should examine yourself today to avoid this disease.
  - 9. This is an evil under the sun, because those in heaven are glorified from such stupidity.
- B. This evil disease and sickness is common among men, so consider it wisely in all its forms.
  - 1. In order to appreciate how common this disease and judgment are, identify all its forms.
  - 2. Covetousness and greed are vain and vexing, but this evil is miserly saving without joy.
  - 3. Some few live in abject poverty in order to hoard great riches, but this is not common.
  - 4. Many more deny liberal spending for pleasure in order to save, and this is quite common.
  - 5. Many more begrudge liberality for things and others, because they think such is wasteful.
  - 6. More are workaholics, who take little time for joy, because they must be getting ahead.
  - 7. More are melancholies, who love to revel in pain, because they have chosen it over joy.
  - 8. The object here is a man who works too much and enjoys too little in order to get ahead.
  - 9. They eat, but in darkness with sorrow and wrath, rather than in light and mirth (Ec 5:17).
- C. The cure is Solomon's lesson to enjoy life (Eccl 2:22-26; 3:12-13,22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10).
- D. The cure is to live a carefree life with modest pleasures (Ps 127:2; Prov 30:7-9; I Tim 6:17).

### ***2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.***

- A. The man considered here is like the man of 5:19, God-blessed with riches, wealth, and honor.
  - 1. No man can have the riches and honor described here without God giving them (Deut 8:17-18; I Sam 2:7; I Chron 29:12; Job 42:10; Psalm 75:6-7; 113:7-8; Prov 10:22; 22:2).
  - 2. Never forget that prosperity is God's work, not yours (Ec 9:11; Ps 127:1-2; Jas 4:13-15).
  - 3. By God's providential blessing, this man has sufficient means to satisfy any soul desire.
  - 4. When you receive a blessing, especially financial, you should examine how you respond.
  - 5. Do you rejoice with thanksgiving and plan to enjoy it? Or save it for some "good goal"?
- B. The inability and slavery denying income and assets for modest pleasures is God's curse.
  - 1. If a man has ability and freedom to spend his income liberally, it is God's gift (Ec 5:19).
  - 2. If a man lacks the ability and freedom to spend his income liberally, it is God's curse.

3. God withholds some rich men from eating to give his riches to a better man (Eccl 2:26).
  4. God infuses no man with evil, for He does not need to – it is already there (Jas 1:13-16).
  5. Liberal giving is a commandment, but also a gift of the Spirit (II Cor 9:6-7; Rom 12:8).
  6. This repeated suggestion is not Epicureanism; it is true Bible Christianity (I Tim 6:17).
- C. This rich man lived poor in order to die rich, so God gave his acquired wealth to strangers.
1. This is exactly what Jesus taught regarding the rich to His disciples (Luke 12:13-21).
  2. No matter how wealth is taken away, many times it is consumed and spent by strangers.
  3. As taught in 5:13-16, riches saved inordinately will perish by loss or the owner's death.
  4. As taught in 5:17, a miserly hoarder loses his money and also lives in darkness and pain.
  5. Some of Solomon's wealth was spent by the ten tribes that rejected his family's rule.
  6. What are you saving for? Death? After a modest inheritance to children, spend the rest.
- D. Miserly hoarding, excessive saving, or covetousness, is vanity, but it is also an evil disease.
1. The evil disease, not spending enough money for modest pleasure, is sickness (Ec 5:17).
  2. Called a sickness and a disease, it is the corrupt and perverse character of masochism.
  3. Misery is living like a miser, and a miser is one who lives in misery so he can save more.
  4. Misers think they are better than spendthrifts, but they are not; both are sinful extremes.
  5. Misers think they preserve wealth, but they are wasters – of the benefit of wealth – joy.
  6. Do not be stingy with yourself or others: liberality and mercy are good (Pr 11:17,24-26).
  7. Misers will justify themselves as conservative, prudent, wise ... but they are sick fools.
- E. Many underestimate the effect of God's sovereign choices on your life, so consider wisely.
1. Notice ... God is the source of riches, wealth, and honor ... not your effort or wisdom.
  2. Notice further ... God is the source of ability to use them ... not your desire or wisdom.
  3. Are you angry or bitter? God does not owe you either riches or ability to consume them.
  4. He is God! You should give Him glory and thanks for both the means and use of things.
  5. Whatever He allows or gives you, thank Him profusely and use it for your own pleasure.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #23: *Missing Life's Joy Is Worse than a Stillbirth* \*\*\*\*\*

***3 If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.***

- A. This is no average or ordinary man, but rather the miser of the context (Eccl 5:13-17; 6:1-2).
- B. Though God blesses this man with two great blessings, he blows it by miserly covetousness.
1. A hundred children is a great blessing, especially in an agrarian society using child labor.
  2. A long life is a great blessing, other things being equal; and this man had many years.
- C. What ruins this man's life? His inability to spend money to fill his soul with good and joy.
1. He endures the labor and travail that all men endure, but he takes no good from his labor.
  2. Your portion in life is not merely labor and travail, but good and joy from their rewards.
  3. The days of labor, toil, and travail shall diminish, as God answers you with joy inside.
  4. God has blessed even the wicked with opportunity for joy (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17).
  5. Some men are cursed with greed, stinginess, and melancholy. Choose a feast (Pr 15:15).
- D. What ruins this man's burial? His inability to spend money that steals his esteem by others.
1. Everyone gets buried, but not everyone gets buried with appreciation, honor, and sorrow.
  2. It is common for many to die and be buried without much grief for their life of darkness.
  3. It is common for many to die and be buried with relief from others that they are gone.
  4. What will others think and say at your funeral? What would they write for your epitaph?

- 5. How cheerful, generous, hospitable, and liberal have you been? Everyone else knows!
- E. An untimely birth is what we call a miscarriage – a conceived child never enjoys life at all.
  - 1. A miscarriage or stillbirth never knows the travail or self-imposed misery of the miser.
  - 2. Solomon is not very kind here, but he should not be to those with this sore evil disease.

**4 *For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.***

- A. The male pronoun here is the aborted, miscarried, or stillborn child of the previous verse.
  - 1. The standard for comparison to measure a miser’s life is by describing an abortive.
  - 2. Compare *hath more rest than the other* (6:5) to *an timely birth is better than he* (6:3).
  - 3. It is the abortive, miscarriage, or stillborn that never sees the sun or knows anything (6:5).
- B. *For he cometh in with vanity* describes birth of a stillborn – worthless gestation and delivery; for all the desires, expectations, and plans for the unborn child amount to absolutely nothing.
- C. *And departeth in darkness* describes the death and burial of a stillborn – without seeing light, without any joy or pleasure, without any goodness, without any praise or thanksgiving, etc.
- D. *His name shall be covered with darkness* describes the total ignorance of his life and person, for no one but a melancholy mother will ever think of the child again, world without end.
- E. As terrible as the life (or lack thereof) of an aborted or miscarried child might be, the life of a miser that has no ability or willingness to enjoy liberality and good in life is even worse.
- F. Reader! What separates and distinguishes you from a stillborn? Examine yourself this day.
  - 1. What is the value-worth of your life measured by good taken and good given to others?
  - 2. Will your name be covered with light (glory) or with darkness (grief) to those near you?
  - 3. Have you been a cheerful benefactor of others and yourself by enjoying the fruit of labor?

**5 *Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other.***

- A. This is the abortive – a miscarried or stillborn child – that is superior to the hoarding miser.
- B. The sun is a great blessing, which God gives to all living (Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17; Job 25:3).
  - 1. Yet, it is the vanity, travail, and vexation of everything under the sun that is our topic.
  - 2. Because he never sees the light of day, as we might say, he does not know life’s vanity.
  - 3. If you live long enough to see the sun, you are old enough to start working under the sun.
- C. A miscarried child, never coming to maturity, does not consciously know either good or evil.
  - 1. He does not know the vanity and vexation of trying to find and grasp profit for his life.
  - 2. He has not considered the various evils that Solomon has listed so far that make life vain.
- D. The comparison is powerful – *read it! hear it! believe it!* – a stillborn is better than a miser.
  - 1. The miscarried child has more rest, for he has no conscious misery like a miser (Ec 5:17).
  - 2. A miser (extreme saver) chooses to deny himself good and live miserably with the intent of keeping his income, which leaves him troubled by travail without any of its reward.
  - 3. Do you begrudge spending? Save more than you should? Work more than you should?

**6 *Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?***

- A. By a transition in the last clause of 6:5, Solomon returned to the miser as the subject here.
- B. Even if the *many years* of 6:3 were two thousand, long life is only a longer time of misery.
  - 1. No man has ever lived even one thousand years, but the hypothetical is twice Methuselah.
  - 2. If we exaggerate the hypothetical case, we still end up with a stillborn better than a miser.

3. What good is a longer life, if the additional days are merely for fretting, working, saving?
- C. The miser will never choose good, no matter how long he lives, further condemning himself.
  1. If God has withheld the gift of enjoying a man's labor, no length of life will change him.
  2. There is no good to realize from accumulating, no matter how much, no matter how long.
  3. Long life is not a blessing or privilege, if you do not enjoy the extra days with pleasure.
  4. This is not epicurean nonsense; this is practical philosophy inspired by God for you.
- D. In the end, the miser ends up in the very same place as the stillborn, but with years of misery.
- E. Man's eternal abode is not in the equation, for Solomon analyzed human life under the sun.
  1. Solomon taught the vanity of natural life and the natural remedies to overcome its vanity.
  2. By comparing scripture, we know God and heaven are blessings that infinitely exceed joy or pleasure on earth by natural remedies (Phil 1:23; II Cor 4:16-18; Heb 11:24-26; etc.).
- F. What is the lesson here, reader? Life is too short to be unhappy, stingy, angry, working, etc.
  1. Buy yourself a large wall clock and attach an appropriate Bible verse about enjoying life.
  2. Life is too short to waste one minute angry, bitter, confused, or denying good from labor.
  3. Life is too short to worry about the future and think you must save most current earnings.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #24: *Contentment with Your Life Is Great Gain* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.***

- A. Contentment is satisfaction with what you have achieved and own in godly, diligent labor.
  1. Bible contentment is never justification for settling for what you have by sinful sloth.
  2. Bible Christians exert themselves toward the best life possible – but in wise moderation.
  3. If you have failed to plan, prepare, or apply yourself, then your poverty is His judgment.
  4. What you can change to match scripture and please God more, you should do with zeal.
  5. Poverty is not a virtue, no matter how content you are, if you are poor due to foolishness.
- B. All men have basic needs and desires; these needs and desires drive men to work and save.
  1. If it were not for absolute necessities like food, men would not labor, toil, or work at all.
  2. The sense here is greater than merely working to buy food for a meal to satisfy hunger.
  3. You work for more than food: mouth is synecdoche for desires and needs (Matt 6:31-32).
  4. The drive in men that make them work hard is to obtain food and many things (Pr 16:26).
  5. Food and the mouth are used only for an example due to the powerful necessity of eating.
  6. Men work hard, enduring various hardships, to acquire necessities and pleasures of life.
- C. *Yet the appetite is not filled* describes man's discontentment with having his needs satisfied.
  1. Consider food as a great desire of man – though his appetite is filled, he is soon hungry.
  2. However, there is a greater lesson of vanity and wisdom, for man seeks more and more.
  3. He is not content with having his basic desires and needs fully met through modest labor.
  4. His covetous and discontent desire for more often leaves him frustrated and unsatisfied.
  5. One of the world's very famous songs repeats over and over, "I can't get no satisfaction."
  6. Both rich and poor can have basic needs met quite easily, but they are not content there.
  7. Men have needs; they acquire enough to satisfy the needs; but they obsess for yet more.
- D. Remember the lesson Solomon taught earlier, lust for things cannot be satisfied (Eccl 5:10).
- E. Grasp the lesson here – food and raiment, basic necessities, should be enough (I Tim 6:8).
  1. The wise prophet Agur prayed for modest means between poverty and riches (Pr 30:7-9).
  2. A modest meal before sleep in a modest bed with your own spouse is as good as it gets, and any man can afford these basic things, yet they crave more that evilly frustrates them.
  3. There are much greater remedies for contentment (Ps 73:25-26; Matt 6:33; Phil 4:11-13).

## ***8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?***

- A. If labour is for a man's mouth, what does a wise man have more than a fool, since both eat?
  1. As a full sense of 6:7 indicates, the issue is more than food – all basic needs and desires.
  2. No matter how much natural wisdom is had, it does not help enhance life's basic needs.
  3. How does natural wisdom help a man in the basic acts of eating, drinking, sleeping, etc.?
  4. Men with natural wisdom eat, drink, and sleep like fools all the way to the day of death.
- B. If labour is for man's mouth, a rich man has nothing over the poor who learn contentment.
  1. The poor, knowing how to walk under the sun by contentment, are not at a disadvantage.
  2. A poor, wise man has contentment while alive, not stressed about dying with a fortune.
  3. Though he may not own much and looks inferior to a wise man, he is content and happy.
  4. No matter how great a rich man's balance sheet, he can only eat so much at one time.
  5. No matter how much is stocked away in freezers and pantries, he can only eat so much.
  6. No matter how big or luxurious his bed or bedroom, a laboring man can sleep better.
  7. No matter how big or luxurious his mansion, a man can only be in one room at a time.
  8. No matter how fancy or fast his car, a man can get from place to place with much less.
  9. No matter how fancy or costly his clothes, a poor man can look nearly the same easily.

## ***9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.***

- A. When Solomon used the word *better*, he simplified life by priorities for your easy learning.
- B. Here is the lesson of this section – contentment, which is a choice, is great gain (I Tim 6:6).
  1. It is a choice to learn contentment with the things God has already given you (Heb 13:5).
  2. Paul would describe contentment as learned behavior (Phil 4:11-13). Learn it today, now!
  3. A fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth, seeking greener grass he cannot own (Pr 17:24).
  4. The greatest contentment is found by walking with God (Psalm 4:7; 73:25-26; Heb 13:6).
- C. What has God given you? Be content with it; be thankful for it; use it well for its purpose.
  1. Since silver will not satisfy a man loving it, choose to be content with copper (Eccl 5:10).
  2. By *the sight of the eyes* Solomon intends the things that God has already put in your life.
  3. A contented poor man is superior to a discontented rich man by enjoying what he has.
  4. The man poor in possessions is richer than a man with them by taking simple pleasures.
- D. The *wandering of the desire* are covetous thoughts and fantasies for things you do not have.
  1. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life manipulate men (I Jn 2:16).
  2. The world – consider advertising – does all it can to cause you great discontentment.
  3. What a travesty! You lose the joy of what you have by thinking of what you do not have.
  4. The man with an eager, pretty wife misses her lovemaking by fantasizing of porn models.
- E. Discontentment with what you have is a great vanity and vexation of spirit that you generate.
  1. Every second you think about things you do not have and crave to have them ... is a loss.
  2. You lose that second of joy and satisfaction from the things that you do have from God.
  3. You degrade the value and pleasure of what you have by comparing it to a lying fantasy.
  4. You waste limited energy and time in a direction that cannot ever give you satisfaction.
  5. You frustrate yourself into a madman like Amnon by craving things impossible to have.
  6. You deceive yourself by idealizing what you do not have by your great ignorance of it.
  7. You fret against the Lord God, for He gave you what you have, grieving the Holy Spirit.
  8. Apply this lesson to your life – are you discontented with your job, wife, house, car, etc.?
- F. There are two levels of contentment – a natural one by natural remedies, and a spiritual one.
  1. Solomon here only deals with a natural choice to be content with natural things you have.

2. The rest of the Bible reaches even higher to spiritual contentment over all earthly things.
3. Asaph shared his discontentment and envy and the spiritual solution for both (Psalm 73).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #25: *Earthly Life Is Hopelessly Vain and Short* \*\*\*\*\*

**10 *That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.***

- A. Solomon here gave an intermediate conclusion and summary before more lessons of wisdom.
- B. The general human experience of any generation is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit.
  1. That thing here named and known is man – a rational, created being of dust and vanity.
  2. Adam was made of the dust of the earth, corrupted himself, and begat all others depraved.
  3. He concluded that what he had written was an accurate description of human existence.
  4. From the beginning, after the Fall in Eden, man’s life of vanity and vexation is the same.
  5. Since man is in a cycle of vanity (Ec 1:3-11), the past proves the future will be the same.
  6. The Creator God has ordered His providence to frustrate men, who cannot influence Him.
  7. The rule is just as true of that which hath been or that which shall be, no matter if great.
  8. The creature under Solomon’s analysis is man – inherently frustrated in life and by life.
- C. The greatest of men – by wisdom, riches, or power – are but men ... a higher order of beasts.
  1. The best of men are but men, reducing them all to quickly-passing mere mortals of dust.
  2. No matter how great men or their accomplishments have been – they are human vanity.
  3. The ambition or desire to be great (see 6:9) is foolish in light of man’s inherent nature.
- D. Lowly man has no right or ability to argue or oppose God’s sovereign providence over him.
  1. God gives; God withholds; God rules timing (Eccl 1:13; 2:24,26; 3:10-18; 5:18-20; 6:2).
  2. He has chosen by infinite wisdom and justice to frustrate and exercise man by travail.
  3. Man cannot discern or understand what He does, let alone question or resist it (Dan 4:35).
  4. He is the Potter, and man is the clay, and He will do with man as He chooses (Rom 9:20).
  5. No matter how much he may dislike his life, he cannot alter God’s sovereign providence.
  6. No matter how much wisdom, strength, or riches he applies for himself, God overrules it.

**11 *Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?***

- A. Solomon here gave an intermediate conclusion and summary before more lessons of wisdom.
- B. Man is vain himself, for he is much like a beast (Ec 3:18-21); his efforts only make it worse.
  1. God made man upright with potential, but he invented *many* things to his hurt (Ec 7:29).
  2. Solomon had already exposed many human efforts to find purpose and profit to no avail.
  3. No matter what man tries to find profit and good in life, he cannot improve his situation.
- C. Natural efforts by man to improve the profit and pleasure of life does not accomplish its goal.
- D. God justly punished man for folly in Eden; recognize the folly of human efforts to counter it.
- E. Every effort man has made to undo the consequences of sin have only made his life worse.

**12 *For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?***

- A. Solomon here gave an intermediate conclusion and summary before more lessons of wisdom.
- B. Earthly life is vain by nature; many inventions made it worse; he cannot even help himself.
  1. His ideas, experiments, and exposure to God’s providence leave all men without hope.

2. There is no natural source of wisdom to show man real profit for his vain and brief life.
  3. The only hope – which Solomon slightly reveals – is the conclusion to close the book.
  4. No one knows what is good for man in his life, except God and Solomon. You must wait.
- C. Earthly life is short by nature; there is nothing he can do to expend his time under the sun.
1. Life is vain enough if men lived as long as Methuselah, but they only live 70-80 years.
  2. Shadows have no reality, only slightly resemble the reality, and race away like no other.
  3. If finding good is an impossible task, life is far too short to experiment or fret about it.
  4. Death ends every achievement, asset, dream, hope, plan, or relationship of every person.
- D. No man knows what will become of his family, his reputation, or his wealth after his death.
1. You do not know what will happen five minutes from now, let alone a decade or century.
  2. No matter your status or achievements, you will quickly be forgotten by all (Eccl 2:16).
  3. This should reduce man to utter hopelessness in all thoughts and activities of earthly life.
- E. I can tell you what is going to happen after you die, for God has revealed it (Hebrews 9:27).
- F. Solomon will kindly, wisely answer this dilemma and these questions at the end of the book.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 7

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #26: Life Priorities – Practical and Philosophical \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.***

- A. This begins the second half of Ecclesiastes with inspired rules for profitable and wise living.
1. The first half of the book is basically a hopeless indictment of man's life under the sun.
  2. The second half of the book will provide the foundation and facts for hope under the sun.
  3. *Vexation of spirit* occurs nine times and *travail* eight, but all ten in the first six chapters.
  4. Man by nature, natural wisdom, and sinful inventions has only made his bad case worse.
  5. Man is subject and vulnerable to the overriding providence of God that is to exercise him.
  6. But there are matters of spiritual wisdom, or higher natural wisdom, to give value to life.
  7. A good name, or reputation, is a choice; a wise man chooses to enhance his reputation.
- B. *A good name is better than precious ointment* – a good reputation is better than any luxury.
1. The Preacher taught this important rule of exalting reputation elsewhere (Proverbs 22:1).
  2. Precious ointment was a luxury in the dry climate of the Middle East (Ps 133:2; Pr 27:9).
  3. Precious ointment was not only fragrantly pleasant, but it was only financially valuable.
  4. Does your name and reputation cause others to smile? Do others esteem your friendship?
  5. Not only should you question what others think of your name, but who are these others?
  6. How much care, effort, time, expense do you put into precious ointment or other things?
  7. What kind of burial will you have? The burial of the rich miser mocked earlier (Ec 6:3)?
  8. More about a good name (slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/good-name-04-27-2016.pdf>
  9. More about a good name (outline) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/good-name.pdf>
  10. More of a good name (Pr 22:1) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/22\\_01.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/22_01.php)
- C. *And the day of death than the day of one's birth* – the wise view death differently than fools.
1. Taking from the first clause, good men with a good name know death is good (Is 57:1-2).
  2. Natural men celebrate birth and birthday parties, but they fear, mourn, and resent death.
  3. They do this since they only know this life, and they deceive themselves about its vanity.
  4. The day of death is not better for the wicked, for they shall wake up facing an angry God.
  5. It had better for them not to have been born, for their final destination is the lake of fire.
  6. Wise men know that death ends the sorrow, travail, vanity, and vexation of earthly life.
  7. Just men, those with truly good names, know that the next life is far better than this one.
  8. Unless and until a seed is planted (body buried), there is no hope of fruit (glorification).
  9. Solomon's words do not mean only a natural view, for God's fear is in context (Ec 7:18).
  10. Solomon had made hopeless points about life, death, and existence (Ec 2:17; 4:1-3; 6:3).
  11. Job and his poor comforters also looked at aspects of life's hopelessness (Job 3:17-21).
  12. Solomon will make hopeful points about life, death, and existence shortly (Eccl 9:4-6).
  13. This is not a hopeless statement, for his arguments for hopelessness ended (Ec 6:10-12).
  14. Keep this in mind with the verses following for contextual, interpretive value (Ec 7:2-6).
  15. Funerals are better than birthday parties, for funerals are the end of all men (Eccl 7:2).
  16. Sorrow, or critical reflection, is better than foolish celebration, like a birthday (Ec 7:3).
  17. A wise man will appreciate the musing approach to the purpose of life more (Eccl 7:4).

- 18. Rebuke, for correction to better godly living, is better than entertainment (Eccl 7:5).
- 19. Birthday parties have a lot in common with thorns burning, worthless noise (Eccl 7:6).
- 20. This does not make birthday parties wrong – we appeal to Abraham and Job to justify.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #27: *Self-Reflection Is Better than Entertainment* \*\*\*\*\*

***2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.***

- A. Here is a cue for right worship, as mega churches go the opposite direction (Heb 12:28-29).
- B. This truth is totally contrary to natural man, the world around us, and modern Christianity.
- C. *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting* is a wise priority.
  - 1. When Solomon compares, contrasts, and ranks two well-known things, wise men listen.
  - 2. The house of mourning is preeminently a funeral, where we mourn the deaths of friends.
  - 3. The house of feasting is a party, likely a birthday (Eccl 7:1), where levity rules the soul.
- D. *For that is the end of all men* tells us the reason for exalting sober funerals over fun parties.
  - 1. Every man is going to die, so wisdom considers that certain fact rather than ignore truth.
  - 2. Since death is an absolute certainty, then we should consider living our lives in light of it.
  - 3. Ignoring death and amusing oneself causes a lighter, superficial, and vainer view of life.
- E. *The living will lay it to his heart* warns men yet alive to consider death and live in light of it.
  - 1. A wise man will consider death and how he can prepare for it by avoiding foolish levity.
  - 2. The thought of death can correct excessive ambition, ignoring God, wasting time, etc.
  - 3. The subject of death should not be ignored, thus losing its value, but rather sought out.

***3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.***

- A. This is not just any sorrow, but rather godly sorrow considering death and self-examination.
- B. Most laughter, by foolish talking or jesting, is a terrible evil and noise (Eph 5:3-6; Titus 2:6).
- C. If science says laughter improves the physical heart, so what! it corrupts the reflective heart.
- D. A great goal in life – and the goal of time outside sleep and work – is to improve the heart.
- E. Here is a cue for right worship, as mega churches go the opposite direction (Heb 12:28-29).
- F. For more about a pure heart (sermon outline) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/a-pure-heart.pdf>.
- G. For more of David's heart (sermon outline) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/heart-of-david.pdf>.

***4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.***

- A. What do you do for health of your heart? Forget vitamins. Forget laughter. Choose mourning.
  - 1. Wise men know improving their heart is a meaningful way to make life more profitable.
  - 2. They reduce levity and noise in their lives to be quiet and think on God (Ps 46:10; 4:4).
  - 3. The more you think about the serious aspects of life, like death, the better for your heart.
- B. Fools do not take their hearts into funerals; fools do not reflect on funerals when completed.
  - 1. Fools rush from entertainment to amusement and back again, shutting out contemplation.
  - 2. They fill their lives with noise (rock/rap music) and activity (recreation, movies, parties).
- C. Here is a cue for right worship, as mega churches go the opposite direction (Heb 12:28-29).

***5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.***

- A. When Solomon gives you an inspired comparison and priority, you should consider it deeply.
- B. It takes rebuke to end bad behavior, learn truth, and be wiser (Prov 1:5; 9:8-9; 25:12; 28:23).
  - 1. Though rebuke hurts, to be told you are stupid and wrong, it is worth it (Prov 13:1; 27:5).
  - 2. Preachers with their inspired manual must fight you (II Tim 3:16-17; 4:1-4; Titus 2:15).
  - 3. Preachers must make war with their hearers (II Cor 10:4-6; Jer 23:28-29; Psalm 119:128).
- C. The world fills its ears, mind, and heart with profane insanity of rock, rap, and other noise.
  - 1. The lyrics are at best nonsense and at worst blasphemous worship of the devil himself.
  - 2. With modern technological advances, they can fill their heads with this noise 24/7.
  - 3. For more about techno sins in recent years ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/techno-sins.pdf>.
- D. Here is a cue for right worship, as mega churches go the opposite direction (Heb 12:28-29).

***6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.***

- A. Thorns in a fire under a pot make a lot of popping noise but cannot produce heat for cooking.
  - 1. Fools laugh, giggle, jest, joke, and fill the air with outrageous noises producing no value.
  - 2. Here is another vanity – noisy fools exalting worthless laughter rather than helpful words.
  - 3. The sound of barking hyenas is similar to the noise of giggling, cackling, laughing fools.
  - 4. God is not mocked by this accepted insanity; He will soon judge is severely (Eph 5:3-6).
- B. America honors such folly with sitcoms and staged laughter, which most think entertaining.
  - 1. Instead of preachers, they want stand-up comedians; insanity instead of sound doctrine.
  - 2. Prime time television avoids mature subjects for children, but it should outlaw sitcoms.
  - 3. Compulsory public education, requiring unmotivated children in one place, fuels the fire.
  - 4. Laughter is more comfortable in conversation than sober questions, which is deceiving.
  - 5. Gatherings without an agenda or structure will degenerate to the LCD of mankind – folly.
- C. Here is a cue for right worship, as mega churches go the opposite direction (Heb 12:28-29).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #28: Proverbs for Wise Character and Conduct \*\*\*\*\*

***7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.***

- A. This is one of the most obscure verses in this book of 222 verses. Will God reveal it to you?
  - 1. Commentators vary widely in their guesses for meaning and violate Solomon’s context.
  - 2. Read the other verses of this section and make sure the interpretation fits the spirit issues.
- B. There are about three options for this verse, and we choose one of the options with great care.
  - 1. Is this a wise man being oppressed by others, including bribes, which corrupts wisdom?
  - 2. Is this a wise man seeing oppression by others, including bribes, which drives him crazy?
  - 3. Is this a wise man oppressing others and taking bribes of them, which corrupts wisdom?
- C. How do the clauses relate? They must, as in Proverbs and by a coordinating conjunction *and*.
  - 1. The coordinating conjunction *and* means the two clauses are agreeable and comparable.
  - 2. Since the second clause is clearest, allow it to drive the interpretation about the wise man.
  - 3. A *gift* here is a bribe, which when accepted to corrupt justice destroys a man’s character.
  - 4. Both clauses describe corrupting influences, so they must both pertain to the wise man.
  - 5. A bribe destroys the heart of the receiver, but whose heart? There is only the wise man.
  - 6. God’s law warned about the blinding, corrupting influence of bribes (Ex 23:8; De 16:19).

7. While *mad* may mean angry, it is delusion, foolish, insane, and anti-wisdom to Solomon.
  8. **Madness.** Imprudence or delusion resembling insanity; extravagant folly.
  9. Compare all the uses of *mad* or *madness* in this book (Ec 1:17; 2:2,12; 7:25; 9:3; 10:13).
  10. By comparing *mad* and *destroyeth the heart*, we know madness is sinful folly, not anger.
  11. *Surely* makes it an absolute rule, not merely a possible outcome of other interpretations.
  12. Indefinite articles and nouns *a wise man* and *a gift* indicate a principle, not observation.
- D. By comparing scripture with scripture, there are at least two perfect Bible cross-references.
1. Samuel declared himself innocent from these very two corrupting choices (I Sam 12:3).
  2. Isaiah described a truly righteous man as one rejecting both compromises (Isaiah 33:15).
- E. Here is the lesson and wisdom of this proverb – stated several ways for fullest understanding.
1. A wise man who oppresses others or accepts bribes corrupts his wisdom and conscience.
  2. He will lose his discretion and understanding; he will destroy his character and integrity.
  3. Wisdom and a pure heart are two precious assets – they cannot be compromised with sin.
  4. Therefore, wisdom must be preserved by rejecting oppression of others or taking bribes.
  5. Any good man in authority must avoid corrupting his wisdom or heart by compromise.

**Note:** For a tabular comparison of possible interpretations and for some commentaries, see material at very bottom.

### ***8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.***

- A. The two clauses are related, for the patient man gets results better than the proud boaster.
- B. *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof* – good results trump plans or words.
1. When you start a thing, you never know what difficulties this vain life will throw at you.
  2. Construction budgets are a good example, for cost overruns are the absolute rule, always.
  3. James taught that all plans, including your life, must be submitted to God (Jas 4:13-15).
  4. However, the lesson is more than just vanity and vexation, by virtue of the second clause.
  5. The second clause in this parallelism indicates that patience trumps boastful intentions.
  6. A finished project with the desired results is superior to fanciful intentions (Prov 14:23).
  7. Lots of bad ideas look good in the beginning before they are fully examined (Prov 18:17).
  8. The rich may look or talk gloriously, but keep watching (Prov 18:11-12; Ps 37:35-36).
  9. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, for completion of a project is best (Prov 13:12,19).
  10. Recall how Ahab rebuked Benhadad for talking confidently before battle (I Kings 20:11).
- C. *The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit* – calm diligence trumps boastful haste.
1. The patient shall exceed the proud by consistent and focused diligence (Proverbs 28:19).
  2. By long forbearing, rather than fighting, a prince is persuaded (Prov 25:15; Eccl 10:4).
  3. Ruling the spirit is better than taking a city; not ruling is an open city (Pr 16:32; 25:28).
  4. By patience men can bear offences, but the proud must be fighting (Prov 21:24; 16:18).
  5. Those that endure are rewarded, as Job was, though imperfectly enduring (James 5:11).
  6. Weeping leads to bearing sheaves, for it humbly sows its precious seed (Psalm 126:5-6).

### ***9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.***

- A. Anger is a terrible trait of fools to be avoided (Proverbs 14:17; 22:24-25; 27:4; 29:22).
- B. Slow to wrath is much better than haste of spirit (Proverbs 14:29; 15:18; 19:2; 28:22).
- C. A man that acts and reacts with proud anger is a haughty scorner to be avoided (Pr 21:24).
- D. Ruling the spirit is better than taking a city; not ruling is an open city (Prov 16:32; 25:28).
- E. Let others think you compromising or effeminate, but do not explode with anger like fools.

- F. The Christian religion calls men to avoid anger (Matt 5:21-26; II Tim 2:24-26; James 1:19).
- G. The sons of Zeruah and sons of thunder were too hasty in anger (II Sam 3:39; Luk 9:51-56).

***10 Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.***

- A. Here is a complaint about God's providence and/or why you cannot bear your present stress.
  1. This is not the wise self-examination of a man looking for sin in his life (Revelation 2:5).
  2. This is a man slandering God by blaming Him for circumstances irrespective of his sin.
  3. There is nothing new under the sun; God's providence is fair and right to all generations.
  4. You are the clay, and you should not be questioning the Potter (Rom 9:20-21; Is 45:9).
  5. God has His secret things of providence; they are none of your business (Deut 29:29).
  6. You have no difficulty that is not common to man (I Cor 10:13). Do not blame God.
  7. Rather than blame God for providential changes, ask what you can do in these days.
  8. God graciously treats man better than he deserves; He is good (Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17).
- B. If you self-examine your life or your family, the question is acceptable and can be profitable.
  1. It is better to ask whether you are better in light of God's goodness (Eccl 7:14; Rom 2:4).
  2. This kind of examination of your own performance is wise, prudent, and acceptable.
  3. Do not examine God and think He has treated generations differently in a wicked way.
  4. Remember God's hatred of trying to shift blame away from yourself (Ezekiel 18:1-9).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #29: *Natural Wisdom and Money Are Good Things* \*\*\*\*\*

***11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.***

- A. *Wisdom* here is primarily natural wisdom, even if given by God or taught in the Bible, for the power of right judgment in life under the sun. We divide it from spiritual wisdom of Christ.
- B. *An inheritance* is money, riches, wealth, or financial means to be able to do good for others.
- C. When a wise man also has economic means, he can accomplish a great deal of good in life.
  1. A rich wise man commands respect and can perform what wisdom says should be done.
  2. A poor wise man is limited and little respected, as Solomon wrote elsewhere (Eccl 9:16).
  3. A rich fool is a danger to himself and to others, because his money is invested wickedly.
  4. A poor fool has nothing to offer anyone. Any poor man can be wise by the fear of God.
- D. Consider how Abraham, David, and a great woman of Shunem helped in the Old Testament.
- E. Consider how Barnabas, Philemon, and Gaius helped others in the New Testament churches.
- F. Good men (1) teach their children wisdom and (2) leave an inheritance (Prov 22:6,15; 13:22).
- G. Nothing in this verse contradicts the danger of loving money (Ps 62:10; I Tim 6:6-10,17-19).

***12 For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.***

- A. This verse defines and explains the earlier one and ranks the two things, wisdom and money.
- B. Wisdom is a defense – the power of right judgment – knowing what, when, where, and how to do what is best for a situation (Ec 7:19; 9:15-18; Prov 2:11; 21:22; 24:5; II Sam 20:16-22).
- C. Money is a defense – the purchasing power of the means of exchange – for it helps buy protection or open doors (Eccl 10:19; Prov 10:15; 14:20; 18:11; 19:4; 21:14; Acts 24:26).
- D. Wisdom and money defend, so wisdom with an inheritance is good and beneficial (Ec 7:11).

- E. You will never have money for its defensive help without saving (Prov 6:6-8; 21:20; 30:25).
- F. You will never have wisdom for defensive help without study (Pr 1:1-7; 2:1-11; 15:28; 18:1).
- G. But ... between the two good things, one is superior to the other and most needful – wisdom.
- H. No wonder David taught Solomon that wisdom is the principal thing and to get it (Prov 4:7).
- I. How does *wisdom give life to them that have it*? It saves from foolish choices that cause destruction and bring the snares of death (Pr 3:1-2,18,22; 4:13,22; 6:23; 8:35-36; 10:17; etc.).
- H. Nothing in this verse contradicts the danger of loving money (Ps 62:10; I Tim 6:6-10,17-19).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #30: *God's Providence Should Produce Wisdom* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?***

- A. Observe the transition from 7:12 ... understanding God's providence is life-giving wisdom.
- B. *Consider the work of God* is what wise men do, who observe and muse on God's providence.
  - 1. These are *acts of God*, which we see by *the work of God*, things which we cannot change.
  - 2. We know God's providence rules life's circumstances by the following verse (Eccl 3:14).
  - 3. Solomon introduced this fact earlier, for God's works affect our lives (Ec 1:12-15; 3:14).
  - 4. Elihu and David exhorted men to this wise practice (Job 37:14; Ps 8:3-4; 107:43; 143:5).
- C. *Who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?* God's providence is unalterable.
  - 1. Of course, men can straighten things that men have made crooked, but this is different.
  - 2. Men use chemicals to straighten naturally curly hair; they use braces to straighten teeth.
  - 3. If teeth confuse you, consider them this way – he hath made crooked, but straightenable.
  - 4. But you cannot alter God's large acts – nations, rulers, economics, businesses, jobs, etc.
  - 5. You cannot alter God's providence, as Solomon taught about God's times (Eccl 3:1-15).
  - 6. The next verse gives the right sense of crooked things – acts of God in life circumstances.
  - 7. This never means we are Fatalists – not using the means God has given to change things.
- D. What is the lesson? Wisdom learns to humbly submit to God's providence without fretting.
  - 1. Solomon will next give rules for what to do with both times of prosperity and adversity.
  - 2. We cannot will ourselves taller, so we should consider God's work in bodies (Matt 6:27).
  - 3. God has made an infinite number of choices affecting you far beyond your bodily height.
  - 4. Man cannot alter his destiny, whether a nation or a man (Job 34:29; Lam 3:37; Dan 4:35).
  - 5. God has many secret things affecting your life, but He gave us the revealed (Deut 29:29).
  - 6. Never get angry at God for circumstances! Never assume your plans will carry the day!
  - 7. Seek the Lord to respond wisely (I Sam 30:6-8). Submit plans to His will (Jas 4:13-15).
  - 8. Pray for matters large and small, because He can overthrow nations for righteous men.
  - 9. What should you do? Humble yourself to Him and confess His greatness (Job 33:12-13).
- E. For more about the sovereignty of God ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.

### ***14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.***

- A. God has arranged the circumstances of life to drive man to humility before Him (Ec 3:10-14).
- B. *The day of prosperity* is God's arrangement of circumstances to bless and favor your efforts.
  - 1. God arranges factors from sunshine and rain to world leaders (Acts 14:17; Daniel 2:21).

2. God promotes men and causes them to find favor with others (Ps 75:6-7; I Samuel 2:7-8).
  3. God can give a 10,000% return, 7 years of plenty, or 7 of famine (Gen 26:12; 41:25-26).
  4. You will never accomplish anything without God's blessing on your efforts (Ps 127:1).
  5. Therefore, we must submit all plans, no matter how well laid, to His will (Jas 4:13-15).
  6. Joy here is more than just celebrating success, but rather joy in God (Deut 28:47-48).
  7. Joy here is not an observation or suggestion – it is a command (Phil 4:4; I Thess 5:16).
  8. God's goodness is for repentance, trust, and praise (Rom 2:4; I Tim 6:17; Heb 13:15).
  9. Job did well in the day of prosperity by fearing God and eschewing evil (Job 1:1-5).
- C. *The day of adversity* is God's arrangement of circumstances to curse and trouble your efforts.
1. When circumstances affect you negatively ... they are not chance; you cannot alter them.
  2. Adverse circumstances may be chastening, so wisely consider your ways (Hag 1:5-11).
  3. Adverse circumstances may be for God's glory, so give Him glory quickly (John 9:1-3).
  4. Adverse circumstances may be for your perfection, so rejoice in them (James 1:2-5).
  5. Adverse circumstances may be consequences of your sin, so submit (II Sam 16:10-11).
  6. Job did well in the day of adversity by humble submission and worship (Job 1:20-22).
  7. It was Mrs. Job who showed her profane lack of wisdom by suggesting cursing (Job 2:9).
- D. *God also hath set the one over against the other* describes God's work of good and evil.
1. The blessed and holy God of heaven brings both good and evil circumstances (Is 45:7).
  2. Do not be so foolish to think God causes all good and Fate or Satan causes all evil in life.
  3. Evil in a city, which means calamity or trouble in a city, is the work of God (Amos 3:6).
  4. His evil is by wise design for good always (Gen 50:20; Acts 4:28; Ps 76:10; Prov 16:4).
- E. *To the end man should find nothing after him* describes our total submission to God alone.
1. Man is totally unable to alter the circumstances and factors that most affect his little life.
  2. Man cannot find anything he can do to alter the large or small matters after God's work.
  3. This situation is to leave man utterly dependent upon God and hopeless without Him.
  4. It should drive men to repentance and worship, but it affects depraved man the opposite.
  5. Solomon has taught already God providentially exercises men (Eccl 1:13-15; 3:10-15).
  6. Do you observe the circumstances of life to see the Lord's lovingkindnesses (Ps 107:43)?
  7. Solomon will next explain God's providence may not match your expectations (Ec 7:15).
  8. What should you do? Humble yourself to Him and confess His greatness (Job 33:12-13).
- F. For more about the sovereignty of God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.

***15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness.***

- A. A great part of Solomon's inspired writings is observations that he made during his lifetime.
- B. As part of life's vanity, he witnessed God's providence not matching his human expectations.
  1. The continuing theme is God's providence in general; here is a practical application of it.
  2. God distributes prosperity and adversity to just and unjust, according to His own will.
  3. Keep the continuing theme in mind, for God's providence is beyond you figuring it out.
  4. This verse relates to the two before it, not the following three that contradict it (Ec 7:17).
  5. Solomon will state this observation of confounding providence again soon (Eccl 8:14).
- C. This is not a general rule – these are clear exceptions he observed about God's providence.
  1. Included in *all things* Solomon had observed were these exceptions to the general rule.
  2. He will immediately warn that wickedness shortens life, rather than extend it (Eccl 7:17).
  3. Solomon's Proverbs repeatedly taught the general rule that wickedness shortens life and righteousness extends it (Proverbs 3:1-2,16; 4:10; 9:11; 10:27; 23:13-14; etc.).

4. When considering Bible generalizations, remember this: *All other things being equal.*
- D. *There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness ... holy men see adversity, even death.*
  1. This is truly a just man properly righteous; this is not self-righteous man deserving death.
  2. Rather than live godly for long life, fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl 12:13).
  3. Because this apparent contradiction can occur, fear God and keep His commandments.
  4. One explanation is God's kind choice to save men from trouble by death (Isaiah 57:1-2).
  5. Josiah was one of the best kings (II Kgs 23:25), but God killed him early (II Kgs 22:20).
  6. Early in the Bible is the record of Enoch, one of God's best men, taken home (Heb 11:5).
- E. *There is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness ... evil men see prosperity.*
  1. This is truly a wicked man living in sin; this is not humble man thinking himself wicked.
  2. Because this apparent contradiction can occur, fear God and keep His commandments.
  3. One explanation is God's merciful choice to let them have their heaven now (Ps 17:14).
  4. Do not ever be moved by the circumstances of the wicked (Ec 8:12; Ps 49:6-15; 73:1-24).
  5. Envy of the wicked, which the Bible condemns, is due to sinners' prosperity (Ps 37:7).
- F. What is the lesson? Do not measure righteousness or wickedness by life's circumstances.
  1. You cannot figure out righteousness or wickedness merely by circumstances (Eccl 9:1-3).
  2. How should we live our lives? Fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl 12:13-14).
  3. God may bless false teachers with heavenly power to test you for His word (Deut 13:1-5).
  4. If circumstances fall out the opposite of what we think, we trust God and submit to Him.
  5. God's manual of righteousness in the Bible is our guide, not the life results of any man.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #31: *Proper Fear of God Leads to Certain Prosperity* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?***

- A. Do not allow the sound of these words to trouble your mind before considering their sense.
  1. Solomon did not write as a scornful Epicurean; his conclusion says otherwise (Eccl 7:18).
  2. It is impossible to have too much righteousness or wisdom, if we define both scripturally.
  3. However, there is a manmade righteousness and wisdom that God clearly condemned.
  4. Fearing God avoids ditches of *them all* – false righteousness and wickedness (Eccl 7:18).
- B. The lesson in this and the following two verses should be kept distinct from the previous one.
  1. First, there is a clear contradiction between 7:15 and 7:17. Do wicked men live or die?
  2. Second, there is a clear difference between the righteousness of 7:15 and of 7:16, for the just man of 7:15 is truly just and righteous, but the righteous man here is not truly just.
  3. Third, the lessons are different: 7:13-15 is God's providence; 7:16-18 is true fear of God.
  4. Solomon by the Spirit made a transition using the same words, but the lesson is distinct.
  5. This is rightly dividing the word of God, just as Paul required of Timothy (II Tim 2:15).
  6. If dividing makes you nervous ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/rightly-dividing-slides-2018-master.pdf>
- C. *Be not righteous over much* condemns evil distortion of righteousness by human tradition.
  1. This cannot be true righteousness; it has no limit (Gal 5:22-23; Rom 13:8; II Pet 1:5-11).
  2. There are some who in zeal for God, religion, or their praise will pervert righteousness.
  3. Pharisees, the Jews' most conservative denomination, were notorious for it (Acts 26:5).
  4. Our Lord opposed them and their manmade rules over and over (Matt 15:1-20; 23:23-24).
  5. Consider the very important lesson of David and the shewbread (Matt 12:1-7; Hosea 6:6).
  6. Consider the real purpose of the Sabbath, which the Pharisees neglected (Mark 2:23-28).
  7. These extremists condemn any and all wine, because they cannot see the wisdom of God.

8. They structure divorce and remarriage laws without any regard to marital mercy or intent.
  9. The monastic righteousness of the RCC requires vows of celibacy and vows of poverty.
  10. The puritanical righteousness of some Puritans and related parties goes beyond scripture.
  11. These extremists that think they are righteous deny Christian liberty to all but themselves.
  12. Extra conservatism is not righteousness – it is Pharisaism – we do not add or take away.
  13. These religious hypocrites had figured out to avoid honoring parents by dedicating assets.
  14. These religious hypocrites had figured out tithes on herbs, but they neglected judgment.
  15. There is righteous judgment by wisdom, and there is *righteous* madness (John 7:22-24).
- D. *Neither make thyself over wise* condemns perversion of wisdom to deny allowed pleasures.
1. It is impossible to have too much true wisdom, especially this writer (Pr 4:7; 3:15; 18:1).
  2. The *wisdom* here is excessive scrupulousness about life and religion – rules that go beyond God and the Bible with the lie that self-denial is better than moderate pleasure.
  3. Denial of pleasure that is not condemned is masochistic heresy (Col 2:16-23; I Tim 6:17).
  4. These super-*wise* fools invented the *touch not, taste not, handle not* religion of ascetics; they range from Essenes to Origen castrating himself to Encratites to monastic penance.
  5. Puritans invented the Christian Sabbath to apply O.T. rules to one day out of the week.
  6. The RCC would have you doing constant penance for sins and eating fish every Friday.
  7. The SDA by Moses’ old covenant wisdom would have you join them as vegetarians.
  8. Some foolishly vote for *principle*, yet their corrupt wisdom elects their enemy by default.
  9. Some foolishly deny birth control, working women, and schools – adding heavy burdens.
  10. They may throw out the bathtub with the bathwater like the Amish to reject inventions.
- E. *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Excessive self-denial is contrary to moderate pleasure.
1. Solomon taught moderate pleasure (Ec 2:24-26; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:9-10).
  2. Manmade righteousness is self-destruction by foolish self-denial (Col 2:20-23; Eph 5:29).
  3. Under both testaments, God ordained enjoying desired things (Deut 14:26; I Tim 6:17).
  4. We want the high road – neither ditch – of excessive conservatism or carnal Christianity.
  5. This text and Paul also taught against the monasticism of the RCC (I Tim 4:1-3); their vows of celibacy and poverty, rejection of meat, etc., are destructive of enjoying life.

***17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?***

- A. If condemnation of manmade righteousness/wisdom leads to another ditch, here is a rebuttal.
1. While fleeing the ditch of false righteousness and wisdom, do not allow extra sin or folly.
  2. This is wickedness and folly that steals men’s lives by bad choices and God’s judgment.
  3. As explained in 7:16’s notes, this is the rule, not the exception, so the lesson is different.
  4. The wicked man in 7:15 lives a long life (an exception); the wicked man here dies young.
- B. This is more the general rule than 7:15, for it agrees with Proverbs 10:27; 23:13-14, etc., etc.
- C. There is no amount of wickedness that we can justify, and that is not the intent of the verse.
1. Can we be angry until sunset (Eph 4:26)? Only if we do not sin in our anger (Eph 4:26)!
  2. Can we riot, as long as no excess (I Peter 4:4)? No, for the rioting there is excessive.
  3. While 7:16 had *over* applied to both righteousness and wisdom, *over* is not to folly here.
  4. Thus, Solomon indicated to you by the Spirit that there is no folly or wickedness allowed.

***18 It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.***

- A. Here is one of the concluding jewels God gave Solomon to give to us about profitable living.
1. It is concluding in only an intermediate sense, for he has many more lessons to introduce.

2. The final conclusion to the book, at least in its first half, is similar to this (Eccl 12:13-14).
3. Solomon's use of good may be meiosis, which is intentional understatement of a point.
4. Fearing God is much more than merely *good*; it is absolutely essential, fantastic, glorious.
- B. The language of the first two clauses, including *also*, is quite simple, but is very emphatic.
  1. *It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this* is the lesson that we are definitely to grasp.
  2. *Yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand* is the exhortation to never forget or leave it.
- C. Fearing God avoids ditches of *them all* of righteousness, wickedness, and folly (Ec 7:16-17).
  1. The fear of the Lord, the conclusion of the whole matter and man's whole duty, will keep us at the crown of the road, far from either ditch of monastic asceticism or lasciviousness.
  2. We do not want the ditch of manmade righteousness by adding to the words of God.
  3. We do not want the ditch of folly and wickedness by taking from the words of God.
  4. Learning to fear God and practicing it in every part of life will save you from all errors.
- D. What is the fear of God? It is reverent obsession to please Him well by all His commands.
  1. Solomon will make this his final conclusion to all observations and lessons (Eccl 12:13).
  2. For more of the fear of God, see this outline: <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/fear-of-the-lord.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #32: *True Wisdom Overcomes Faults and Others* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.***

- A. What is wisdom? That just described ... fearing God and living by His moderate rules only.
  1. This natural wisdom is contrasted with the over righteous and over wise excess of 7:16.
  2. This natural wisdom is contrasted with the over wicked and foolish, sinful men of 7:17.
  3. What we call natural wisdom may or may not include fear of God, but here it surely does.
  4. Yet, natural wisdom without the fear of God is superior to strong men, even if combined.
  5. What we call natural wisdom is not spiritual wisdom, which is gospel faith of Christians.
  6. While gospel faith of Christians is certainly an advantage, it is not necessary her for this.
  7. Solomon's Proverbs include the fear of God, but much natural wisdom exists without it.
- B. The following coordinating conjunction *for* indicates wisdom avoids both ditches about sin.
  1. The truly wise man fears God and avoids foolish extremes of manmade scrupulousness.
  2. The truly wise man does not believe he has freedom or liberty for sinning or wickedness.
  3. Rather than merely think about saving a city, think of being saved from the two ditches.
  4. It includes understanding God's providence in prosperity and adversity (Eccl 7:13-15).
- C. A man is great with this wisdom – the fear of the Lord free from any manmade extremes.
  1. It gives him greater advantage than ten mighty men with natural or physical strength.
  2. You will have the blessing of God and advantage of the most prudent course of action.
  3. The power of right judgment in any situation with God's favor is always unbeatable.
  4. What other comparisons do you need to pursue wisdom? They are declared in Proverbs.
  5. Solomon had given wisdom's superiority (Ec 2:13; 4:13-14), and he would (Ec 9:15-17).
  6. Considering just anger and ruling the spirit, it is also true (Eccl 9:8-9; Prov 16:32; 25:28).
  7. Wisdom is profitable to direct, so it can defeat superior strength of others (Eccl 10:10).
- D. If wisdom is advantageous and beneficial, what are you doing to get it (Pr 4:7; 16:16; 18:1)?

### ***20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.***

- A. Though it reads and sounds like a verse from Romans 3, total depravity is not the context.
  1. The coordinating conjunction *for* is continuation and explanation of the axiom (Ec 7:19).

2. The adverb *also* in the next verse adds another hindrance that should not stop a wise man.
3. We see Solomon continuing to separate a wise man from the errors above (Eccl 7:11-18).
4. Men take their different approaches regarding life and religion, but fear of God is enough.
- B. God's favor is not upon the absolutely perfect, for there are none perfect; He favors the wise.
  1. No man can be perfectly wise, so stop trying to create your own righteousness (Ec 7:16).
  2. Yet this does not justify a man from giving up and plowing into wickedness (Ec 7:17).
- C. God knows we are sinners, so He forgives and empowers those who fear Him and obey Him.
  1. David is a great example of success over enemies, though a known sinner (Ps 18:17-29).
  2. The wise man shall come forth of them all, even though he is not perfect (Eccl 7:18,12).
  3. Consider how God counted Asa perfect, though he left the high places (I Kings 15:14).

***21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:***

- A. The axiom is in 7:19; the conjunction *for* in 7:20 covers faults; the *also* in 7:21 covers others.
- B. Regarding others, ignore their opinions, as long as the fear of God leads you in true wisdom.
  1. God's favor is not upon the most popular, for even a servant will curse the one feeding it.
  2. Wise men may be discouraged at times by friends turning; think Ziklag (I Sam 30:6-8).
  3. You would hope your servant would praise and thank you, but depravity says otherwise
  4. *Sticks and stones may break ...* is a ditty of children that conveys the needed confidence.
- C. If a wise man corrects, instructs, or rebukes you, such should be heard (Prov 9:9; 27:5-6,9).

***22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.***

- A. A practical rule of wisdom is to remember your outbursts when hearing others' accusations.
- B. We should remember how we have thought, spoken, and acted toward others to temper us.
- C. Our disrespect of others and hasty criticism of their mistakes should cause us to be merciful.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #33: Man's Inventions, Including Women, Are Vain \*\*\*\*\*

***23 All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.***

- A. This verse and the next two may apply to all his experiments and inquiries both before and after this point, but it is best to see them as applying to the forthcoming lesson about women.
  1. The demonstrative pronoun *this* indicates a topic close at hand in time or space, without any certainty as to whether things before or after this statement are the intended objects.
  2. Yet, the colon and the language following indicates that *all this* refers to what is coming.
  3. How can *all this* refer back to 7:15 and *all things* there, for he had obtained that wisdom?
  4. *All this* is also used in 8:9 and 9:1 (twice), and in both cases it points forward to matters.
  5. There is a life matter in the following context that was far from Solomon and his pursuits.
  6. The purpose for these introductory verses is to emphasize the coming, important topic.
- B. Solomon applied himself diligently to separate value from vanity by his God-given wisdom.
  1. Let every man be convicted by his example to apply himself (Prov 18:1; Psalm 90:12).
  2. Ignorance, trouble, and death await the neglectful (Pro 1:20-32; 4:5-13; 8:36; Luke 8:18).
  3. But wisdom is out of the reach of the distracted or slothful (Pr 2:1-9; 23:23; II Tim 2:15).
- C. He chose to exercise wisdom in a foolish way or matter in which he did not obtain his goal.

1. It is true that wisdom leads one to know how foolish he is and how little he truly knows, but how can we understand the words of this text to establish this as the point he made?
  2. Solomon was wise (I Kgs 4:29-34), and he used his wisdom (Eccl 1:13,16; 2:9; 12:9-11).
  3. Since he proved all of something by wisdom, how was he far from wisdom he sought?
  4. Was Solomon wise or not wise? Did he prove all things by wisdom, or did he not do so?
  5. He had taught that fearing God was the best thing to do (Ec 7:18). This is great wisdom.
  6. What was far from him? The pronoun *it* cannot refer simply to wisdom, for he had *it*.
  7. There is a matter in the coming context that was far from him, which he missed by much.
  8. Therefore, we conclude that he is about to prove by wisdom an error of fleshly ambition.
  9. He chose to be fleshly wise in a large area of life he has not yet addressed, and he failed.
  10. It was fleshly lusts that led him to marry 1000; it was wisdom that assessed it to be folly.
- D. There is a matter that Solomon pursued in which he was a total failure and missed his mark.
1. The large matter of life before the reader, which the rest of the chapter covers, is women.
  2. How could Ecclesiastes deal with the purpose of life and ignore love, sex, and marriage?
  3. In answering what was far from Solomon, we must observe in the following verses these frequent words: “find” (7:26), “found” (7:27), “find” (7:27), “seeketh” (7:28), “find not” (7:28), “found” (7:28), “not found” (7:28), “found” (7:29), “sought” (7:29).
  4. Solomon pursued women like no other man in Bible history, but he only found trouble.
  5. He had laid the snare for his own soul before God ever granted him wisdom (I Kgs 3:1).
  6. He wrote after he had built houses (Ec 2:40; I Kgs 6:38; 7:1), time to marry many wives.

#### ***24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?***

- A. Here is another demonstrative pronoun, *that*, and a pronoun, *it* – the fleshly goals from 7:23.
- B. When a thing is too far away or too deep, you cannot fully or rightly discover or explain it.
- C. What was so far off and exceeding deep that king Solomon could not discover or explain it?
1. It cannot be natural wisdom, for he was loaded with more natural wisdom than any man.
  2. It cannot be spiritual wisdom, for he concluded right often (Ec 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13).
  3. Solomon sought a wisdom that he did not have in his wisdom – knowledge of women.
  4. Therefore, we conclude that he is about to prove by wisdom an error of fleshly wisdom.
  5. He chose to be fleshly wise in a large area of life he has not yet addressed, and he failed.
  6. It was fleshly wisdom that led him to marry 1000; it was true wisdom that proved it folly.
  7. He was as foolish and blinded as Eve seeking to become as gods knowing evil (Gen 3:5).
- D. There is a matter that Solomon pursued in which he was a total failure and missed his mark.
1. The large matter of life before the reader, which the rest of the chapter covers, is women.
  2. How could Ecclesiastes deal with the purpose of life and ignore love, sex, and marriage?
  3. In answering what was far from Solomon, we must observe in the following verses these frequent words: “find” (7:26), “found” (7:27), “find” (7:27), “seeketh” (7:28), “find not” (7:28), “found” (7:28), “not found” (7:28), “found” (7:29), “sought” (7:29).
  4. Solomon pursued women like no other man in Bible history, but he only found trouble.
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  6. He wrote after he had built houses (2:40; I Kgs 6:38; 7:1), time for marrying many wives.

#### ***25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:***

- A. We could let this verse and two before it be only general propositions (Ec 1:13-17; 2:1-3,12).
1. However, the wisdom he sought in this context is wisdom he could not find (Ec 7:23-24).

2. However, there is a field of study in context that has not yet been addressed – women.
- B. Due to wise conclusions Solomon will draw (Eccl 7:26-29), he detailed learning of women.
  1. He did not seek wisdom or wickedness of women by observation, but experimentation.
  2. He applied himself diligently in fleshly ambition to learn what role women had in profit.
  3. No man would consider a study of life’s purpose complete without much of love and sex.
- C. There is a matter that Solomon pursued in which he was a total failure and missed his mark.
  1. The large matter of life before the reader, which the rest of the chapter covers, is women.
  2. How could Ecclesiastes deal with the purpose of life and ignore love, sex, and marriage?
  3. In answering what was far from Solomon, we must observe in the following verses these frequent words: “find” (7:26), “found” (7:27), “find” (7:27), “seeketh” (7:28), “find not” (7:28), “found” (7:28), “not found” (7:28), “found” (7:29), “sought” (7:29).
  4. Solomon pursued women like no other man in Bible history, but he only found trouble.
  5. He had laid the snare for his own soul before God ever granted him wisdom (I Kgs 3:1).
  6. He wrote after he had built houses (2:40; I Kgs 6:38; 7:1), time for marrying many wives.
- D. Marrying unbelieving women – *affinity* – is folly, for it is against God’s revealed will (Neh 13:23-27; Gen 6:1-3; Gen 27:46 – 28:5; Ex 34:15-16; Deut 7:1-4; Josh 23:11-13; I Kings 11:1-2; Ezra 9:1-4; Neh 10:29-30; I Cor 7:39; 11:11; II Cor 6:14-18).
- E. Marrying one thousand women – *polygamy* – is madness, as it is contrary to God and nature, for what man can effectively love so many women (Gen 1:27; 2:18-25; 6:1-3; Deut 17:17; Job 31:1; Mal 2:15; Matt 19:4-6; I Cor 7:1-5; I Tim 3:2,12; Titus 1:6).

***26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.***

- A. Now we get to the lesson – a painful lesson Solomon learned by experimenting with women.
  1. You can read all the modern volumes about women, but Proverbs and here is far better.
  2. A woman that fears the Lord, one Solomon never had, is worth hunting for (Pr 31:30).
- B. His experience with many bad women he described as being more painful than death itself.
  1. *The woman* is a collective noun for 1000 women he had (I Kings 11:1-13; I Tim 2:9-15).
  2. This is not a condemnation of all women or the female sex, but rather of his princesses.
  3. There are many good women in Bible history and in the experience of the saints of God.
  4. It would not be hard to believe that there have been more good women than good men.
  5. Death is often not painful; and if painful, it is usually bodily only, and of short duration.
  6. The pain of a conniving, deceitful, disloyal, gold digging woman is far worse than death.
  7. There is more than one way to die, and dying inside is worse (I Samuel 25:37; I Tim 5:6).
  8. Bitterness of soul is pain 24/7 from the inside out (Prov 14:10; 15:13,15; 17:22; 18:14).
  9. Who could have told the Preacher he would burn David’s grandchildren to Molech!
- C. The women here that caused him so much grief were the gold digging pagans he married.
  1. Solomon wrote much in Proverbs about both the odious woman and the strange woman.
  2. An odious woman drives men crazy (Pr 30:21-23; 12:4; 19:13; 21:9,19; 25:24; 27:15-16).
  3. The strange woman has destroyed many strong men, like Samson (Pr 6:26; 7:26; 23:28).
  4. He knew about good women, but he did not have one (Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:30).
  5. The descriptions here do not apply to godly women; they apply to evil, faithless pagans.
  6. Solomon loved many outlandish – different, exotic, strange – women (Nehemiah 13:20).
  7. They were from different nations, and each nation still has its own look (I Kings 11:1-4).
  8. He called it love, but you and I know better. This was lust of his eyes, flesh, and pride.
  9. Imagine the conniving by these women to conceive the heir to his throne and fortune.

10. Imagine the bitter wickedness caused by jealousy of 1000 cats living in the same cage.
11. Imagine the pressure on these women by their fathers to get their claws into his money.
- D. An unbelieving woman, especially with a whore's heart, is trouble in marriage or adultery.
  1. Solomon married these women, but he had broken two commandments marrying them.
  2. Her heart, the source of her conniving, deceitful, love and lust games, was like snares.
  3. Solomon described this creature as a hunter for innocent souls (Prov 22:14; 23:27-28).
  4. Solomon stressed in Proverbs about her use of flattering speech (Pr 2:16; 5:3; 6:24; 7:21).
  5. No wonder he gave so many warnings to his son, because he had seen their great evil.
- E. An unbelieving woman, using her body for selfish ends, is trouble in marriage or adultery.
  1. Solomon married these women, but he had broken two commandments marrying them.
  2. If you let one of these women grab or touch you, only a few can break the iron bands.
  3. Joseph by the grace of God and strength of character rejected Mrs. Potiphar (Gen 39:12).
  4. Solomon described this creature and her physical wiles (Prov 5:20-22; 6:25; 7:10,13).
  5. No wonder he gave so many warnings to his son, because he had seen their great evil.
- F. Who and how can men escape this dangerous creature? By keeping God's commandments.
  1. The man who pleases God is the man who keeps His commandments and does not sin.
  2. The man who has little regard for God's commandments will be easily taken by whores.
  3. Solomon restated this lesson at the book's end without reference to women (Eccl 12:13).
  4. There are commandments to only marry a woman who fears the Lord God of heaven.
  5. Samson would not listen to his father to marry an Israelite, and he ate the consequences.
  6. There are commandments to marry one woman and to be fully satisfied with her love.
  7. There was trouble in David's family as his wives and their sons conspired for his throne.

***27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:***

- A. Though his eyes, flesh, and pride were never satisfied, his wisdom could make a conclusion.
- B. Here is the most fantastic information and wisdom about women, if a man will just believe it.
- C. He could not find fulfillment, happiness, and lasting pleasure; but he did find a terrible rule.
- D. He learned that breaking God's rules is certain disaster, even if you test it a thousand times.
- E. With his superior gifts of wisdom, he could analyze each woman among the thousand wives.
- F. With many advantages no other men have, he found affinity and polygamy to be terrible.

***28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.***

- A. He could not find fulfillment, happiness, and lasting pleasure; but he did find a terrible rule.
- B. Every man married to one believing wife has a marriage that king Solomon only dreamed of.
  1. Though he was the richest, wisest, most handsome, and most eligible man in the world.
  2. Solomon never found what Christians have ... believing, devoted, sincere, loving wives.
  3. His sober and wise advice is for us to love one wife and enjoy life with them (Eccl 9:9).
- C. This seems to be the seeking and finding he mentioned pointedly in the context (Ec 7:23-25).
  1. This does not condemn all women, but it condemns the kind of women Solomon pursued.
  2. There are good men and women in all ages of the world, but there are very few of them.
  3. Though Solomon plunged deep into women to find true love for his soul, he did not find.
- D. What is the solution? Simple enough! One believer of the opposite sex (Pr 31:30; I Cor 9:5).
- E. What about the Shulamite? The woman Solomon loved and described favorably in his song.
  1. Without definitive identification or a timeline, we must wisely speculate a little about her.
  2. He excluded her, whatever his reason, from his summary about 1000 outlandish women.

3. Solomon's Song could be a parable, a fiction; he was certainly capable; the description of marital love is edifying and could further tell spiritual mysteries of Christ and church.
4. She was an early love, for his words indicate his harem was still quite small (Song 6:8).
5. By appeal to girls of Jerusalem, was she a Jewess (Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5,10,11; 5:8,16; 8:4)?
6. If Jewish, what happened to her? She could have died naturally, deserted him for his marital and religious crimes, been corrupted, been murdered, destroyed by jealousy, etc.

***29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.***

- A. For all of Solomon's efforts with women, he only learned how foolish men actually are.
  1. God gave the perfect plan for men and women – one man and one wife (Gen 2:18-25).
  2. God made man upright and gave upright laws to protect him, like monogamy (Mal 2:15).
  3. But they were not content with what God had designed and altered it to fit their lusts.
- B. God made the first man Adam upright, but he and his descendants chose against His rules.
  1. Of course, the first and strictest application would be following Eve to eat the fruit.
  2. But the context of Solomon's polygamy here raises Lamech's polygamy (Genesis 4:19).
  3. But the context here of affinity and polygamy would lead us to Noah's day (Gen 6:1-3).
  4. It is not merely the singular *he* of Eden that is being considered, but rather the plural *they*.
  5. It is not merely the singular sin of Eden that is being considered, but *many* inventions.
  6. Yet it could be carried all the way through human history and all inventions (Rom 1:30).
- C. Marrying unbelieving women – *affinity* – is folly, for it is against God's revealed will (Neh 13:23-27; Gen 6:1-3; Gen 27:46 – 28:5; Ex 34:15-16; Deut 7:1-4; Josh 23:11-13; I Kings 11:1-2; Ezra 9:1-4; Neh 10:29-30; I Cor 7:39; 11:11; II Cor 6:14-18).
- D. Marrying one thousand women – *polygamy* – is madness, as it is contrary to God and nature, for what man can effectively love so many women (Gen 1:27; 2:18-25; 6:1-3; Deut 17:17; Job 31:1; Mal 2:15; Matt 19:4-6; I Cor 7:1-5; I Tim 3:2,12; Titus 1:6).
- E. Relationships with the opposite sex are the most important danger for you and your children.
  1. Fathers, remember that Rehoboam had 18 wives and 60 concubines (II Chronicles 11:21).
  2. Of course, from the forbidden fruit to your sins yesterday, they are all inventions to seek fulfillment in this world apart from God, and not one of them or all of them will work.
  3. Solomon gave the cure for frustration in life, including love, sex, marriage (Eccl 12:13).
  4. What should you do, if you have followed man's inventions? Job 33:27-28 & I John 1:9.
- F. What inventions regarding love, marriage, and sex tempt you? God as Creator knows best.
  1. He purposed to annihilate the Canaanites for their sex inventions (Lev 18:1-30; 20:1-24).
  2. Marriage is honorable in all consensual marital sex not violating nature (Hebrews 13:4).
  3. Modern inventions include adultery, anal sex, bestiality, bitterness, bondage ( bdsm ), casual sex, cross-dressing, defrauding, escorts, fantasies, fetishes of all kinds, filthy communication, fornication, immodesty of attire, Internet sex, incest, marrying unbelievers, masochism, necrophilia, open marriage, peeping, pedophilia, phone sex, polyamory, pornography, prostitution, robots, romance novels, sadism, same-sex marriages, sexting, sodomy, transgenders, etc. Many others are beyond prudent inclusion.
- G. For further study of this terrible vanity of life – the abuse of love, marriage, sex, and women.
  1. *Marriage Only in the Lord* ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/marriage-in-the-lord.pdf>.
  2. *Proverbs about Marriage* ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/topics/marriage.php>.
  3. *Proverbs about Sex* ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/topics/sex.php>.
  4. *Proverbs about Women* ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/topics/women.php>.
  5. *Rate-a-Date Test for Girls* ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/practical/rate-a-date-women.php>.

## The Interpretation of Ecclesiastes 7:7

“Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.”

	<b>Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad;</b>	<b>and a gift destroyeth the heart.</b>
<b>Wise Man is Active, Oppressing Others</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The second clause drives the interpretation, because it is more definitive, and Solomon’s parallelism must combine the two agreeably.</li> <li>2. The coordinating conjunction <i>and</i> indicates that the second clause is agreeable, confirming, and comparable to the first clause; therefore, since it is a wise man made mad in the first clause, then it is the same wise man having his heart destroyed by a bribe.</li> <li>3. <i>Surely</i> is an adverb making this an absolute rule for every case, which is not true in every case of the other two possible interpretations.</li> <li>4. The indefinite articles and nouns <i>a wise man</i> and <i>a gift</i> indicate that it is a principle affecting individuals, not a general observation of nature.</li> <li>5. We assume mad = insane by virtue of the second clause indicating a wise man’s choice that corrupts or perverts his heart, not angering him.</li> <li>6. Examples of “maketh” used in somewhat comparable ways are: Ps 104:15; Pr 10:1; 12:25; 13:7,12; 15:13,30; 18:16; 19:4; Dan 11:31.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gift here is a bribe, and it destroys the heart of him receiving it.</li> <li>2. Since there is no new party introduced, the wise man is the only man.</li> <li>3. Surely a wise man receiving a bribe destroys his heart by doing so.</li> <li>4. A singular gift destroying the heart is a bribe accepted, not just seen.</li> <li>5. God’s law taught a gift would blind the wise (Ex 23:8; Deut 16:19).</li> <li>6. Samuel testified that he did neither evil of this verse (1 Sam 12:3).</li> <li>7. Isaiah testified a righteous man would not do either evil (Is 33:15).</li> </ol>
<b>Wise Man is Passive, Being Oppressed</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A wise man is highly offended when others oppress him, for a man with greater understanding is more deeply cognizant of the crime’s evil.</li> <li>2. A possible cross-reference for this interpretation is Psalm 125:3.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does a wise man receive the bribe, or only has it offered to him?</li> <li>2. If he takes the bribe willingly, then the parallelism does not stand.</li> <li>3. If he does not take the bribe, then how does it destroy his heart?</li> </ol>
<b>Wise Man is Observer of Others Oppressing</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The interpretation focuses on indirect discouragement caused by observing oppression going on in the world between and among men.</li> <li>2. This repeats earlier lessons of seeing oppression (1:18; 4:1-3; 5:8).</li> <li>3. But how does seeing oppression make a wise man mad? Oppression may bother a wise man, but does it make him go crazy and insane?</li> <li>4. How does seeing oppression <i>surely</i> make a wise man mad? It may bother men in varying degrees, but must it certainly make them insane?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do men giving and taking bribes destroy a wise man’s heart by discouraging it?</li> <li>2. This interpretation transfers the gift’s destructive effect from the giver and receiver to an observer instead.</li> <li>3. How can a single bribe among other men destroy a wise man’s heart?</li> </ol>

**Notes:**

1. All of the possible interpretations could be true according to the rest of the Bible and human experience.
2. But we want the specific rule intended by the Spirit in this verse, rightly dividing it by conclusive evidence.
3. Each interpretation could be true, but only one is most direct, most conclusive, and most supported by scripture.

### Commentaries

**Matthew Henry**

Solomon had often complained before of the oppressions that he saw under the sun, which gave occasion for many melancholy speculations and were a great discouragement to virtue and piety. Now here,

I. He grants the temptation to be strong (#Ec 7:7): Surely it is often too true that oppression makes a wise man mad. If a wise man be much and long oppressed, he is very apt to speak and act unlike himself, to lay the reins on the neck of his passions, and break out into indecent complaints against God and man, or to make use of unlawful dishonourable means of relieving himself. The righteous, when the rod of the wicked rests long on their lot, are in

danger of putting forth their hands to iniquity, #Ps 125:3. When even wise men have unreasonable hardships put upon them they have much ado to keep their temper and to keep their place. It destroys the heart of a gift (so the latter clause may be read); even the generous heart that is ready to give gifts, and a gracious heart that is endowed with many excellent gifts, is destroyed by being oppressed. We should therefore make great allowances to those that are abused and ill-dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not act so discreetly as they should; we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

II. He argues against it. Let us not fret at the power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them, for,

1. The character of oppressors is very bad, so some understand #Ec 7:7. If he that had the reputation of a wise man becomes an oppressor, he becomes a madman; his reason has departed from him; he is no better than a roaring lion and a ranging bear, and the gifts, the bribes, he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but destroy his heart and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him, and therefore he is rather to be pitied than envied; let him alone, and he will act so foolishly, and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself.

### **Matthew Poole**

Ver. 7. Oppression; either,

1. Active. When a wise man falls into the practice of this sin of oppressing others, he is besotted by it, and by the vast riches which he by his great wit gets by it. Or rather,

2. Passive. When a wise man is oppressed by foolish and wicked men, it makes him fret and rage, and speak or act like a madman; for the wisest men are most sensible of indignities and injuries, whereas fools are stupid, and do not much lay them to heart.

A gift, a bribe given to a wise man,

destroyeth the heart; deprives him of the use of his understanding, which is oft called the heart, as #Ex 23:8 De 16:19 Ho 4:8, or makes him mad, as was said in the former clause. So this verse discovers two ways whereby a wise man may be made mad, by suffering oppression from others, or by receiving bribes to oppress others. And this also is an argument of the vanity of worldly wisdom, that it is so easily corrupted and lost, and so it serves the main design of this book.

### **Geneva Bible Notes**

7:7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man {e} mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

(e) A man that is esteemed wise, when he falls to oppression, becomes like a beast.

### **John Gill**

Ver. 7. *Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad, &c.*] Which is to be understood either passively, when he is oppressed by others, or sees others oppressed; it raises indignation in him, disturbs his mind, and he is ready to pass a wrong judgment on the dispensations of Providence, and to say rash and unadvised things concerning them, #Ps 73:2,3,12-14; or actively, of oppression with which he oppresses others; when he gives into such measures, his wisdom departs from him, his mind is besotted, he acts the part of a madman, and pierces himself through with many sorrows. Some understand this of wealth got in an ill way; or of gifts given to bribe men to do injury to others; and which the following clause is thought to explain;

*and a gift destroyeth the heart;* blinds the eyes of judges other ways wise; perverts their judgment, and causes them to pass a wrong sentence, as well as perverts justice: or, "and destroys the heart of gifts" {k}; a heart that is

possessed of the gifts of wisdom and knowledge; or a munificent heart, a heart disposed to give bountifully and liberally, that oppression destroys and renders useless.

{k} hntm bl ta dbayw "et frangit cor dotibus praeclaris ornatum," Tigurine version; so some Jewish writers in Mercerus.

### **Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary**

7. oppression—recurring to the idea (#Ec 3:16 5:8). Its connection with #Ec 7:4-6 is, the sight of "oppression" perpetrated by "fools" might tempt the "wise" to call in question God's dispensations, and imitate the folly (equivalent to "madness") described (#Ec 7:5:6). WEISS, for "oppression," translates, "distraction," produced by merriment. But #Ec 5:8 favors English Version.

a gift—that is, the sight of bribery in "places of judgment" (#Ec 3:16) might cause the wise to lose their wisdom (equivalent to "heart"), (#Job 12:6 21:6,7 24:1, etc.). This suits the parallelism better than "a heart of gifts"; a benevolent heart, as WEISS.

### **Adam Clarke**

Verse 7. Oppression maketh a wise man mad. This has been translated with good show of reason, "Surely oppression shall give luster to a wise man: but a gift corrupteth the heart." The chief difference here is in the word *yeholel*, which, from the root *halal*, signifies to glisten, irradiate, as well as to move briskly, to be mad, furious, in a rage; and certainly the former meaning suits this place best. We cannot think that the wise man – he that is truly religious, (for this is its meaning in the language of Solomon,) can be made mad by any kind of oppression; but as he trusts in God, so in patience he possesses his soul.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 8

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #34: The Excellency of Political Wisdom \*\*\*\*\*

***1 Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.***

A. *Who is as the wise man?*

1. Is this a wise king (in light of the following context, which turns to political wisdom)?
2. There are verses in the Bible that speak of the glory and wisdom of kings (Job 34:16-19; Pr 8:15-16; 16:10,12-13; 20:26,28; 25:2-3; 29:4; 29:14; 31:4-5).
3. The forward context should guide, since the previous context, women, is very different.
4. Do kings' countenances change? Indeed, they do (Prov 14:35; 16:14-15; 19:12; 20:2,8).
5. Is this Solomon by the definite article *the*? For he had used such a construction (Ec 2:12).
6. Is this Solomon by his pursuit of wisdom, for he had written of his pursuit (Ec 7:23-25)?
7. Solomon was the wisest man; he could be the wise man and the interpreter; but he then switched to the indefinite article *a* in the latter part of this verse for any wise man's face.
8. Can the definite article *the* be used for a collective noun – the wise man (Eccl 2:14,16)?
9. The wise man is a collective noun for wise men – they are exceptional and incomparable.
10. Joseph was an incomparable man (who is as the wise man?), and Pharaoh recognized it.

B. *And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?*

1. The interpretation of a thing: this is not interpreting scripture, but God's works and life.
2. Joseph, a wise man, gave the interpretation of a thing (a dream) by God's inspiration.
3. This is understanding the times and knowing what Israel ought to do (I Chron 12:32).
4. This is judging righteous judgment rather than by appearance (Eccl 7:16 cp John 7:24).
5. This is knowledge David had – mercy is greater than sacrifice – which he applied with the shewbread (I Sam 21:1-6 cp I Sam 18:5,14,30; Prov 21:3; Hos 6:6; Matt 12:1-7).
6. This is knowledge Jesus Christ had under examination about taxation to endorse a pagan, foreign, occupying *de facto* government over Israel's *de jure* government (Mat 22:15-22).
7. It is Paul's wisdom to choose a trial before Caesar over Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 25:9-12).

C. *A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine?*

1. We know very clearly the difference between a dull face and a shining face, for even the intelligence of infants can be discerned easily and quickly by their facial appearance.
2. This is not the shining face of Moses or Stephen. Those faces were signs and wonders.
3. The face is synecdoche or metonymy; a shining face indicates a good heart (Prov 15:13).
4. A wise man has his heart in the right place, and it shows in His countenance (Pr 15:13).
  - a. He knows not to seek, question, or resent God's sovereign choices affecting his life.
  - b. He eats, drinks, and is merry in moderation as God's gift (Eccl 2:24; 3:13; 5:18-20).
  - c. He has a continual feast, day after day, by his wisdom (Eccl 9:7-10; Pr 15:15; 17:22).

D. *And the boldness of his face shall be changed.*

1. Notice carefully that the boldness would be changed ... not that it would not be changed.
2. Wisdom teaches humility and other related graces not known to foolish or proud men.
3. He knows changes in circumstances needing changes in conduct (Ec 8:5-7; I Chr 12:32).

4. There are circumstances and times for wise men to hide (Prov 28:12,28; Judges 6:11-12).
  5. Wisdom makes a man strong (Pr 24:5), and he uses the means for counsel (Pr 24:3-6).
  6. An upright man knows how to have a soft face at the right times (Proverbs 21:29; 11:5).
  7. But wisdom also makes a man bolder in necessary cases without shame (Psalm 119:46).
- E. The interpretation and application of this verse must include a measure of politics in context.
- F. Every man's ambition should be to acquire wisdom to be as this man to interpret the times.
1. For practical application of this great verse ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/who-is-as-the-wise-man.pdf>.
  2. For practical application of this great verse ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/wisdom-of-authority.pdf>.
  3. For much more about Christian ethics ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-ethics-case-studies.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #35: *Submission to Civil Rulers as to God* \*\*\*\*\*

### ***2 I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.***

- A. Here is Solomon, both king and Preacher, giving good counsel regarding matters of politics.
- B. God's inspired book of philosophy in the divine library has several sections on politics (Eccl 3:16; 4:1,13; 5:8-9; 8:1-5,9-11; 10:4-7,16-17,20).
- C. The oath of God is sworn allegiance of citizens to rulers (II Sa 2:1-6; 5:1-5; I Chr 12:37-39).
1. All governments and their rulers are from God, and they should be obeyed as from Him.
  2. Think how England follows the Bible with the words, *God save the queen* (I Sam 10:24).
  3. American citizens pledge allegiance many, many times to both their flag and government.
  4. God appointed David king by Samuel's anointing and ordination, but Israel had to make it formally and practically so, as do all nations (I Sam 16:13; II Sam 2:1-6).
  5. There is no power in the text, if the oath of God is merely the ruler's oath to obey God.
  6. Timothy was sworn by an oath to do several things (I Timothy 5:21; II Tim 4:1-2; etc.).
- D. This agrees with the New Testament, where we are to obey every ordinance of man, even though the government over the apostles was pagan Rome (Rom 13:1-7; I Pet 2:13-17).
- E. There are two reasons in both testaments to obey government (Rom 13:5; I Pet 2:17)... conscience toward God (Eccl 8:2) ... and fear of government's punishment (Eccl 8:3-5).
- F. Civil disobedience or disrespect is one of the most flagrant and infantile evidences of folly.
- G. For much more about political authority ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf> [and links].

### ***3 Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.***

- A. Rulers had absolute power, as they should – wise men will both respect and obey all of them.
1. Whether Israel's judges, kings, or prophets, they had absolute power over all subjects.
  2. Kings had absolute power, life or death, by the sword (Pr 19:12; 20:2; 30:31; Rom 13:4).
  3. They get this authority from God for civil peace of nations from criminals and enemies.
  4. You have no ability or right to judge rulers – God put the world under Nebuchadnezzar.
  5. Separation of powers is an inefficient form of government, contrary to God's examples.
- C. *Haste to go out of his sight* ... is disrespect, insolence, or intention to rebel, which are wrong.
1. It is worse for a citizen to leave a ruler's presence angry than for a child to do it to you.
  2. The right thing to do if a ruler is angry is yield and pacify him (Ec 10:4; Pr 16:14; 25:15).
- D. *Standing in an evil thing* ... includes civil disobedience or rebellion, which also is wrong.
1. Resisting civil rulers is resisting God Himself; you will have hell to pay (Rom 13:1-7).
  2. God even condemns considering the materials of civil rebellion of others (Pr 24:21-22).

- E. There are two reasons in both testaments to obey government (Rom 13:5; I Pet 2:17)... conscience toward God (Eccl 8:2) ... and fear of government's punishment (Eccl 8:3-5).
- F. For much more about political authority ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf> [and links].

#### ***4 Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?***

- A. Rulers had absolute power, as they should – wise men will both respect and obey all of them.
  1. Whether Israel's judges, kings, or prophets, they had absolute power over all subjects.
  2. Kings had absolute power, life or death, by the sword (Pr 19:12; 20:2; 30:31; Rom 13:4).
  3. Kings are supreme rulers, as Peter wrote, with lesser officials under them (I Pet 2:13-14).
  4. They get this authority from God for civil peace of nations from criminals and enemies.
  5. You have no ability or right to judge rulers – God put the world under Nebuchadnezzar.
  6. Separation of powers is an inefficient form of government, contrary to God's examples.
- B. A king's word, or his sentence in public or private, is absolute and final with great authority.
  1. His decisions and decrees are like the roaring of a lion (Proverbs 19:12; 20:2; 16:14-15).
  2. A real king is a beautiful sight by the fact no one dare rise up against him (Pr 30:29-31).
  3. God ordained this authority; God ordained the offices of it; God ordained the men for it.
- C. A king's errors are irrelevant just as your wife or children should rebel for many faults/errors.
  1. Christians only disobey the civil authority when they directly contradict God (Acts 5:29).
  2. This does not include disrespect because they personally or legislatively contradict God.
  3. The Bible is far stricter than most men realize about due reverence (Job 34:18; Ec 10:20).
  4. The harshest language in the Bible is about disrespect of civil rulers (II Peter 2:10-12).
- D. For much more about authority in general ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/authority-ordinance-of.pdf>.
- E. For much more about political authority ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf> [and links].

#### ***5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.***

- A. Those that respect and obey the civil ruler will obtain the ruler's favor and God's favor also.
  1. What *commandment* is here? All the kings' commandments as a collective noun (Ec 8:2).
  2. What *evil thing* is here? The power of the king's authority of life and death over you.
  3. Civil obedience brings the government's approval and favor (Romans 13:3; I Peter 2:14).
  4. They will sheathe their sword; there is no reason for them to be angry at good citizens.
  5. In addition, since they are God's ministers, He Himself will further bless good citizens.
  6. This lesson of wisdom is one of importance – as it reaches to conduct with all authority.
  7. An important rule for success in life is to learn of God's exaltation and defense of rulers.
- B. Wise men are able to discern political winds and adjust their conduct as citizens accordingly.
  1. God makes changes among, which alters the proper course of action in light of changes.
  2. A broad sense of time and judgment is here (Ec 8:6; 3:10), yet including civil rebellion.
  3. Moses' parents knew to disobey the king; so did Hebrew midwives, Rahab, Gideon, etc.
  4. Wise men vote practically, not principle – lest they elect an enemy in a two-party system.
  5. They know changes in circumstances needing changes in conduct (Ec 8:5-7; I Chr 12:32).
  6. There are circumstances and times for wise men to hide (Prov 28:12,28; Judges 6:11-12).
- C. Every man's ambition should be to acquire wisdom to be as this man to interpret the times.
  1. For practical application of the first verse ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/who-is-as-the-wise-man.pdf>.
  2. For practical application of the first verse ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/wisdom-of-authority.pdf>.
  3. For much more about authority in general ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/authority-ordinance-of.pdf>.
  4. For much more about political authority ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf> [links].

5. For much more about Christian ethics ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-ethics-case-studies.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* *Lesson #36: Man Proposes, but God Disposes* \*\*\*\*\*

**6 *Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.***

- A. Without God's timing, your efforts will not work, not matter how wisely pursued (Eccl 9:11).
- B. God is constantly working His secret purpose in the affairs of men (Eccl 3:1-15; Deut 29:29).
1. Every plan by man has a different set of circumstances (from God) to be judged rightly.
  2. Business plans must submit your own life to God, let alone your activities (Jas 4:13-15).
  3. Time and judgment here includes ignorance of the future, which is stated next (Eccl 8:7).
  4. God makes things crooked that you cannot make straight, so submit (Eccl 1:15; 7:13).
  5. One purpose or event of life that greatly affects your plans is your sure death (Eccl 8:8).
  6. Solomon will soon further state man's ignorance of God's providence in life (Eccl 8:17).
- C. Man's misery is great, for God gave him this dilemma to exercise him (Eccl 1:13; 3:10,14).
1. God will deny a man's plans and efforts; God will use his plans and efforts for Himself.
  2. Even man's wrath will praise God, since if He does not like it, He restraints it (Ps 76:10).
  3. God is not going to let man find anything in life outside Him – so submit to Him now.
  4. Poor Sennacherib – he was used by God – and then punished by God (Isaiah 10:5-15).
  5. Poor Pharaoh – used for God's name – he and his nation wasted (Ex 9:16; Rom 9:17).
  6. At no time in the process could either man learn what was occurring – circumstances and results went from victory to defeat, without repentance or worship – by their blindness.
- D. Much more of the sovereignty of God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.

**7 *For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?***

- A. Man has a knowledge problem – he does not know what is coming ... nor when it will come.
1. The possible outcomes for one year from now are incomprehensibly infinite to mere man.
  2. Which advisor or consultant will tell him the time of the coming unknown future events?
  3. God's righteous purpose is to exercise man with misery and travail (Eccl 1:13; 3:10,14).
- B. The sober warning of Solomon elsewhere – you do not know even tomorrow (Prov 27:1).
- C. Consistent, long-term profits from the markets is a very difficult task, even for modern man.
1. He has computers, full historical detail, instant news, real time trades nearly free, and AI.
  2. A few billionaire traders make it worse ... because others presume they can do the same.
  3. Time and chance affects all; they do not know what God will do five minutes from now.
- D. In light of his ignorance of the future, the next verse states the certainty of each man's death.
1. The event with the greatest impact on plans and efforts is death, which annihilates both.
  2. Business plans must submit your own life to God, let alone your activities (Jas 4:13-15).

**8 *There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.***

- A. The one event with the greatest impact on plans and efforts is death, which annihilates both.
1. There are other events short of death that affect men e.g. accidents, diseases, taxes, etc.
  2. Life and body are things you most control, but you cannot add a cubit or day (Matt 6:27).
  3. Business plans must submit your own life to God, let alone your activities (Jas 4:13-15).

- B. Man cannot avoid death, which is the most certain thing of his existence, so plans are vain.
  1. Death is entirely out of man's control, which means it must be in his Creator's control.
  2. No matter how terrible war is requiring so many men, yet they are discharged on time.
- C. The wicked hate death and talk arrogantly about it, yet they cannot escape it by any means.
  1. If you despair about death to deny and/or hate God for it, you will still die by His choice.
  2. The rich man, successful in life, made foolish plans, for God chose to take him that night.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #37: Wisdom Regarding Criminal Justice \*\*\*\*\*

**9 All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.**

- A. Solomon introduced a new lesson – from all he had seen, and how he had applied himself.
  1. *All this have I seen* ... applies to what comes after, not what comes before, just like 7:23.
  2. *Applied my heart unto every work under the sun* ... applies to what is then clearly stated.
  3. *A time when one man rules over another to his own hurt* ... the claims of criminal justice.
- B. The choice by wicked men to commit crimes results in their own civil punishment or death.
  1. The emphasis – by content in this chapter so far and *ruling over another* – is civil rulers.
  2. Solomon had already introduced criminal activities and oppression before (Ec 4:1; 5:8).
  3. Pharaoh ruled over Israelites severely, but it was surely to Pharaoh and Egypt's own hurt.
  4. Sihon of the Amorites selfishly denied Israel's need, so he and his nation were destroyed.
  5. All governments are popular – approved; when unpopular, their citizens throw them off.
  6. Rehoboam abused rule as king and lost 10 tribes, though he could have had them easily.
  7. Ahab and Jezebel ruled over Naboth for his vineyard to their own painful, vengeful hurt.
- C. What is the lesson? The abuse of authority is not right use of authority and will bite in return.
  1. This text warns about the use of authority, which has been lifted up highly (Eccl 8:2-5).
  2. Solomon taught earlier that wise men oppressing others corrupt their wisdom (Ec 7:7).

**10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.**

- A. The adverb *so* connects this verse with the previous one; we conclude rulers remain the topic.
  1. The wicked that are buried here are cruel rulers who ruled over others to their own hurt.
  2. Wicked rulers are punished by revolt or successors that leave them buried in ignominy.
  3. The emphasis – by content in this chapter so far and *ruling over another* – is civil rulers.
- B. What is the *vanity* here? That God-ordained authority for good may be corrupted by sinners.
  1. The men buried here, who were thrown out of the holy, who were forgotten, are rulers.
  2. They were guilty of having *so done*, which is reference to the criminal conduct in 8:9,11.
  3. God created their offices for the public good and for their honor, but they corrupted both.
- C. What is leaving *the place of the holy* here? It is the sanctified place and throne of judgment.
  1. Civil rulers are ordained of God, which makes them ministers of God for good (Ro 13:4).
  2. God calls them gods, so their office is holy (Ex 22:28; Ps 82:1-8; 138:1; John 10:34-35).
  3. The divine right of kings implies they do holy work for God (Rom 13:1-7; II Chr 19:6).

***11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.***

- A. Is this a direct statement of political righteousness, or a description of God's longsuffering?
  - 1. The emphasis – by content in this chapter so far and *ruling over another* – is civil rulers.
  - 2. However, the application to rulers certainly provides a general rule by greater to lesser.
  - 3. Solomon's overriding theme everywhere is God's providence that is unknown to men.
  - 4. Therefore, God may withhold speedy judgment, which results in their even greater sins.
  - 5. And is not this proven by scripture in general and with rulers (Ps 50:16-23; Daniel 4:17).
  - 6. The lesson here must include God's longsuffering of evil men due to the next verses.
- B. However, there is also the practical rule that applies politically and in all spheres of authority.
  - 1. If punishment is not executed speedily, men are comforted and hardened in their crimes.
  - 2. Punishment and severe punishment, especially capital punishment – the sword, are indeed deterrents to crime, regardless of what modern soothsayers say to the contrary.
  - 3. If a man in authority allows an inch to a man under his authority, he will soon take a foot.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #38: *God's Judgment Is Slow but Certain* \*\*\*\*\*

***12 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:***

- A. The relative long life of the wicked does not alter the certain success of those that fear God.
  - 1. It is common for those that fear God to envy the wicked and question their faith (Ps 73).
  - 2. The rule that those who fear God will succeed all others is not to be forgotten (Eccl 7:18).
  - 3. In spite of the longsuffering and mercy of God to a sinner, the fear of God is still the best.
  - 4. Do not envy the wicked, no matter how they appear to prosper (Prov 3:31-35; 23:17-18).
- B. There are not only blessings in this life unknown to the world for the man who fears God, but he shall also awaken with God's likeness in the next world with eternal life.
- C. The lesson here is practical and valuable; if you see sinners *getting away with sin 100 times*, the end of that man is death in many ways (Pr 14:12), and the end of the righteous is life.

***13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.***

- A. God will judge wicked men, no matter rank; be not deceived – a man will reap what he sows.
- B. In distinction to the well-being of men who fear God above, it shall not be well with sinners.
- C. The general rule, not the absolute rule, is that sinners do not live as long as the righteous live.
- D. No matter the days he has, they are brief as a shadow, and then he goes to the grave and hell.
- E. The fear of God is the great dividing factor of men, which must not be forgotten (Eccl 7:18).
  - 1. For more about the fear of the LORD ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/god/fear-of-the-lord/sermon.php>
  - 2. For more about the gift of eternal life ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/eternal-life-is-a-gift.pdf>

**14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.**

- A. Remember the purpose of the book – life under the sun only is very vain and vexing to man.
  - 1. Solomon had declared this rule – life does not seem to treat men as it should (Eccl 7:15).
  - 2. Solomon will again declare this rule – life does not treat men as it should (Eccl 9:1-3).
  - 3. Natural man is confounded by seeing circumstances of life – they may not confirm truth.
  - 4. From a natural viewpoint under the sun, it is vain to see uncertain, varying circumstances.
- B. It is certainly not vanity to be a just man; it is certainly not wise to be wicked (Eccl 8:12-13).
- C. The vanity is God’s sovereignty in disposing of His providence in the affairs of men’s lives.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #39: Repetition of Remedy for Earthly Vanity \*\*\*\*\*

**15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.**

- A. Solomon, while repeatedly showing the vanity of human life, repeated his simple remedy.
  - 1. Misunderstanding his repeated maxim here causes some to slander him as an epicurean.
  - 2. He has stated it repeatedly in his lessons of vanity (Ec 2:24; 3:12-13,22; 5:18-20; 9:7-10).
  - 3. Furthermore, he always corrects any slanderous thoughts by invoking it as God’s gift.
  - 4. Paul, the most sober and spiritual Christian ever, confirmed this epicurean (I Tim 6:17)!
- B. From a natural viewpoint, leaving spiritual interests to other places, mirth and pleasure help.
  - 1. Mirth here is the moderate pursuit of comfort, pleasure, and ease by the fruits of labor.
  - 2. Mirth is not Hollywood, sin, or evil worldly pleasures of fornication and lasciviousness.
  - 3. *No better thing* is subordinate to fearing God, which he declared (Eccl 3:14; 7:18; 8:12).
  - 4. The man that learns this verse will have a continual feast, and it will show (Pr 15:13,15).
- C. Under the sun is apart from and secondary to setting affection on things above (Ec 12:13-14).
  - 1. There is another portion for a Christian, which is above the sun (Col 3:1-4; I Jn 2:15-17).
  - 2. We must avoid two ditches or extremes – (a) lascivious excess of frivolity and sinful reveling and (b) a monastic, puritanical approach to life that denies fleshly pleasures.
  - 3. This text does not militate or mitigate against the true rule of holiness in both testaments.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #40: The Inscrutability of God’s Providence \*\*\*\*\*

**16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)**

- A. *When I applied mine heart to know wisdom ...* describes His pursuit of a perfect philosophy.
  - 1. From the beginning of this book, Solomon has described His pursuit of profitable living.
  - 2. He stated priority and purpose of his life repeatedly (Ec 1:3,13,16-18; 7:23-25; 8:9; etc.).
  - 3. He sought out man’s purpose under the sun and how he should live for maximum benefit.
  - 4. Since he sought to teach the people knowledge, he shared his conclusions (Ec 12:8-14).

5. The consequence or failure of his search is clearly and emphatically in the next verse.
- B. *And to see the business that is done upon the earth ...* was His pursuit of understanding life.
  1. What is business here? It is the activities and effects of human activity under God's rule.
  2. He sought to know why things happen the way they do to men under God's providence.
  3. All human effort is either halted, hindered, used, or enhanced by the providence of God.
- C. *(For also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes) ...* is fretting insomnia.
  1. Here we have a certain person or kind of person indicated by *that* (Pr 11:24; 12:18; 13:7).
  2. This person cannot find rest during the daytime; he cannot find sleep during the night.
  3. It could be Solomon, who separated himself to the pursuit of wisdom (Pr 18:1), and who by this language modestly refers to himself, as did Paul about his visions (II Cor 12:1-7).
  4. It could be foolish men so in love with riches they cannot sleep (Ec 2:22-24; 4:7-8; 5:12).
  5. But rather, the clause describes those men who are obsessed to find out and understand life and God's providence – philosophers good and bad, as in the next verse (Eccl 8:17).
  6. What does *also* mean? Solomon described others distinct from him who *also* pursue wisdom and earthly with great and obsessive efforts: philosophers, official and unofficial.
  7. They are always restless, for they cannot by any means discover God's work (Eccl 8:17).
  8. Righteous and wise men are safely in the hand of God (Eccl 9:1), and they should not seek to be over wise and figure out His secret operations in the affairs of man (Eccl 7:16).
  9. Wisdom is to learn God's secret things are secret; He has given you plenty (Deut 29:29).
  10. The cure is to relax and live carefree, for God will do the rest (Psalm 127:1-2; Phil 4:6-7).
  11. The Preacher taught elsewhere that a man may devise and God will dispose (Pr 16:9,33).
  12. The cure stated over and over is to eat, drink, and enjoy life, including sleep (Eccl 8:15).

***17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.***

- A. *Then I beheld all the work of God ...* describes God's providential dealings in human history.
  1. This verse ends a long sentence beginning in 8:16 about Solomon's pursuit of knowledge.
  2. Solomon sought to learn the origin, profit, purpose, factors, and end of all human activity.
  3. He concluded that God Himself has a greater role than man in all activities and events.
  4. God's providence is the single greatest factor affecting His creatures, especially men.
  5. Kings and nations are raised up and dashed down without any purpose obvious to man.
  6. Some efforts work and men prosper, and similar efforts do not work and poverty results.
  7. Men are born with or without ability, with or without opportunity, prosper greatly, suffer greatly, die young, live long, have stretches of adversity or prosperity, etc., etc., etc.
  8. The work of God is what God does in the affairs of men – we are not Deists that presume He created us and sat back to watch from a distance what we would do as creatures.
  9. We do not believe He is *watching from a distance*, as sung by some profane unbelievers.
  10. We believe God is actively working up close and personal near all men (Acts 17:24-28).
- B. *That a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun ...* is His secret providence.
  1. God's secret things are done daily in the world, and we are not to seek them (De 29:29).
  2. We are not to seek to know them, and only God knows them (Deut 29:29; Mark 13:32).
  3. Even if we were to seek to find out God's work, we would not be able to do so, as below.
  4. Man cannot find out what God has done, is doing, or will do, for they are far beyond him.
  5. Man cannot discover his own death, which is rather individual and personal (Eccl 8:7-8)

6. The only knowledge of God's work that can be known is by direct inspiration or found in the Bible (Gen 41:25,28; Dan 2:20-23; Amos 3:6-8; John 14:29; Rev 1:1; etc.).
  7. The response to God's secret work is humble submission and repentance (Lam 3:37-41).
  8. The pursuit of any plan must be subordinate to the will of God for even life (Jas 4:13-15).
- C. *Because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it ... it is truly inscrutable.*
1. This clause describes the efforts of an ordinary man to discover God's secret operations.
  2. This clause describes the extraordinary effort – *the labour* – of a man to discover them.
  3. There is no library, teacher, or wise man that others may consult to know God's work.
  4. Revelation is the only source of knowing God's work, and He only reveals a little of it.
  5. God is great, greatly to be praised, and His greatness unsearchable – even providence.
- D. *Yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it ... above.*
1. This clause describes the efforts of an extraordinary man to discover God's secret work.
  2. This clause describes the ordinary presumption of such a wise man that he can know it.
  3. It is this man's inability, even an extraordinary man, a wise man, that hinders his effort.
  4. Solomon, the wisest man ever, could not go far in discovering God's secret operations.
  5. God only, no angels or even Jesus, and especially no heathen gods, is able to know what He will do and forecast the future (Isaiah 41: 21-24; 44:6-8; 46:9-11; 45:20-21; etc.).
- E. This uncertainty about life could drive a man crazy ... but there is a righteous response to it.
1. We fear the God Who created us and rules our lives (Ec 3:14; 12:13; Is 64:8; Deut 32:6).
  2. We keep His commandments and hate evil, which is His fear (Ps 111:9; 112:1; Pr 8:13).
  3. We live in subject to Him as Sovereign and in light of His omniscience (Psalm 50:16-23).
  4. We moderately use things He gives and allows for enjoyment (Ec 8:15; I Tim 6:17-19).
  5. We do not inquire, question, or resent God's work (Pr 19:3; Isaiah 8:16-22; Rev 16:9-11).
  6. The Serenity Prayer is quite fitting, which puts each player in his proper place for peace.
  7. We read the New Testament to know that it gets much better – we are the sons of God.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 9

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #41: God's Providence Ignores Character or Conduct \*\*\*\*\*

***1 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.***

A. *For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this.*

1. Solomon introduced a new lesson in philosophy and wisdom that he was about to present.
2. God raised up an exceptionally gifted man to observe and analyze and then teach us truth.
3. He observed many things, considered them in his heart, and then gave inspired lessons.
4. God moved Solomon to declare inspired truth by preaching (Ec 1:1-2,12; 7:27; 12:8-11).
5. Here is another use of the demonstrative pronoun *this* for context coming (Ec 7:23; 8:9).

B. *That the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God.*

1. Read very carefully (and rejoice!) that fools, sinners, and the wicked are exempted here.
2. Here is an axiom of life that the righteous should lay hold of and never let go, not ever.
3. The righteous and the wise are known and cared for by God their Father (Matt 10:29-31).
4. God also knows the works of the righteous and wise (Mal 3:16-18; I Ti 5:25; Heb 6:10).
5. Rich saints can count on willing hearts being remembered at judgment (I Tim 6:17-19).
6. Poor saints can count on small kindnesses remembered at judgment (Matthew 25:31-46).
7. Hagar knew this wonderful lesson, when she was hopeless and in dire straits (Gen 16:13).
8. Consider the unique expression that Abigail used to describe David's life (I Sam 25:29).
9. Regardless of circumstances, the righteous and wise must remember this, no matter what.
10. To be in God's hand, short of Jesus' use of it for salvation (Jn 10:28-29), is very glorious.
11. Therefore, to envy sinners for life circumstances as will be shown, ignores this lesson.
12. You measure by other things to know He loves you – grace, faith, love, service to Christ.

C. *No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.*

1. God's love of His elect children cannot be known by only observing life circumstances.
2. God's hatred of reprobates cannot be known either by only observing life circumstances.
3. *No man knoweth* either God's love or hatred of a man by only observing circumstances.
4. A wise man may think to know it, but neither effort or intelligence will learn it (Ec 8:17).
5. The things *before them* are the things right in front of men that can be viewed with eyes.
6. God loves His elect children, but He sends them evil events for His glory and their profit.
7. God hates reprobates, but He may send them good events for His glory and their reproof.
8. God sends sunshine, rain, and fruitful seasons of joy to all men (Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17).
9. It is the ignorance of a fool that sees a man favored and says, "He must be living right."
10. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were guilty of such ignorance (Job 32:1-22; 33:12; 42:7-9).
11. Overall circumstances here do not deny God's blessings for obedience (Eph 6:2-3, etc.).
12. Why Bad Things Happen to Christians ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/why-bad-things-happen.pdf>.

**2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.**

*All things come alike to all.*

1. The *all things* here must be limited to those natural events of natural life under the sun.
  2. It is the *all that is before them* of the previous verse, which are natural things easily seen.
  3. Overall circumstances here do not deny God's blessings for obedience (Eph 6:2-3, etc.).
  4. God's spiritual blessings in Christ – five phases of salvation – do not come to reprobates.
  5. Birth marks and defects, accidents, floods, pain, pleasure, business failures, sickness, wars, marital trouble, car trouble, storms, political folly, honor, dishonor, rebellious children, death, unjust firing, theft, mourning, business profit, sickness, etc. come to all.
  6. Anything you can think of that is part of natural life under the sun affects all men equally.
- B. *There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ...*
1. We do not limit this one event to any single event or to death, for Solomon had already stated that he is declaring *all that is before them* (9:1) and *all things* (9:2), not just one.
  2. The same life events that happen to the righteous also happen to the wicked is the sense.
  3. The overall providence of life events does not discriminate between good and bad men
  4. Five contrasting comparisons show character and conduct do not determine providence.
  5. Righteousness is doing what is right in God's sight, while wickedness is the evil opposite.
  6. A good man that is clean before God has no unconfessed sin, but the unclean are guilty.
  7. Wicked men swear foolishly (Ec 5:1-7), but righteous men are careful and pay (Ps 15:4).
  8. The man who sacrifices worships God at his own and proper cost, but the other refuses.
  9. This is a generalization of overall life circumstances, not specific blessings for obedience.
  10. A man who honors his parents will have a long life contrasted to the man that does not.
- C. *As is the good, so is the sinner ...*
1. The good man and the sinful man are only alike in their natural circumstances of life.
  2. Evil men swear easily and loosely; godly men swear rarely and carefully, and they pay.
  3. The overall providence of life events does not discriminate between good and bad men

**3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.**

A. *This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun.*

1. This is not evil in the sense of sin on God's part, but rather an evil aspect of life's vanity.
  2. God creates evil in life, but it is bad circumstances, not sin (Is 45:7; Jer 18:8; Amos 3:6).
  3. This is evil, or confusion, in the sense of being part of the vanity of life (Eccl 7:15; 8:14).
  4. Considering earthly human existence, it is hard to see good and bad men treated equally.
- B. *That there is one event unto all.*
1. A restatement of 9:2, which intended all life circumstances experienced under the sun.
  2. We do not limit the *one event* to death, for it those things *all that is before them* (Ec 9:1).
  3. We do not limit the *one event* to some specific occurrence, due to the *all things* of 9:2.
  4. Death is only specifically introduced at the end of the text; it is not the *one event* here.
  5. This is vanity, or confusion, in the sense of being part of the vanity of life (Eccl 2:14-15).
- C. *Yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil ...*
1. Not only is similarity of life circumstances vanity to wise men, but it *also* blinds fools.

2. Because wicked men see no natural reason to reform, their depraved hearts feed on sin.
  3. They have no regard for God or the supernatural, for they see no real reason to do so.
  4. They have no regard for the spiritual, for they see no natural advantage or benefit in it.
  5. They live the lives of madmen, for such reasoning is as narrow and stupid as a fool.
  6. God has not revealed His truth by discriminating in overall life circumstances on earth.
  7. But God has revealed truth by creation, providential kindness, conscience, and scripture.
  8. The prosperity of fools, the success of other sinners, deceives them to folly (Prov 1:32).
  9. God has set the world in their hearts, eyes, and thoughts, which blinds them (Eccl 3:11).
- D. *And after that they go to the dead.*
1. As in Psalm 49, they do not think about death, the end of this life, and their return to God.
  2. Their evil madness has an end, and any natural arrogance or pleasure they had due to it.
  3. Death is the complete cessation of all aspects of natural life, as 9:4-6 will now explain.

\*\*\*\*\* *Lesson #42: Life Itself has Hope for Pleasure* \*\*\*\*\*

#### ***4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.***

##### *A. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope.*

1. Since men live with comparable circumstances and then die (Eccl 9:1-3), life has hope.
  - a. Before going to the dead (Ec 9:3), make sure you embrace all that life does offer you.
  - b. Do not let the vanity of comparable circumstances steal the opportunities of your life.
  - c. Rather than complain, fret, worry, or explore life's vanity, change your life for good.
2. Solomon's lesson here is related to what went before (Ec 8:15) and follows (Ec 9:7-10).
  - a. How do men respond to apparent random circumstances (Ec 9:1-3)? Search yourself.
  - b. Curious men waste days and nights in misery trying to figure it out (Ec 8:6-8,16-17).
  - c. Wicked men set themselves in evil, presuming there is no reward (Ec 8:12-14; 9:1-3).
  - d. Righteous men fear God and submit to His given will (Eccl 7:16-18; 8:12; 12:13-14).
  - e. Seemingly random circumstances should lead to daily joy in God's hand (Eccl 9:1-3).
  - f. No man can figure out God's providence in life, so do not try to do so (Eccl 8:16-17).
  - g. No man knows the future to any degree whatsoever, so enjoy each day (Eccl 8:6-8).
  - h. A response to vanity of life is easy – eat, drink, and be merry (Eccl 8:15; 9:7-10, etc.).
3. There is hope natural, for death is the end of all natural hope. This is the emphasis here.
4. There is hope spiritual, for life allows a man to humble himself to God in spirit and soul.
5. There is hope eternal, for life allows men to reconcile to God and lay hold of eternal life.
6. Solomon did not teach about life in heaven in Ecclesiastes, so limit the text to the natural.

##### *B. For a living dog is better than a dead lion.*

1. How is a living dog better than a dead lion, if a living lion is far better than a living dog?
  - a. Death makes all the difference; life has hope, for things change; death is final ruin.
  - b. This is a proverb teaching the wisdom of the first clause – there is hope for any living.
  - c. A lion, when alive is glorious, regal, and powerful, but when dead is nothing at all.
  - d. A dog, dirty and vile in many ways, is more useful for any matter than a dead lion.
  - e. The comparison of lions and dogs is not close, though dog lovers cannot grasp it.
  - f. It is God's providential blessings or curses that make dogs or lions, not their choice.
2. Suicide is stupid, for most do it by hopelessness, when staying alive is their only hope.
  - a. Suicide is murder. If you take your life or another's life, you kill life that God gave.
  - b. Most commit suicide to "end the pain and hopelessness," but then they meet God.

- c. Things may improve tomorrow, but you cannot know by cutting your wrists today.
- 3. There is always hope ... until the baby dies ... as with David and son (II Sam 12:22-23).
  - a. But with God's power, even dead babies may come back to life (II Kings 4:36-37).
  - b. But if they do not come back to life, God can give better babies (II Sam 12:24-25).
  - c. Human perspective is so limited that we cannot see tomorrow, so love life today.

**5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.**

- A. Because the living know they shall die, they also know there is cause for hope, joy, change.
  - 1. Remember, a living dog is better than a dead lion; any man is far better than a living dog.
  - 2. Hopelessness of overall life circumstances from 9:1-3 does not mean life cannot be good.
  - 3. While you have life – before you die – take advantage of God's providence and remedies.
- B. Because the living know they shall die, they should use their lives well and wisely every day.
  - 1. Since life is short, and death is certain, every day should be used to its fullest advantage.
  - 2. Since life is short, and death is certain, saints should pursue wisdom diligently (Ps 90:12).
  - 3. Since life is short and death certain, saints should live in light of judgment (Ec 12:13-14).
- C. Once death strikes, from which there is no discharge (Ec 8:8), there is no more earthly life.
  - 1. If there is no further natural reward after death, then each day should include its reward.
  - 2. As Solomon taught next, you may choose to enjoy life daily before death takes joy away.
  - 3. Get yourself a large wall clock; do not let a day, hour, or minute pass in willful vanity.
- D. Death is terrible – the dead lose all earthly knowledge or privilege – everyone forgets them.
  - 1. *The dead know not anything* ... is simply and only from the natural analysis of Solomon.
  - 2. The dead know God's existence and His eternal rewards perfectly one second after death.
  - 3. Phrases like this in the Bible only intend the human body and its natural life on the earth.
  - 4. Heretics pervert passages like this for soul sleep, since they fail to divide body and spirit.
  - 5. There is nothing in this verse to alter total spirit-knowledge after death (Luke 16:22-25).
- E. Death is terrible – there is no more reward for all the labor, travail, and vanity life brings.
  - 1. Who in the world would quit a job before payday? Which is what life without joy does!
  - 2. While alive, before death removes opportunity for reward, pay yourself some joy today.
  - 3. Life is not bad once you see God's hand in vanity; eat, drink, love, and work (Ec 9:7-10).
  - 4. There is nothing in this verse to alter total eternal rewards after death (Luke 16:22-25).
- F. Death is terrible – everyone that you enjoy and love so much today will totally forget you.
  - 1. Therefore, if you have family and friends and brethren that you love, enjoy them today.
  - 2. Therefore, since your spouse will forget you and may marry another, love them today.
  - 3. Cemeteries are full of men, women, youth, and children that are fully forgotten in reality.
  - 4. There is nothing in this verse to alter conscious affection after death (Luke 16:22-25).

**6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.**

- A. Solomon continued a terrible description of death to get you to appreciate your present life.
  - 1. In this verse, *their* is dead of all kinds of 9:5. There is no righteous or wicked difference.
  - 2. All aspects of natural life – good and bad – are ended completely at the moment of death.
  - 3. *Love* ... and all its passion, pleasure, and profit ... is abruptly and totally ended at death.
  - 4. *Hatred* ... against or from enemies to cause anger or fear ... cannot be altered after death.
  - 5. *Envy* ... for advantages of others ... cannot be enjoyed, ignored, or remedied after death.
  - 6. There is nothing in this verse to alter our conscious emotions after death (I Cor 13:8,13).
  - 7. There is every reason for you today to love all you should and end all negative emotions.

- B. Death cuts off all opportunities for a portion or reward for the labor of life on this vain earth.
  1. Life is hard, since we chose pain, sorrow, and travail in Eden, so we need a kind reward.
  2. Life is short, since we chose death in Eden, to today, not tomorrow, is time for a reward.
  3. Therefore, since life is short and death sure, today is time to love and find joy and peace.
  4. There is hope in life (Ec 9:4), so use the opportunity and privilege for moderate pleasure.
  5. Get yourself a large wall clock; do not let a day, hour, or minute pass in willful vexation.
  6. Consider all relationships and their potential ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/relationships-chart.pdf>.
- C. Solomon has a frequent remedy (Ec 9:7-10 from 2:24; 3:12-13,22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 11:9; 12:1).

\*\*\*\*\* *Lesson #43: Love and Live with Joy and Zeal* \*\*\*\*\*

***7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.***

- A. *Go thy way.*
  1. There is a remedy to vanity and vexation of short life and certain death; embrace the cure.
  2. Rather than foolish hopelessness or frustration of most, wise men will take another path.
  3. Rather than foolish curiosity about God's providence, wise men live over circumstances.
  4. The remedy is easily within reach of every person; do not waste one more minute of life.
  5. Natural philosophy declares life is short and death is both certain and final; embrace life.
  6. Get yourself a large wall clock; do not let a day, hour, or minute pass in willful vexation.
  7. Simple pleasures of food, drink, relationships, and work are to be embraced and enjoyed.
- B. *Eat thy bread with joy.*
  1. Bread is synecdoche for all kinds of food. Bread is cheap, as all food in America is cheap.
  2. God allows and encourages creativity with culinary lusts (Deut 14:26; II Samuel 6:19).
  3. Eating good food with gladness for abundance from God is good (Deut 28:47; Acts 2:46).
  4. Mirth feasts were part of religious life under both testaments (Neh 8:10-12; Jude 1:12).
  5. There is the bread of sorrow, which we are to avoid by resting in the LORD (Ps 127:1-2).
  6. If it is *thy* bread, then any embezzlement, extortion, or theft is excluded and condemned.
  7. If it is *thy bread*, then luxurious excess or gluttonous excess is excluded and condemned.
- C. *And drink thy wine with a merry heart.*
  1. God made wine to make men's hearts glad, but good men start out glad (Ps 104:14-15).
  2. God allows and endorses wine and strong drink for pleasure in His worship (Deut 14:26).
  3. Rather than drink wine for a heavy heart, drink wine with a cheerful heart (Prov 31:6-7).
  4. There are times to drink to heal a heavy heart, but it is better to drink with joy (Ec 10:19).
  5. No matter what the fare, the man with a merry heart has a continual feast (Pr 15:13,15).
- D. *For God now accepteth thy works.*
  1. Though Solomon wrote *about* the wicked, even in context, he wrote *to* the righteous only.
  2. Solomon's audience, like other scripture, is God's children (Eccl 12:9-11; Ps 147:19-20).
  3. God does not accept lives of the wicked, no matter how lived (Prov 21:4; Titus 1:15-16).
  4. Moderate pleasure for vanity and vexation is His gift (Ec 2:24; 3:13; 5:18-20; 6:2; 8:15).
  5. Long before Judgment Day, God accepts your moderate obedience to Him (Ec 7:18-22).
  6. The health to eat ... the wealth to purchase it ... the grace to enjoy it ... are all from God.
  7. Cheerful submission to God's will in fear of the LORD is approved by God (Ec 8:12-15).
  8. Trusting God's providence, knowing you are in his hand, is good and acceptable (Ec 9:1).
  9. Admitting you do not know His secret will is pleasing to God (Eccl 8:16-17; Deut 29:29).
  10. Living one day at a time is God's acceptable choice for approach to life (Psalm 127:1-2).

E. For more considerations about living with mirth ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/cause-for-mirth.pdf>.

### **8 *Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.***

A. *Let thy garments be always white.*

1. Sackcloth is not white. Sackcloth and ashes are dark and dirty. This here is the opposite.
2. White garments are bright and cheerful, rather than mournful or merely professional.
3. The white garments here are synecdoche for all things cheerful and pleasant of any kind.
4. Rather than dressing for a funeral (or living like going to one), choose to be cheerful.
5. If a merry heart leads to a continual feast (Pr 15:15), then why not dress for this feast.

B. *And let thy head lack no ointment.*

1. In the dry region where Solomon lived, ointment provided moisture to skin (Ps 104:15).
2. Many ointments were also aromatic, thus a pleasant thing (Eccl 10:1; Ps 45:7; Song 1:3).
3. Think of Jesus having head and feet anointed with precious ointment (Luke 7:36-50).
4. David described the anointing oil on Aaron's head and running down as good (Ps 133:2).
5. The effort and expense for this bodily treatment is endorsed by God for your pleasure.

### **9 *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.***

A. *Live joyfully with the wife.*

1. It is not good for the man to be alone; marriage is a great blessing (Gen 2:18; Ruth 3:1).
2. A wife is a very good thing and great gift from God (Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-31).
3. He defined marital sexual pleasure (Prov 5:19); his love Song detailed passionate love.
4. Life is short! If you follow the context (Eccl 9:4-6), marital bitterness is folly (Col 3:19).
5. This is an obvious singular noun for monogamy (Mal 2:15; Gen 2:21-25; Matt 19:4-5).
6. This is in stark contrast to his failed experiment with a thousand wives (Eccl 7:19-26).
7. Though he had 1000 princess wives, his heart still craved a loving, loyal companion.
8. For ideas on how to measure your marriage ... <https://letgodbetrue.com/pdf/measure-your-marriage.pdf>.

B. *Whom thou lovest.*

1. Love is a command, not an option; God tells you exactly how to do it (Pr 5:19; Col 3:19).
2. The general rule is that men always marry a wife that they loved, so make sure to do it.
3. If your marriage is not all that it should be, it is your fault ... for you are not loving her.
4. If your marriage is not all that it should be, it is your fault ... for women are responders.
5. Men cannot avoid oversight by being unwilling – they must become willing (I Pet 5:2).
6. Men cannot avoid giving by begrudging it – they must become cheerful (II Cor 9:7).
7. You promised you would always love her before many witnesses of all kinds, so do it.

C. *All the days of the life of thy vanity.*

1. Marriage is a permanent relationship of companionship, not a temporary arrangement.
2. Marriage with the wife of your choice, cultivated and nourished, gives lifelong pleasure.
3. All the benefits of two are better than one are certainly realized in marriage (Ec 4:9-12).
4. Vanity is human existence under the sun, for the reasons already specified in this book.
5. Women outlive men by a few years, so most men have their wife beside them at death.
6. Men usually marry women younger than themselves, so their wife is with them at death.
7. Death continues to be the context and situation here to maximize marriage (Ec 9:4-6,10).

D. *Which he hath given thee under the sun.*

1. That which God hath given here is a wife, not the days of vanity, by virtue of the *portion*.
2. God made the woman without clothes; invented marriage; introduced them (Gen 2:17).

3. God created, prepared, and sent your particular spouse (Gen 18:22; 19:14; Gen 24:1-67).
  4. He had the residue of the spirit of women, but he made one woman for Adam (Mal 2:15).
  5. God is the magnificent Matchmaker ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/magnificent-matchmaker.pdf>.
- E. *All the days of thy vanity.*
1. The reminder even here, with talk of the honorable institution of marriage, is of vanity.
  2. There will be no wives or marriage in heaven, so every day with a woman is a blessing.
  3. Death continues to be the context and situation here to maximize marriage (Ec 9:4-6,10).
  4. Even though life is vain and vexing, marriage to a good woman overcomes much of it.
- F. *For that is thy portion in this life.*
1. Marriage to a good woman is a great portion in this life ... a very great earthly blessing.
  2. There is great fulfillment in a happy marriage by sharing life together in companionship.
  3. It was not good for Adam to be alone, not even in Eden, so God gave him Eve (Ge 2:18).
  4. The lies of Catholicism and others are from the devil himself (I Tim 4:1-3; Col 2:20-22).
- G. *And in thy labour.*
1. It is easy to go to work in order to share professional blessings and rewards with a wife.
  2. Working hard is easy for a woman's praise and her appreciation for sharing it with her.
  3. Leaving work for a clean and peaceful home, attractive wife, good meal, etc. is fantastic.
  4. We have the means for phone calls, emails, texts, or sexts to stay in touch with a wife.
- H. *Which thou takest under the sun.*
1. This is under the sun – earthly existence – for a woman as wife is for this life here only.
  2. There are no women, wives, or marriage in heaven, not matter how appropriate you think.
  3. Though marriage is good, a wise man looks above and beyond the sun to better things.

***10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.***

- A. Zeal in professional labor – whether employment or a business – is a privilege to appreciate.
1. Zeal in all things is good – *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do* – not just jobs (Gal 4:18).
  2. Jehu was zealous in what God assigned him, and God praised him for it (II Kings 10:30).
  3. Spiritual things especially deserve diligence (Heb 6:10-11; II Peter 1:5-11; II Peter 3:14).
  4. This is not just a simple rule to get ahead that he taught elsewhere (Pr 12:24; 22:29 etc.).
  5. This is a remedy for defeating the vanity and vexation of earthly life's labor and travail.
  6. This condemns those who foolishly look at work as a curse and something to be avoided.
  7. Enjoying life requires maximizing a good job, for it uses your abilities and rewards them.
  8. Death continues to be the context and situation here to maximize marriage (Ec 9:4-6,10).
  9. Zeal is not just for great men, though all great men have much zeal (Ro 12:11; Gal 4:18).
  10. Diligence and passion to pursue excellence is a good thing to be embraced and enjoyed.
  11. Hard work is its own reward, and a job well done has subjective blessings for its owners.
  12. Diligence brings honor, praise, reward, and wealth (Pr 10:4; 12:24; 13:4; 21:20; 22:29).
  13. Taking care of your sponsor in a job results in eating from his fig tree (Pr 27:18; 17:2).
  14. Proverbs is full of Solomon's warnings for diligence and against sloth (Prov 6:6-11; etc.).
  15. Solomon also attacked idleness and sloth in the next chapter of this book (Eccl 10:18).
  16. Finding the perfect job is not as important as doing perfect work at your imperfect job.
  17. If Christian men followed this wise advice, they would be happy, healthy, and wealthy.
  18. Young foolish men dread work, but older men wish they had youthful strength for work.
  19. Bad work habits from parents, teachers, or peers must be rejected for godly philosophy.
  20. This is an important part of godly wisdom – finding fulfillment in life here under the sun.
  21. Solomon wrote mainly to boys and men, but the lesson also applies to girls and women.

22. The greatest practical trait of the virtuous woman is diligence by far (Proverbs 31:10-31).
  23. They do not have time to waste on the phone, on social media, surfing the Internet, etc.
  24. For much more about a Christian work ethic ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-work-ethic.pdf>.
  25. For more about getting ahead on the job ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/getting-ahead-on-the-job.pdf>.
- B. The reason for this rule for a happy and fulfilled life is the lack of all opportunity after death.
1. This is not just a simple rule to get ahead that he taught elsewhere (Pr 12:24; 22:29 etc.).
  2. This is a remedy for defeating the vanity and vexation of earthly life's labor and travail.
  3. Death ends all the opportunities and privileges of hard work and its many varied rewards.
  4. Therefore, along with other aspects of Solomon's remedy, make sure you love your job.
  5. All the things you can do, enjoy, and profit from during life will completely end at death.
  6. While hard to fully appreciate this negative aspect of death – no more work – it is true.
  7. Only by learning this lesson and embracing this lesson can you triumph over life's vanity.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #44: Providence Trumps Ability and Effort \*\*\*\*\*

***11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.***

C. *I returned, and saw under the sun.*

1. Solomon used *return* here to describe further exploration of man's earthly life (Ec 4:1,7).
2. Having dealt with the cure and remedy for man's life of vanity, he proceeded further.
3. He observed another vanity that causes vexation, for ability nor effort guarantee results.
4. A man may apply himself with great effort, but he may not meet with success (Ec 9:10).
5. Time and chance, which are under God's governing providence, control all outcomes.
6. He used five examples of this phenomenon to make sure you accept this universal rule.
7. Circumstances of life often have more to do with success or failure than ability or effort.
8. Ability and effort may often carry the day, but they fail to do so often enough for vanity.

B. *That the race is not to the swift.*

1. We intuitively believe and declare that a swift man will win a race over a slower man.
2. There are countless factors from loss of desire to death and all between that alter results.
3. Why do they run races at the Olympics? Because there are upsets of many race favorites.
4. Poor Jim Ryun, a Christian, lost two Olympic 1500 races though the prohibitive favorite.
5. Buster Douglas knocked out Mike Tyson in Japan in 1990. Buster who? He won anyway.

C. *Nor the battle to the strong.*

1. We intuitively believe and declare that strong army will always defeat a weaker army.
2. There are countless factors from mutiny to pestilence all between them that alter results.
3. History has many examples of smaller, weaker forces defeating larger, stronger forces.
4. Consider the numbers and might of the adversaries and outcome of Dunkirk and Midway.

D. *Neither yet bread to the wise.*

1. We intuitively believe and declare that a wise farmer will use his land for superb yields.
2. There are countless factors from sickness to weather to theft to prices that alter results.
3. Farming is a very risky business at times, thus a prayer, *Give us this day our daily bread.*

E. *Nor yet riches to men of understanding.*

1. We intuitively believe and declare that wise men will financially prosper and have plenty.
2. There are countless factors from sickness to lawsuits to taxation that can alter his results.

3. If this were not the case, then there would be no need for estate planning, insurance, etc.
- F. *Nor yet favour to men of skill.*
1. We intuitively believe and declare that gifted and skillful men will be promoted by others.
  2. There are factors outside their control like politics or sabotage that greatly alter results.
  3. Joseph was very skillful, and Potiphar knew it, but his wife falsely accused him to prison.
- G. *But time and chance happeneth to them all.*
1. *Time and chance* is God's governing providence over factors in life (Eccl 3:1-15; 8:6,9).
  2. All *times* of every life and every event are in the hands of our sovereign God (Ps 31:15).
  3. The *chance* of every life and event is *chance* only as it appears to men forgetting God.
  4. Men think the time and chance of events is random, but God governs all (Prov 16:33).
  5. This cannot annul the general rule that the race is to the swift, the battle to the strong, etc.
  6. The lesson is that outside factors affect results enough to hurt confidence and planning.
  7. The lesson? We devise a way in our heart, and we trust the Lord to direct steps (Pr 16:9).
  8. The lesson? We do not envy the wicked when they surpass us; it is God's will for them.
  9. The lesson? We do not envy our brethren when they surpass us; we rejoice in God's will.
  10. The lesson? We are not frustrated by lack of success, if we gave our reasonable best.
  11. The lesson? We give thanks to God for every success, for He could easily have hindered.
  12. The lesson? We submit each plan to God's will, for we do not know much (Jas 4:13-15).
  13. The lesson? The ablest should not boast or presume, even of tomorrow's results (Pr 27:1).
  14. The lesson? The inferior or weak should not despair, for God can make up the difference.
  15. The lesson? Time and chance that affect outcomes is not Fate, but rather your fine Father.
  16. The lesson? All your works are in the hand of God to dispose of as He sees best (Ec 9:1).
  17. The lesson? We do our reasonable best, trust Him for the rest, and go to bed (Ps 127:1-2).
  18. For more about God ruling chance events ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/16\\_33.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/16_33.php).
  19. For more about how to operate under God ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/16\\_09.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/16_09.php).
  20. For all about the sovereignty of God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.

***12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.***

- A. *For man also knoweth not his time.*
1. The *time* used here is the *time* Solomon had explained (Ec 9:11): God's time affecting us.
  2. Not only does God's rule of *time and chance* affect all outcomes; man cannot know it.
  3. There is a time for everything in your life, and you are dependent on God's timing for it.
  4. A certain rich man was so sure of long life and success that he drew up a plan ... in vain.
- B. *As the fishes that are taken in an evil net.*
1. How are men like *fish*? They cannot see the coming trouble more than a fish does the net.
  2. Why is it called an *evil net*? Because it is not for the fish's good, but its trouble and ruin.
  3. *Evil* in the Bible need not mean iniquity or sin, but rather trouble (Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6).
  4. Men are caught by God's government of all outside circumstances and factors like fish.
- C. *And as the birds that are caught in the snare.*
1. How are men like *birds*? They cannot see coming pain more than a bird a snare (Pr 1:17).
  2. Why is it not called an *evil snare*? Because you know it is evil from the fish illustration.
  3. *Evil* in the Bible need not mean iniquity or sin, but rather trouble (Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6).
  4. Men are caught by God's government of all outside circumstances and factors like birds.
- D. *So are the sons of men snared in an evil time.*
1. *As ... so* in English describes a strong comparison, for men are hurt like fishes and birds.

2. They are caught or snared by outside factors that overwhelm their abilities and/or efforts.
  3. Why is it called an *evil time*? Because it is not for man's good, but his trouble and ruin.
  4. *Evil* in the Bible need not mean iniquity or sin, but rather trouble (Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6).
- E. *When it falleth suddenly upon them.*
1. The evil times that overwhelm human ability and/or effort *fall suddenly* upon all men.
  2. They *fall suddenly* only from man's viewpoint, for God has had it planned from eternity.
  3. Events of time surprise men because they cannot see the future (Eccl 6:12; 8:7-8; 10:14).
  4. A tower fell and killed 18 in Siloam, which they would have avoided if known (Lu 13:4).
  5. If crew and passengers had known, they would not have paid for tickets on the Titanic.
  6. The lesson? We know these evil times come from God, so we submit all plans to Him.
  7. The lesson? We know these evil times come from God, so we worship in pain like Job.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #45: *Natural Wisdom Is Great but Often Neglected* \*\*\*\*\*

**13 *This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:***

- A. *This wisdom have I seen also under the sun.*
1. The demonstrative pronoun *this* points forward to another observation Solomon declared.
  2. The adverb *also* indicates he had left his previous lesson to give a new one (Ec 9:11-12).
  3. By his frequent words – *under the sun* – he reminds us he speaks of human life on earth.
  4. The wisdom that Solomon observed was prudent understanding superior to great strength.
  5. The primary lesson is the superiority of wisdom to strength, but also its shameful neglect.
  6. Wisdom is superior to strength and weapons of war, but most men exalt the latter two.
- B. *And it seemed great unto me.*
1. He considered his observation to be *great* – profound and significant in human existence.
  2. As a wise man, who knew wisdom was superior to folly (Eccl 2:13), he had an opinion.
  3. It was a great discovery to see weak wise men prevail over strong fools, even in battle.
  4. The lesson following exalts wisdom over folly, but also shows wisdom's general neglect.

**14 *There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:***

- A. *There was a little city, and few men within it.*
1. Here is an historical event Solomon had observed or a short parable for the same purpose.
  2. To exalt the glory of wisdom, the adjectives *little* and *few* emphasize the city's weakness.
- B. *And there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.*
1. To exalt the glory of wisdom, the adjective *great* used twice stresses the king's power.
  2. In ordinary military situations such as described, the city would surely be taken in time.
  3. Bulwarks are defensive fortifications or offensive ramps for taking a city as here; English allows both, and the Spirit used both (Deut 20:20; II Chron 26:15; Ps 48:13; Isaiah 26:1).

**15 *Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.***

- A. *Now there was found in it a poor wise man.*
1. That is, a poor wise man was found in the little city that had but a few men within it.
  2. The wise man is poor, obscure in earthly status, even in a small and sparse community.
  3. The wisdom compared and exalted here is natural wisdom to understand prudent action.

4. Due to many circumstances, all by the providence of God, even a wise man may be poor.
  5. But let it be declared once and for all, there is no virtue or wisdom in poverty by itself.
  6. While God calls many poor to eternal life, poverty generally proves slothfulness or waste.
- B. *And he by his wisdom delivered the city.*
1. The poor man, having nothing else to offer but a body, used his wisdom to save his city.
  2. The Bible records a wise woman saving the city of Abel from Joab (II Samuel 20:14-22).
  3. Consider the wise woman Jael, who helped defeat Sisera and his army (Judges 4:17-24).
  4. Consider wise Abigail, who delivered her whole family and household (I Sam 25:32-34).
  5. Solomon will conclude that wisdom is better than strength or war weapons (Ec 9:16,18).
- C. *Yet no man remembered that same poor man.*
1. In spite of saving the city and many lives by wisdom, the poor man was fully forgotten.
  2. The poor and obscure, lacking rank and status, are easily forgotten, no matter how wise.
  3. Joseph foretold the butler's deliverance, but he forgot Joseph (Gen 40:9-15,23; 41:9-13).
  4. Mordecai saved Ahasuerus from assassination, but was forgotten (Esther 2:21-23; 6:1-3).
  5. It is a delusion of mankind to exalt or favor a show of strength rather than quiet wisdom.

***16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.***

- A. *Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength.*
1. The king in context had the advantage and strength, but the poor wise man defeated him.
  2. He restated his observation and discovery by lifting wisdom over war weapons (Ec 9:18).
  3. Solomon declared an axiom and illustration exalting wisdom over strength (Eccl 10:10).
  4. Most men esteem strength over wisdom ... physical, financial, military, educational, etc.
  5. Since the great king was beaten by the wise man, the wise man should be honored for it.
- B. *Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*
1. In spite of what should be obvious, the poor man is not adequately honored or rewarded.
  2. The poor man's wisdom was not despised with the city in danger, but he is despised later.
  3. The poor man's words were heard when the city was besieged, but they are ignored later.
  4. Though he saved the city, because he had no rank or status, he is ignored for the future.
  5. Solomon would expand upon this observation in his proverbs (Proverbs 14:20; 19:4,6-7).
  6. This is a great vanity, but it is a very real phenomenon of human existence under the sun.
  7. Fools in their simplicity exalt strength – physical, financial, military, etc. – far too high.

***17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.***

- A. *The words of wise men are heard in quiet.*
1. How can this be a general rule, since the previous two verses declared the very opposite?
  2. Is this describing the desirable way things should be, or is it describing limited situations?
  3. Can we draw from the previous verse that Solomon here declared what ought to be true?
  4. It is true that modest words of a wise man are to be preferred over loud, imperious fools.
  5. Therefore, wise men always will, and all men should, and most men in trouble will, seek for wisdom, even if spoken humbly and meekly by a poor man without rank or riches.
  6. If trouble comes, a poor wise man that speaks humbly and quietly will be heard gladly.
  7. When trouble is gone, the loud and pompous ruler surrounded by fools may get attention.
  8. This is how wise men should behave, who do not follow the general rule of hearing fools.
  9. When there is no danger, fear, or trouble, then loudmouthed rich men get the audience.

B. *More than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.*

1. In the ordinary course of life, loud rich men get heard first, even though they are fools.
2. When trouble arises, a poor wise man that speaks humbly and quietly is heard gladly.
3. When trouble is gone, the loud and pompous ruler surrounded by fools gets the attention.
4. It is true that modest words of a wise man are to be preferred over loud, imperious fools.
5. Therefore, wise men always will, and all men should, and most men in trouble will, seek for wisdom, even if spoken humbly and meekly by a poor man without rank or riches.

***18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.***

A. *Wisdom is better than weapons of war.*

1. Here is the positive observation and axiom that Solomon had already declared (Ec 9:16).
2. This is the chief lesson of six verses – prudent understanding trumps rank and strength.
3. Though the great king in context used great bulwarks, wisdom defeated him (Eccl 9:14).
4. Weapons of war are bulwarks above and other military engines (II Chr 26:15; Ezek 26:9).
5. Wisdom, or prudent understanding, is superior to military size, strength, or strategy.
6. A great army with great assault weapons is a formidable force, but wisdom is better.
7. The problems in your life are not as strong as a great army, so wisdom can easily help.

B. *But one sinner destroyeth much good.*

1. The *sinner* here is a rich fool, for the contrast is of wisdom and folly, thus a sinful fool.
2. One loud fool can cause as much damage and waste as a wise man can accomplish good.
3. Though a poor wise man can deliver a city, a rich fool can destroy the same city by sin.
4. Wisdom is to be honored, even if held by a poor man, for a rich fool's words are trouble.
5. Rich men get heard; loud men get heard; never confuse popularity or power for wisdom.
6. Achan brought terrible consequences on Israel in many ways (Joshua 7:1,25; 22:20).
7. Saul troubled Israel and destroyed much good by an extreme law (I Samuel 14:29-31,46).
8. The poor woman who marries a fool or the children born to one are in trouble (Pr 11:29).
9. Whether a marriage, family, church, business, or nation ... one fool destroys much good.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 10

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #46: Reputation and Wisdom Must Be Guarded \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.***

A. *Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour.*

1. **Apothecary.** One who prepared and sold drugs for medicinal purposes – the business now (since about 1800) conducted by a druggist or pharmaceutical chemist.
2. This profession in the Bible pertained to the mingling of various oils, herbs, spices, and other ingredients in the preparation of ointments and perfumes (Exodus 30:25,35; 37:29).
3. Since stinking savor, or aroma, is the feared effect, we understand perfume is the item.
4. Perfume was a very pleasant thing, given the dry climate and lack of showers (Pr 27:9).
5. Flies are minor nuisances, but dead ones in cologne will greatly alter its intended aroma.
6. Here is a poetic, proverbial, and powerful metaphor to emphasize protecting reputations.

B. *So doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.*

1. Reputation is the high opinion by others for wise and honorable men (Eccl 7:1; Pr 22:1).
2. Faults or failures are seen more easily and judged more strictly in those with reputations.
3. Temperance – moderation – or discipline to avoid faults should be seen by all (Phil 4:5).
4. Consistency is that wonderful trait of continuing steadfast in the path of wise conduct.
5. A man must rule his spirit to stop anger or other emotions from folly (Prov 14:29; 16:32).
6. Words are easily heard and judged, so speech must be guarded (Pr 17:27-28; Eph 5:3-5).
7. Full repentance can recover and clear a person, like David for his sins (II Cor 7:10-11).
8. Instant and complete apology and proper restitution are needed to fully clear a reputation.
9. However, it is better to be a diamond with a flaw than to be a mere pebble without one.
10. For more about a good reputation (slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/good-name-04-27-2016.pdf>.
11. For more about a good reputation (outline) ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/good-name.pdf>.
12. For more about a good reputation (22:1) ... [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/22\\_01.php](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/22_01.php).

### ***2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.***

A. *A wise man's heart is at his right hand.*

1. Here is another metaphorical expression we must grasp for another lesson of wisdom.
2. Solomon had already used a metaphor of eyes comparing wise men to fools (Eccl 2:14).
3. Most men are right-handed, so the Bible speaks of the right hand being the most useful.
4. The psalmists exalted the right hand's importance and cunning (Ps 16:8,11; 17:7; 137:5).
5. The right hand is coordinated, strong, and useful. Which hand should draw your sword?
6. At your right hand are those necessary and useful things to help guide and protect you.
7. The right hand of any throne in the Bible was where the most esteemed prince would sit.
8. A wise man's heart is coordinated, strong, and useful to guide his conduct dexterously.
9. A wise man's heart understands time and judgment and the appropriate conduct (Ec 8:5).
10. A wise man's heart is ready to teach his mouth and guide his speech (Prov 15:28; 16:23).
11. A wise man's heart is fully under his control so he can keep all issues of life (Prov 4:23).
12. A wise man does not trust his heart, and he wants to be corrected (Prov 28:26; 9:9; 27:6).

B. *But a fool's heart at his left.*

1. Here again is a metaphorical expression that we are to grasp for the lesson of wisdom.
2. Most men are right-handed, so the Bible speaks of the left hand being less valuable.
3. A righthanded person, all men in the metaphor, cannot do anything well with his left.
4. The left hand is uncoordinated, weak, and problematic. Could it even draw a sword?
5. The left hand has no muscle memory for actions and cannot execute detailed movements.
6. A fool's heart is disconnected, weak, and problematic to leave him blind through life.
7. A fool's heart is useless to teach his mouth and guide his speech (Proverbs 17:16; 14:6).
8. Solomon shortly took the fool to task for his speech more extensively (Eccl 10:11-14).
9. A fool trusts his foolish heart, and he does not want to be corrected (Prov 28:26; 14:12).
10. If you ask a fool a series of serious questions, his answers will quickly reveal his folly.

**3 *Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.***

A. *Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way.*

1. Here is another aspect of a fool, which wise men must avoid to preserve their reputations.
2. Walking by the way is a metaphorical expression for simple and ordinary actions of life.
3. A wise man guards himself even in the ordinary and simple actions of life to be virtuous.
4. In even simple actions, the fool shows faulty and foolish carelessness and frowardness.
5. Rather than use the time to remember, meditate, and muse, a fool daydreams and babbles.
6. Solomon soon ridiculed fools for inability to figure out the simplest of things (Ec 10:15).

B. *His wisdom faileth him.*

1. When he encounters a person or a situation, his best responses are worthless to wise men.
2. He thinks he has wisdom, but it cannot rule his spirit, guide his mouth, or direct his steps.
3. He cannot wisely direct his own affairs, let alone provide prudent solutions for others.
4. A short conversation with anyone quickly reveals that he has no wisdom to share at all.

C. *And he saith to every one that he is a fool.*

1. His personal conduct reveals to every wise observer that he is truly a fool in proven fact.
2. His immature and ignorant responses to questions or problems also prove the foolish fact.
3. Actions certainly reveal fools, so do words and speech (Pr 14:3,7; 15:7; 17:27-28; 18:2).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #47: *Obey and Pacify Offended Civil Rulers* \*\*\*\*\*

**4 *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.***

A. *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee.*

1. A spirit rising up means anger and intention to harm (Ps 3:1; 18:48; 35:11; 44:5; 139:21).
2. The reason for the ruler's anger is clearly given in the last clause – your large offences.
3. Rulers generally do not get angry against citizens for no cause – there are too many citizens, they do not have the time, it does not promote popularity, it has no benefit, etc.
4. The spirit of a ruler rising against you is like offending a lion to your own grave danger.
5. Even if a ruler were angry for no cause at all, the wisdom of the rule still stands (Pr 15:1).
6. If you resist a ruler for any personal faults, give your wife and children the same liberty.

B. *Leave not thy place.*

1. Do not move from your house or station in life to fight a ruler whom you have offended.
2. Do not go to the king to argue your case, since you are the fool with the great offences.

3. The wise lesson here is the same as that taught in 8:3; do not foolishly oppose the king.
4. Why in the world would you even consider wrestling a lion (Eccl 8:2-5; Pr 19:12; 20:2)?
5. A man that leaves his station is a fool ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/27\\_08.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/27_08.php).
6. A man that resists civil rulers is a fool ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/24\\_21.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/24_21.php).
7. A man resisting civil rulers will be judged ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/24\\_22.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/24_22.php).

C. *For yielding pacieth great offences.*

1. Wise men learn to pacify angry rulers (Pr 16:14-15; 20:2). How? By yielding to them.
2. Many holler about principle, but they usually are only following their rebellious pride.
3. Are we pacifists? Absolutely, in the sense right here. We are peacemakers (Rom 12:18).
4. Soft words turn away wrath, but grievous words (or actions) stir up anger (Prov 15:1).
5. Patient submission and soft speech can break the bones of an angry prince (Prov 25:15).
6. Forcing wrath to the increase of a ruler's strife is stupid folly (Prov 30:33; 20:2; 21:24).
7. Do what is right, and the king (or any authority) will love you (Prov 14:35; Rom 13:3).
8. It takes two to fight, and it is impossible to fight with a pillow, so be soft before rulers.
9. Better yet, try a gift in secret (Prov 21:14), though avoiding any perception of a bribe.
10. It is hard ruling or managing, and submission always works, for it makes their job easy.
11. This applies to employment management as well, for submissive servants are promoted.
12. In a perverse effort to corrupt this verse to its opposite sense, some few pervert the word *pacieth* to mean allow, endorse, promote, or support the great offences of the ruler! It is the same anarchic interpreters and hermeneutics that applies Romans 13:1-7 to pastors!
13. For more wisdom about pacifying rulers ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/16\\_14.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/16_14.php).
14. For more wisdom about pacifying rulers ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/25\\_15.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/25_15.php).
15. For more about civil authority and politics ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #48: *Government Should Enforce Proper Roles* \*\*\*\*\*

**5 *There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler:***

A. *There is an evil which I have seen under the sun.*

1. Solomon observed and analyzed earthly life concerning all the things done (Eccl 1:13).
2. He witnessed good and evil, and God inspired him to write a correct summary of it all.
3. Of his observations, he saw an evil that corrupted man's existence on earth, as follows.
4. Observe that Solomon identified the matter before us as an evil and an error. It is bad.
5. We must not underestimate the importance of each person fulfilling his role from God.
6. God ordained the institutions of marriage, family, government, etc. Violations are evil.
7. God ordained all positions of authorities in five spheres. Thus, any violations are evil.
8. God ordained subordination of those under authority in five spheres. Violations are evil.
9. God also made intellectual, physical, and economic differences among men to be kept.
10. All men are not created equal – they are very unequal – and the differences are valid.

B. *As an error which proceedeth from the ruler.*

1. Every person in authority is ordained by God to maintain the status quo of proper roles.
2. Since the civil ruler is the highest authority and example in a land, he sets the standard.
3. An office of authority is not merely a privilege – it includes duties and responsibilities.
4. Rulers exist – no matter what authority sphere we consider – to maintain righteousness.
5. Ahasuerus and his counselors understood this regarding Vashti's rebellion (Est 1:10-22).
6. Herod did not understand when he over-spoke and kept an oath to a girl (Matt 14:1-12).

7. Solomon knew enough to overrule his mother's request for Adonijah (I Kings 2:12-25).
8. If you are a ruler in any sphere, are you using your position to maintain righteousness?
9. Disruption of roles and stations in life should be put down by rulers to preserve peace.
10. It is a shame in the present generation that rulers allow and defend transgender insanity.

## **6 *Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.***

### **A. *Folly is set in great dignity.***

1. Folly can be anything from foolishness to sin to madness to jesting to fools to the poor.
2. But the contrast here emphasizes foolish and poor persons allowed to have great honor.
3. The evil error from government is confusing social strata of persons by ability or wealth.
4. God is very plain about the impropriety of ever giving honor to fools (Pr 19:10; 26:1,8).
5. Fools do not deserve honor, and a full fool is more than the world can bear (Prov 30:22).
6. Young, poor, ignorant fools like college students must be far below old, rich, wise men.
7. Consider the foolish notion that a king needs a court jester, like the comedians in our age.
8. Sitcoms often mock authority of parents, especially fathers, preachers, policemen, etc.
9. Editorials and entertainment television caricature and mock our president every day.
10. It is a shame to poll students – the lowest stratum in society – for anything beyond pizza.
11. When an actor or actress enters the White House, you have this clause clearly fulfilled.
12. Consider an 18-year-old high school dropout with three children by three men on welfare voting equal to Warren Buffett, the richest businessman in America. This is total insanity.

### **B. *And the rich sit in low place.***

1. By *the rich*, Solomon intends a successful man of position with experience and wisdom.
  - a. Contrast the adjective *rich* against the dignified folly of the previous clause (Ec 10:6).
  - b. Contrast the adjective *rich* with *servants* used twice in the following verse (Ec 10:7).
  - c. Compare the adjective *rich* with *princes* and *horses* in the following verse (Ec 10:7).
  - d. It is a general rule that rich men are noble and wise, thus their riches (Pr 10:4; 11:16).
  - e. It is arrogant folly and anarchic rebellion to disrespect the rich for their greater roles.
  - f. Solomon will shortly condemn even private criticism of a nation's rich (Eccl 10:20).
  - g. If it were not for the rich creating jobs, the poor would be dead or living like beasts.
  - h. When a government allows athletes to make more than CEO's, the text is clearly true.
2. By *sit in low place*, Solomon described the popular but erroneous neglect of great men.
  - a. When a government defends or protects labor unions, you have this text proven true.
  - b. Landlords by every measure are superior to renters and should be treated accordingly.
  - c. Owners and management should be allowed to any means to protect their businesses.
  - d. Americans are rebels by origin, nature, culture, instruction, modern education, etc.
  - e. The Bible teaches that young persons should stand up before old persons (Lev 19:32).
  - f. When 18-year-old infants get to vote equal to a business titan, it is idiotic insanity.
  - g. Isaiah chapter 3 describes a nation's ruin ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/death-of-a-nation.pdf>.
  - h. Video review of America's great rich men ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbqXYstJY90>.

## **7 *I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.***

### **A. *I have seen servants upon horses.***

1. Servants are today's employees. They do not deserve to ride on horses. It is not fitting.
2. Solomon had observed servants being treated too generously and kindly. It was not right.
3. Since this evil error is now so prevalent, are you even able to think Solomon's wisdom?
4. The confusion and reversal of social strata by ability and wealth destroys societal peace.

5. Carefully consider the age, ability, knowledge, and wealth of most street demonstrators.
6. Illiterate, ignorant, and incompetent persons get to vote equal to Bill Gates. Why? Why?
7. Moving the chairman's parking spot for some ridiculous H.R. employee of the month.
8. Children divorcing parents, slapping parents, cursing parents – these are capital crimes.
9. When men are demoted or removed, then women and children are oppressors (Isaiah 3).
10. Girls in the military is insane; they should be home tending to husbands and children.
11. Union workers are too stupid to grasp that their wage demands will cost them their jobs.
12. Union leaders are too greedy and selfish to care that their workers will lose their jobs.
13. God's view of business decisions is that masters never hurt good servants (Ex 21:20-21).
14. Mortgagees protected from mortgagors foreclosing due to lack of payment is insanity.

B. *And princes walking as servants upon the earth.*

1. Princes should not walk. When there is a horse and a prince and servant. Only one rides.
2. Jesus spoke very plainly about the natural order of masters and servants (Luke 17:7-10).
3. Communism, socialism, and other forms of humanist insanity have corrupted right roles.
4. Rich, successful, wise men should not have to stoop or give up their seats on the plane.
5. The president of Ford Motor should never have to negotiate with anyone from the UAW.
6. Board of directors having to meet with a whining employee that wants a bigger canteen.
7. Parents should never have to beg or crawl to children, their infinite inferiors (De 27:16).
8. Labor unions are a true fulfillment of this text – they are anarchist rebels to be destroyed.
9. Owners and servants, employers and employees, are not at all created equal (Prov 19:10).
10. Christians should maintain proper authority relationships in all spheres (I Cor 11:7-16).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #49: *What Goes Around Will Come Around* \*\*\*\*\*

**8 *He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.***

A. *He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it.*

1. Here is more wisdom from Solomon, who analyzed all things done on earth (Eccl 1:13).
2. This short book of philosophy is incredible in its range of practical wisdom and warnings.
3. Four metaphors or similitudes teach this: *what goes around comes around* (Eccl 10:8-9).
4. *Digging a pit* here is not ordinary pit digging – it is digging a pit to trap or snare others.
5. Since you have not dug a pit in your lifetime to catch or trap anything, you may not get it.
6. Solomon used this metaphor in his book of Proverbs (Prov 22:14; 23:27; 26:27; 28:10).
7. A person that sets out to harm another person will by God's judgment be harmed himself.
8. God's just providence may hurt the wicked person the very way they planned for another.
9. This is a precious rule of God's providential judgment of men (Psalm 7:15-16; 9:15-16).
10. Abimelech killed 70 brothers on a stone; a woman killed him by a stone (Judges 9:5,53).
11. Absalom lied to steal the kingdom from David, so Hushai did it to him (II Sam 17:1-14).
12. Haman was hung on gallows that he had made to hang Mordecai (Esther 5:14; 7:9-10).
13. Judas betrayed Jesus to hang on a tree; Judas also hung himself with trouble (Matt 27:5).
14. Viewed in light of the previous lesson, societal positions and roles better not be violated.
15. If you foolishly alter the roles or stations of authority and honor, you will suffer for it.
16. If you foolishly alter the roles of the sexes like current transgenders, you will suffer for it.
17. If you foolishly alter the nature of relationships e.g. marriage, you will suffer for the sin.
18. If you talk or listen to junk against government, prepare for consequences (Pr 24:21-22).
19. Let not rulers or magistrates overstep their bounds; let not citizens rebel or incite sedition.

20. Government, or authority in all its spheres, is protected by God's hedge. Meddler beware!

B. *And whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.*

1. Here is more wisdom from Solomon, who analyzed all things done on earth (Eccl 1:13).
2. This short book of philosophy is incredible in its range of practical wisdom and warnings.
3. Four metaphors or similitudes teach this: *what goes around comes around* (Eccl 10:8-9).
4. *Breaking a hedge* is not working on your yard – it is destroying an important boundary.
5. *A serpent shall bite him* is God's fitting judgment – for snakes often hid in field hedges.
6. If you mistreat your spouse after swearing in your wedding, expect to be bitten yourself.
7. If you violate secrecy contracts with your company, expect others to be unfaithful to you.

## **9 *Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.***

A. *Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith.*

1. Here is more wisdom from Solomon, who analyzed all things done on earth (Eccl 1:13).
2. This short book of philosophy is incredible in its range of practical wisdom and warnings.
3. Four metaphors or similitudes teach this: *what goes around comes around* (Eccl 10:8-9).
4. *Removing stones* is not working on your garden – it is destroying important boundaries.
5. Property boundaries were piles of stones (Pr 22:28; 23:10; Deut 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2).
6. *Shall be hurt therewith* is God's fitting judgment – for God shall judge the sinner in kind.
7. If you alter or undermine established and right landmarks of any kind, expect the same.
8. For further elucidation here (Prov 23:10) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/23\\_10.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/23_10.php).

B. *And he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.*

1. Here is more wisdom from Solomon, who analyzed all things done on earth (Eccl 1:13).
2. This short book of philosophy is incredible in its range of practical wisdom and warnings.
3. Four metaphors or similitudes teach this: *what goes around comes around* (Eccl 10:8-9).
4. *He that cleaveth wood* is not merely cutting firewood – he cuts into his neighbor's trees.
5. Another evil cutting of wood was unnecessarily taking down good trees (Deut 20:19-20).
6. *Shall be endangered thereby* is God's fitting judgment – He shall judge a sinner in kind.
7. If you are dishonest in your business practices, then expect to get ripped off by others.
8. If you pay less or charge more than you should, expect other transactions to punish you.
9. Viewed in light of the previous lesson, societal positions and roles better not be violated.
10. If a civil ruler oppresses the poor for gain, he can and should expect to be abused himself.
11. If you sow discord or sedition behind a leader's back, you will also be subverted yourself.
12. If you verbally or actually disrespect authority, you may expect revolt in your own house.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #50: *Professional Wisdom Trumps Effort* \*\*\*\*\*

## **10 *If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.***

A. *If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength.*

1. There are two ways to cut down a tree – by brute force, or by modest use of a sharp edge.
2. Some men never use their wits to get ahead and try instead by more force, speed, or time.
3. There are two ways to cut down a tree here ... and a wise man will learn the efficient one.
4. Hard work running around doing a basic job is no better than the meathead in this text.
5. This proverbial metaphor restates the lesson that wisdom trumps strength (Eccl 9:16,18).
6. It is a small mind that believes the human energy of one body can accomplish very much.

7. Many think sharpening an ax wastes time, for they could be beating the tree with a club.
8. Many esteem bicep size, the hours worked, or the sweat dropped rather than productivity.
9. They cannot imagine going back to school, learning computer skills, getting certified, etc.
10. Bullying, yelling, pressing, pushing, and such are the witless tools of the ineffective fool.
11. Blunt force, brute force, or intimidation does not work nearly as well as wise direction.
12. Tools and witty inventions are wonderful things that deserve investment (Pr 8:12; 14:4).
13. More about labor-enhancing tools (Pr 14:4) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/14\\_04.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/14_04.php).
14. More help about getting ahead on the job ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/getting-ahead-on-the-job.pdf>.
15. Bible Economics is wise (Rule 6) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/practical/bible-economics/sermon.php>.

B. *But wisdom is profitable to direct.*

1. God wants you to work hard (Eccl 9:10), but He wants your efforts to be very profitable.
2. Profit is the goal here ... maximizing return on assets, investment, labor, design, etc.
3. Working hard is good, but working smart to leverage your hard work is the best of all.
4. More effort is sometimes required, but less effort can often be leveraged by prudence.
5. Here is another creative way from Solomon to exalt the superiority of wisdom and wits.
6. By using your wits – wisdom – you can better leverage your strength to accomplish more.
7. Leverage is a word and concept wise men love ... to multiply all his abilities and efforts.
8. Considered in light of the previous lessons, rulers are here warned to use discretion, for more can be accomplished by wisdom than brute force or intimidation. Think Rehoboam.
9. The lesson of exalting wisdom over brute strength applies to all parts of life e.g. politics, housecleaning, relationships, child training, businesses, jobs, leadership, delegation, etc.
10. Discretion is better than valor – discretion being prudence – valor being bold courage.
11. There are always optional means to achieve a goal that take less strength and more wits.
12. What can you do to put this wonderful verse with its great benefit of profit into practice?
  - a. Foolish men read the Bible and think they can force wives to submit, wrong. The Bible is clear that the way to get the most from your wife is to love her (Eph 5:25-28).
  - b. Regarding children, you can try to force obedience, but wisdom will also win them.
  - c. You can go back to school to add helpful technical courses or get a college degree.
  - d. You can examine whether you have a transferable skill and identify how to get one.
  - e. Determine if you work for a firm or master that rewards creativity and productivity, otherwise your hard work working for a master that does not is not using your wits.
  - f. Wisdom saves to buy an income-producing asset to get ahead of workers (Prov 14:4).
  - g. We do not use oxen today? Save to buy mutual funds for others to work for you 24/7.
  - h. Facing a recession, a wise man will adjust his spending rather than just work harder.
  - i. Business textbooks have some suggestions e.g. mentor-sponsor career progression, vertical integration for a manufacturing or sales company, franchise benefits, etc., etc.
  - j. A man of faith makes the best plans he can and trusts the Lord (Pr 16:9; Jas 4:13-15).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #51: *Speech Quickly Proves a Fool or Wise Man* \*\*\*\*\*

***11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babblers is no better.***

A. *Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment.*

1. A snake will certainly bite those persons near it unless appropriate precautions are made.
2. *Enchantment* used here by Solomon shows knowledge of Indian or other snake charmers.
3. David and the prophet Jeremiah also wrote about snake charmers (Ps 58:4-5; Jer 8:17).
4. Snakes are dangerous; unless charmed or enchanted to calmness, they should be avoided.

B. *And a babbler is no better.*

1. A babbler is a fool that must talk, continues talking, and never talks of anything of value.
2. No wonder some people are called snakes! They talk too much and verbally hurt others.
3. Babblers must be enchanted like a snake, which is why they have no friends, only users.
4. Those who think they can say anything they wish and others must accept them are fools.
5. A fool cannot help himself by stopping the folly of his mouth, for it is his need and habit.

## ***12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.***

A. *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious.*

1. Here is one of the great lessons from Solomon – gracious speech is wise and very helpful.
2. His father David was incredibly gracious and won competitors by it (I Sam 18:1-5; etc.).
3. Gracious speech can win kings, as it did for David, and it starts in the heart (Prov 22:11).
4. It is also the most beautifying trait for women; it will bring perpetual honor (Prov 11:16).
5. Jesus Christ is known in prophecy and reality as most gracious (Ps 45:1-2; Lu 4:14-24).
6. The apostolic rule divine inspiration is for your speech to always be gracious (Col 4:6).
7. Graciousness is likely the most enhancing and beautifying character trait above all others.
8. **Gracious.** Agreeable, amiable, approachable, appropriate, attentive, benevolent, charming, cheerful, comforting, considerate, cooperative, cordial, courteous, decorous, forgiving, friendly, generous, gentle, hospitable, humble, kind, loving, merciful, pleasant, pleasing, polite, proper, relaxed, selfless, sociable, tactful, warm.
9. For much, much more about graciousness ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/graciousness-the-third.pdf>.

B. *But the lips of a fool.*

1. There is a powerful contrast here taught by the disjunctive *but*, which aids in the lesson.
2. What is the chief deficiency in the speech of fools? He/she is not gracious in their talking.
3. Let this precious lesson of wisdom from Solomon get your attention and change your life.
4. You can attract more flies with honey than vinegar, no matter how foolish the metaphor.
5. Odious persons drive men away, even those they seek as friends, by their uncouth speech.
6. Odious persons generally cannot become gracious, for they cannot discern it or learn it.

C. *Will swallow up himself.*

1. What is the evil consequence of lacking grace in your speech? You swallow up yourself.
2. Odious speech fully taints any virtue a person may have by being so offensive to hearers.
3. Those that lack gracious speech, though they think they are friendly, kill their reputations.
4. Their odious words, like Agur's example, is an evil the world cannot stand (Pr 30:21-23).
5. The lips of a fool – ungracious speech – destroy himself and expose him to all as a fool.

## ***13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.***

A. *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness.*

1. A fool starts with foolishness; if allowed to continue, he will say worse and worse things.
2. He has a fire within; he has allowed much evil thinking, and his heart must vent itself.
3. If you want to avoid this indictment, then cut your words in half (Prov 10:19; 17:27-28).

B. *And the end of his talk is mischievous madness.*

1. Though he may have started with stupidity, he will soon move on to slander, sedition, etc.
2. Though he started with present stupidity, he soon moves to vain forecasts of the future.
3. Therefore, wisdom says to avoid such persons exposing themselves by words (Pr 14:7).

**14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?**

A. *A fool also is full of words.*

1. A fool is identified by listening. The ones talking the most are fools by Solomon's word.
2. A fool's voice is known by multitude of words, which Solomon taught before (Eccl 5:3).
3. If you want to avoid this indictment, then cut your words in half (Prov 10:19; 17:27-28).

B. *A man cannot tell what shall be.*

1. Why does a fool feel the big urge to talk? He does not know even tomorrow, so why talk?
2. Solomon had taught often that men do not know the future (Eccl 3:22; 6:12; 8:7; 9:12).
3. If Solomon did not know the future, you or any other fool should not presume to know it.

C. *And what shall be after him, who can tell him.*

1. There is no place the fool can go to learn the future, which should silence him even more.
2. Forget next year or other grandiose plans of fools; boasting of tomorrow is sin (Pr 27:1).
3. Making any boast of what you intend to do or what will happen is a sin (James 4:13-16).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #52: Professional Success Is Beyond Fools \*\*\*\*\*

**15 The labour of the foolish wearith every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.**

A. *The labour of the foolish wearith every one of them.*

1. Fools do not know how to talk, as the previous lesson, nor do they know how to work.
2. Fools see work as a curse, pain, and trouble. They begrudge mental or physical exertion.
3. When they do work, it exhausts them, because they cannot envision its purpose or profit.
4. Your attitude about work is one of the great factors for happiness and success (Eccl 9:10).
5. Going to work every day is too much, because they dream of success without any labor.
6. They get frustrated by the same boring job, which is the only means to financial success.
7. They do not understand, and they greatly resent, that they have to go work for the boss.
8. For more about the evil of sloth (Pr 21:25) ... [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/21\\_25.php](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/21_25.php).

B. *Because he knoweth not how to go to the city.*

1. Lazy persons know directions to a city as a place, but they cannot get any business there.
2. Lazy men cannot connect the effort and wisdom of work today to be promoted tomorrow.
3. Many of these fools are sucked in by network marketing schemes, when they could be so much farther ahead just by getting a transferable skill and working it by Solomon's rules.
4. These fools that yack much about success are incapable of simple projects (Ec 10:10-14).
5. The most basic success in life is beyond a fool, because he is too stupid to see how life works and that the diligent will surely be rewarded, especially if they apply wisdom to it.
6. The talk of the lips tends only to penury, no matter how exciting (Pr 14:23; 28:19; 12:11).
7. Patient tending to a real fig tree will bring reward; fools cannot believe it (Prov 27:18).
8. Fools assume wrongfully that they deserve to be bosses, owners, princes, rich, successful.
9. Getting promoted to the city (Prov 27:18) ... [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/27\\_18.php](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/27_18.php).
10. More about getting promoted (Prov 17:2) ... [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/17\\_02.php](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/proverbs/commentaries/17_02.php).
11. More about getting promoted on the job ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/getting-ahead-on-the-job.pdf>.

**16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!**

A. *Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child.*

1. Solomon the king here warns against abuse of privilege and power by civil authorities.
2. A kingdom or nation (or other entity) is in trouble when its leaders are given to excess.
3. The woe is pronounced upon the land, for a land depends upon sober and diligent rulers.
4. The *child* king here is not Joash or another young king, but rather childish, foolish rulers.
5. The conjunctive *and* indicates the child king is compared to excessive luxury by princes.
6. The next verse indicates the child king is contrasted to a king with nobility and training.
7. We know *child* does not condemn youth, but rather foolishness, immaturity, indulgence, luxury, playing, and such like by comparing it to the son of nobles in the context.
8. What does a childish king do? He plays rather than soberly engage himself for his nation.
9. What does a childish king do? He does not rule the government to practice temperance.
10. There have been excellent young kings who have had character, discipline, and gravity.
11. King James I of England had written a commentary on the Revelation by the age of 18.
12. The issue is not age – but rather character, self-discipline, maturity, nobility, and training.
13. A king or nation (or other entity) is in danger when its leaders are foolish and luxurious.
14. Solomon was surely guilty of some of these sins later in his reign due to his 1000 wives.

B. *And thy princes eat in the morning!*

1. There is no sin in breakfast, but the lust of the flesh for luxurious gluttony and drunkenness is sin, which the next verse indicates is the foolish error under consideration.
2. These childish rulers were so obsessed with partying that they began again each morning.
3. The position, finances, and practices of rulers can easily lead to gluttony or drunkenness.
4. The Bible warns against ease and luxurious excess (Is 5:11-12; 22:12-14; Amos 6:3-7).
5. The time past of our lives, as unconverted sinners, is when we ate too much (I Pet 4:1-5).
6. Surfeiting (think diet: “surf and turf”) will ruin a man physically and morally (Lu 21:34).
7. Gluttony and drunkenness, excessive eating and drinking, are ruinous (Pr 21:17; 23:21).
8. For further study about the sin of gluttony ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/gluttony.pdf>.

**17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!**

A. *Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles.*

1. This clause is contrasted to the first clause of the previous verse about foolish *child* kings.
2. This clause is compared to the second clause of this verse about wise, temperate princes.
3. The issue is not merely a birthright or noble parents, but rather the character and training.
4. There are many kings who have the right pedigree, but who do not have good character.
5. The primary issue in any leader or ruler is an issue of character (Ex 18:21; I Tim 3:1-13).

B. *And thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!*

1. Temperance is an important character trait of leaders and rulers (Deut 17:14-20; Tit 1:8).
2. Temperance, contrary to the Temperance Movement, is moderation; it is not abstinence.
3. There is a right time, right content, and right amount to proper eating with temperance.
4. The position, finances, and practices of rulers easily lead to gluttony and drunkenness.
5. Consider Solomon’s thorough warning about dietary seduction by evil men (Pr 23:1-8).
6. There is food convenient for ordinary uses, and that should be the goal (Prov 30:7-9).
7. Americans are given to excess, especially youth, which must be opposed (Pr 23:19-21).

8. Excessive alcohol corrupts sensibilities and morals of rulers (Pr 23:29-35; 20:1; 31:3-4).
9. For further study about the sin of gluttony ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/gluttony.pdf>.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #54: *Slothfulness Will Ruin the Most Secure Things* \*\*\*\*\*

**18 *By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.***

**A. *By much slothfulness the building decayeth.***

1. A literal house will surely fall apart from age and use, thus the very necessary accounting and management concepts of depreciation and maintenance and repair to keep it usable.
2. Proper maintenance of material things may be boring, but it must be done repeatedly.
3. Jesus was not totally metaphorical when He said moths and rust corrupt things on earth.
4. Compare Solomon's observations and analysis from the Proverbs (Pr 24:30-34; 6:6-11).
5. If efforts are not made to preserve a building, many factors work together to destroy it.
6. A lazy woman that does not work to keep her house might as well tear it down (Pr 14:1).
7. However, there are other houses, such as a kingdom, a nation, a family, a church, etc.
8. Consider the context that has just gone before and its warnings about national prosperity.
9. These metaphorical houses will decay just as fast through much slothfulness. Beware!
10. Preventive measures must be applied to preserve these houses as much as a physical one.

**B. *And through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.***

1. The metaphor is from a lazy homeowner or housewife that allows a house to fall apart.
2. But the application is higher, for it follows a context of rulers given to luxury and excess.
3. Women differ greatly on this point – be very wise, young man (Prov 14:1; 30:28; 31:13).
4. But there are probably as many lazy men as women, so the men should not gloat here.
5. A literal house will fall apart, but rather fear a government, business, family, church, etc.
6. The previous lesson warned of gluttony and drunkenness leading to ruler's slothfulness.
7. If rulers, masters, fathers, husbands, or pastors are slothful, their *houses* will also fail.
8. Those in authority are soberly obligated to diligence to preserve their various *houses*.
9. For example, a child left to himself will surely bring his mother to shame (Pr 29:15,17).
10. For example, a pastor neglecting himself and the doctrine hurts all involved (I Tim 4:16).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #55: *Money Is Better than Happy Feasts and Wine* \*\*\*\*\*

**19 *A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.***

**A. *A feast is made for laughter.***

1. This verse and its lesson should be seen in light of what has gone before (Eccl 10:16-18).
2. Feasts and wine have a place, even for rulers, but national prosperity is the better priority.
3. Feasting is a time for mirth – the pleasure of eating and drinking lends itself to laughter.
4. Good food in plenty causes a glad heart that rejoices with pleasant laughter (Acts 14:17).
5. Solomon commended the combination of eating and drinking for mirth (Ec 8:15; 9:7-8).
6. The Bible gives examples of mirthful feasting in both testaments (Neh 8:12; Jude 1:12).
7. There is good feasting, which the Bible commends for purpose, place, profit, and time.
8. However, as with all God's liberties, feasting can be abused by excess in any aspect of it.

9. Feasts have their place, but excessive feasting ruins persons (Proverbs 21:17,20; 23:21).
10. This is surely true of civil rulers, when they abuse their office by luxurious entertainment.
11. A young couple eating out too often or too high for their means will remain in poverty.
12. Previous generations grew up without ever eating out and not knowing the sheer luxury.
13. Eating out, as in feasting, is a luxury that only those who earn enough rightly deserve.
14. If you eat out on a credit card, it will come to destroy you, just as Solomon tried to warn.
15. Yet, as Solomon warned, all work and no play or spending is also wrong (Eccl 5:13-20).

B. *And wine maketh merry.*

1. God made and commends wine for its properties to make the heart glad (Ps 104:14-15).
2. God made and commends wine for its use to assuage grief and pain of men (Prov 31:6-7).
3. God allowed and encouraged family celebration with wine and strong drink (Deut 14:26).
4. However, Solomon has just condemned drunkenness as a destructive vice (Ec 10:16-17).
5. Wine has its place, but leaders are bound to drink less (Pr 31:4-5; Lev 10:9; I Tim 3:3,8).
6. Wine has its place, but excessive drinking ruins persons and nations (Pr 21:17,20; 23:21).
7. You may be merry while drinking, but financial trouble will be there when you sober up.
8. Note the folly caused by drunkenness to kings Baasha and Benhadan (I Kgs 16:9; 20:16).

C. *But money answereth all things.*

1. The lesson's emphasis is the importance and value of money over temporary pleasure.
2. This statement about money does not contradict other warnings about it (I Tim 6:6-10).
3. A ruler must not use his position to exalt luxury or entertainment, but rather prosperity.
4. Rulers eating and drinking in excess – feasts and wine – will cost a nation (Ec 10:16-18).
5. Princes are prone and vulnerable to feasting and drinking, but economic and financial prudence and prosperity are greater matters of government and of private life as well.
6. Strong men retain riches, and strong rulers do not let privilege cost the nation (Pr 11:16).
7. But weak men lose riches, and a weak ruler fiddled while Rome burned (Eccl 10:16-18).
8. Solomon oppressed the nation by heavy taxation for many foreign wives (I Kgs 12:1-4).
9. The same rule applies to private men – money better measures character than playing, for anyone can have fun and go to parties, but only a few can retain riches (Pr 11:16).
10. A feast only provides for laughter for a short time, and the same with wine, but money is able to provide for many feasts, much wine, and many other necessities or desires.
11. For retaining riches as character (Pr 11:16) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/11\\_16.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/11_16.php).
12. For the danger of overspending (Pr 21:20) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/21\\_20.php](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/21_20.php).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #56: *Rulers and Rich Deserve Careful Respect* \*\*\*\*\*

***20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.***

A. *Curse not the king.*

1. God had condemned reviling or *cursing* those in positions of rule (Ex 22:28; Acts 23:5).
2. The Almighty God calls civil rulers *gods* for our learning and respect (Ps 82:1; Jn 10:35).
3. The offices and men in them are by the ordinance of God (Romans 13:1-7; I Pet 2:13-17).
4. Profane men without understanding speak evil of dignities (II Pet 2:10-12; Jude 1:8-10).
5. When a king is less than he should be, there is the temptation to curse him (Ec 10:16-19).
6. God protects civil authority and will judge those who consider sedition (Prov 24:21-22).
7. Elihu reasoned with Job from a premise that officials were not to be rebuked (Job 34:18).

8. Rulers must be respected, for honor is owed to all official authority (Ro 13:7; I Pet 2:17).
  9. The terminology here is clearly the civil authority of a monarch, but children must not curse parents either (Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 27:16; Pr 20:20; 30:17; Matt 15:4).
  10. Employees, whether bondservants or free servants, should respect their masters (Tit 2:9).
  11. Wives are to reverence husbands, calling them lord instead of fool (Eph 5:33; I Pet 3:6).
  12. Stating the lifestyle or decisions of a king are wrong in light of scripture is not cursing, but despising, ridiculing, or jesting about rulers at any level is sinfully wrong.
  13. For more warning against sedition (Prov 24:21) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/24\\_21.htm](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/24_21.htm).
  14. For more warning against sedition (Prov 24:22) ... [http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/24\\_22.htm](http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/24_22.htm).
- B. *No, not in thy thought.*
1. The philosophy or science of life from God includes the thoughts and intents of the heart.
  2. If you think a thing, you are guilty of it, for you desire it – only opportunity hinders you.
  3. Therefore, if you desire to commit adultery with a woman, you are guilty of it (Mat 5:28).
  4. Solomon taught in his proverbs that even the thought of foolishness is sin (Prov 24:8-9).
  5. Words are formed in the heart, so the heart must be kept from sin (Pr 4:23; Matt 12:34).
  6. If you despise a ruler in your heart, then it will affect your attitude, speech, actions, etc.
  7. If you despise a ruler in your heart, then you are guilty of mental disrespect and rebellion.
  8. In America, it is common, popular, and acceptable to mock rulers in many evil ways.
  9. Even Christians get in on the act, for they have forgotten God’s protection of authorities.
- C. *And curse not the rich in thy bedchamber.*
1. The rich and poor both need each other, and the Lord has made both of them (Prov 22:2).
  2. But the rich are more important than the poor, and they should be treated so (Ec 10:5-7).
  3. If it were not for the rich creating jobs for the poor, they would die or barely survive.
  4. Let us identify the rich in this clause, but let us focus our attention on the sin of cursing.
  5. The rich include more than just the wealthy, for simple wealth may not provoke cursing.
  6. The rich include more than just the wealthy, for the context of the verse is civil rulers.
  7. The rich are successful men, princes, magistrates, bosses, landlords, owners, judges, etc.
  8. It is easy to think when you are alone with your spouse that you can say anything, that you can let your hair down, as the expression goes, but the Spirit here warns against this.
  9. The Lord Jesus Christ would extend this rule to include all evil speaking (Matt 5:21-22).
  10. The opposite wisdom of this rule is to ignore curse words you may hear (Eccl 7:21-22).
  11. Anarchists that call themselves patriots love to rail against Rockefellers, Rothschilds, etc.
  12. But these insolent children would love to have their influence and wealth if they could.
- D. *For a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*
1. Solomon, a master of metaphors, warns that evil thoughts and words will be discovered.
  2. There are no literal birds or wings in this text, but rather the amazing way words get out.
  3. Your sedition or treason in private will eventually become public in ways you overlook.
  4. How can you cure this folly? Pray for rulers and masters instead (I Tim 2:1-3; Je 29:4-7).
  5. Men say, “Hedges have ears,” or, “The walls will speak,” or, “Kings have long ears.”
  6. Though men may not discover it, the Lord Jesus Christ knows it all clearly (Heb 4:12).
  7. Elisha gave Israel’s king great advantage over Syria’s king by such insight (II Kgs 6:12).
  8. If God sees or hears your heart cursing, get ready for your wife or children to curse you.
  9. A great way to honor God is to honor those He appointed and blessed – kings and rich.
  10. *Be sure your sin will find you out* was a political warning by Moses to Israel (Nu 32:23).
  11. For more of, *Be sure your sin will find you out* ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/be-sure-your-sin4.pdf>.
  12. For more about the Bible and politics ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf> [links].

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 11

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #57: Ignore Circumstances for Charity and Business \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.***

#### ***A. Cast thy bread upon the waters.***

1. Here is a wonderful clause exhorting the children of God to throw money to the poor.
2. As the next verse explains, the real issue is giving a portion of necessities to the poor.
3. Bread is a necessity; this kind of giving is not toys for tots or other extravagant waste.
4. Solomon rephrased his scattering of money as a metaphor for charity (Prov 11:24-26).
5. Throwing your bread upon any body of water seems foolish – just like scattering does.
6. Men sometimes talk of casting a bottle with a note into an ocean to see what it brings.
7. It takes hard work to get bread out of the ground, but we should throw some to charity.
8. When we open wide our hands and give to poor who cannot repay, it appears wasteful.
9. Moses taught charity as well, but Solomon repeated it for prosperous living (De 15:7-11).

#### ***B. For thou shalt find it after many days.***

1. Charity always prospers. God and/or men will reward it, which will be now and/or later.
2. The man with a bountiful eye – who gives charity generously – will be blessed (Pr 22:9).
3. The liberal soul will prosper; God will water the man who waters others (Prov 11:24-26).
4. Though the poor cannot themselves repay it, God Himself will repay for them (Pr 19:17).
5. There are many promises in the Bible for the man who gives and disperses (Ps 112:1-10).
6. The Day of Judgment will recall every act of charity (Matthew 25:31-46; I Tim 6:17-19).
7. But let every act of charity be done with the spirit of charity, or it is vain (I Cor 13:1-7).
8. God discerns between the churl and the liberal, and He will bless the latter (Is 32:5-8).
9. A foolish and vile person expects blessing immediately, for the text says *after many days*.

### ***2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.***

#### ***A. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.***

1. From the previous verse, this is casting your bread upon the waters, or giving to the poor.
2. Note his words well. If there happen to be more mouths than you thought, feed them all.

#### ***B. For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.***

1. The evil here is not sin, but rather the evil of trouble and difficulty that can afflict men.
2. You do not know the future, so ignore it; give to the poor for God that rules the future.
3. If you want God to provide in your time of trouble, take care of others in their trouble.
4. Consider. Your financial situation could deteriorate to where you have nothing to give, and thus you lose the precious opportunity to secure blessings in time and eternity.
5. Consider. Your financial situation could deteriorate to where you need charity from God and/or men, and so you will depend on the mercy you showed in the past to deliver you.
6. Consider. In light of *not* knowing the future, you are to cast away and give liberally now.
7. The fool says he cannot give because he must lay up for a *rainy day*, which Solomon here corrected, and he will now show both business and charity to be under God's providence.
8. There have been and always will be hundreds of reasons to fear the future, but trust God.

9. Some say a recession is coming and you should hold back; get away from them now.

### ***3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.***

#### ***A. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.***

1. This clause is to be understood in light of not knowing the future from the previous verse.
2. A key word here is *if*, for you do not know *if* they are rain clouds bringing rain or not.
3. The fool says he cannot give because he must lay up for a *rainy day*, which Solomon here corrected, and he will now show both business and charity to be under God's providence.
4. Fools say that not knowing the future should restrict action, but Solomon ruled opposite.
5. You do not know if a *rainy day* is coming, and you cannot stop it, so go ahead and work your business and give part of it away to the poor without fear, trust God for *rainy days*.
6. If a recession is coming, then it will come, and God will preserve you, or He will not.
7. Anything beyond our reasonable prudence is mistrust of God and vanity (Psalm 127:1-2).
8. If a recession comes, the man in the best stead is the one that gave (Pr 19:17; 11:24-26).

#### ***B. And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.***

1. This clause is to be understood in light of not knowing the future from the previous verse.
2. A key word here is *if*, for you do not know if the tree is going to fall or in what direction.
3. Stop worrying about trees falling, for you do not know the future; it will be where it falls!
4. Fools say that not knowing the future should restrict action, but Solomon ruled opposite.
5. You do not know if a tree is going to fall, and you cannot stop it, so go ahead and work your business and give part of it away to the poor without fear, trust God for falling trees.

### ***4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.***

#### ***A. He that observeth the wind shall not sow.***

1. A man worried about the wind possibly bringing rain will not sow out of his fear of rain.
2. The fool says he cannot give because he must lay up for a *rainy day*, which Solomon here corrected, and he will now show both business and charity to be under God's providence.
3. If you wait for perfect circumstances for business or charity, you will never do either.
4. There is never a perfect day to sow – for business or charity – unless you live by faith.
5. Therefore, watching the Weather Channel and worrying about it at all is foolish vanity.
6. Thus, reading political *insider information* and changing anything by it is foolish vanity.
7. Of course, certain farming operations require checking the weather, but God expects you to know the difference between paralyzing worry and faithful boldness (Matt 6:25; etc.).
8. Those who forecast the end of the U.S. in the 60's and 70's missed the greatest economic boom in the history of the U.S., which ran from about 1982 to 2000 or 2006 or 2019.
9. These fearmongers worried about Y2K and prepared for the end of the world. Shameful!
10. Recall the story of *Chicken Little*, who for worry the sky falling did not avoid the fox.
11. The JBS and related organizations have forecast the end of America for 50 years or more.
12. Instead, America has had the greatest peace and prosperity during those same 50 years.

#### ***B. And he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.***

1. A man worried about the clouds possibly bringing rain will not reap out of fear of rain.
2. If you wait for perfect circumstances for business or charity, you will never do either.
3. There is never a perfect day to reap – for business or charity, unless you live by faith.

4. For two minutes about Chicken Little ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NO04VXBIS0M>.
5. Recall the story of *Chicken Little*, who for worry the sky falling did not avoid the fox.
6. Instead of worrying about circumstances in God's control, live God by your control.
7. Ignore the news! Grow up! Those that write do not know, how must lest you that reads it.

***5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.***

A. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit.*

1. The spirit of man entering a child in its mother's womb, as in the immediate context, is a marvel as to when, how, from where, why captive, how released, etc. (Eccl 3:21; 12:7).
2. We know not the Holy Spirit and His wonderful ways in creation (Gen 1:2), upon and within man (John 3:8), and those which David had written about earlier (Ps 139:7-12).
3. The point to be had and remembered from this text is that you do *not* know this matter of either spirit, for Solomon's point by the Spirit is your ignorance of God's providence.
4. Rather than use this text to teach anything about Spirit regeneration or child development in the womb, the point is that you do *not* know anything of value about either subject.

B. *Nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child.*

1. The formation of a child from joining of sperm and egg is a miraculous transformation.
2. If you want to read and consider more on this subject, look elsewhere (Psalm 139:13-16).
3. The point to be had and remembered from this text is that you do *not* know this matter of child growth, for Solomon's point by the Spirit is your ignorance of God's providence.
4. Rather than use this text to teach anything about Spirit regeneration or child development in the womb, the point is that you do *not* know anything of value about either subject.

C. *Even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

1. As with the spirit or development of a child in the womb, you do *not* know God's works.
2. God makes all, spirit and bones, and He works all factors affecting business and charity.
3. Solomon taught often that men do not know the future (Eccl 3:22; 6:12; 8:7; 9:12; 10:14).
4. Thus, since you do not know the future – do what you do know – charity and business.
5. If you fret, fear, or worry about what you do not know (everything), you will do nothing.

***6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.***

A. *In the morning sow thy seed.*

1. At the first opportunity, go ahead and make your business plans and execute them boldly.
2. The Lord sent word by Jeremiah to captive Jews in Babylon to sow and grow (Je 29:4-7).
3. We do not give up on any matter by appearance or rumor, except where prudence demands change, until the baby dies (II Sam 12:15-25; Jonah 3:4-10; Isaiah 38:1-8).

B. *And in the evening withhold not thine hand.*

1. At the first opportunity, go ahead and give away to the poor without fear of the future.
2. If fools say a recession is coming and you should hold back, get away from them now.
3. Fools say, I cannot afford to give. Wise men say, I cannot afford not to give. Excellent!

C. *For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that.*

1. As your ignorance in the previous verse, you do not know the outcome of either effort.
2. You do not know if, how, or when God will reward your business plan or your charity.

3. We must reject all fearmongers, because they have never done anyone any good at all.
  4. If you read all the military reports you wish, you do not if there will be war or who wins.
- D. *Or whether they both shall be alike good.*
1. The only restraint on following your heart and plans is God's will (Pr 16:9; Jas 4:13-15).
  2. Trusting God to press ahead in business and charity improves chances of both prospering.

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #58: *Considering Death Enhances Present Life* \*\*\*\*\*

## **7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:**

### A. *Truly the light is sweet.*

1. The Preacher does not want you to miss the love of life, so he prefaces it with a fine *truly*.
2. The ability to see and appreciate light is a blessing of life (Job 3:20; 33:30; Psalm 56:13).
3. A sunny day is truly a sweet and pleasant thing, for which we should give profuse thanks.
4. God gives us many things to show His lovingkindnesses and tender mercies (Ps 103:1-5).
5. Vain life under the sun can be a sweet and pleasant experience, if lived holily and wisely.
6. Do you rejoice and give thanks for all the sweet things God graciously gives you in life?

### B. *And a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.*

1. The ability to see and appreciate the *sun* and *sunshine* is a blessing of life (Ec 6:5; 7:11).
2. Life under the sun has its blessings as well as its vanities, and we should discern both.
3. Do you know how to enjoy life and soak a beautiful day in through your eyes and skin?
4. God considers sunshine and rain as two great providential gifts (Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17).
5. Consider that sunshine is free! It requires no prerequisites of any kind. It knows no limits of nationality, economic ability, educational attainments, or anything at all (Ps 19:1-6).
6. Consider other gifts of God that are free or nearly free ... sex, food, drink, exercise, etc.
7. David spoke of tasting and seeing God's goodness (Ps 34:8). Do you *smell the roses*?
8. Life under the sun can be sweet and pleasant, but sinful man has corrupted life and destroyed its sweetness with fear, greed, lust, laziness, discontentment, polygamy, etc.
9. But only the very naïve and stupid will assume or believe they will live forever here.
10. There are even greater pleasant things (Ps 4:7; Hab 3:17-19; Acts 14:17; Gen 15:1; etc.).
11. Life above the sun is better than here (Ps 16:11; 73:24-26; Phil 1:21-23; Re 7:16; 21:23).

## **8 But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.**

### A. *But if a man live many years.*

1. The disjunctive *but* is to contradict and warn about the sweetness and pleasure of 11:7.
2. In spite of the sweetness and pleasantness of youth, there are dark and evil days coming.
3. Remember that the length of life is by the sovereign will of God (Prov 27:1; Jas 4:14-16).
4. Observe the contrast between *years* of this phrase and *days* of a following phrase, for the good parts of life may be measured in *years*, and the evil parts in *days*, though *many*.

### B. *And rejoice in them all.*

1. He takes in all life has to offer through the sun and other enjoyments God freely gives.
2. That is, rejoice in all his good years, before the evil days come for him (Ec 11:8b; 12:1).

### C. *Yet let him remember the days of darkness.*

1. The *days of darkness* are days of decay and sickness and days after death (Eccl 12:1-7).

2. Observe the contrast between *days* of this phrase and *years* of a preceding phrase, for the good parts of life may be measured in *years*, and the evil parts in *days*, though *many*.
3. Life is short ... old age is miserable ... therefore live each day in view of coming misery.
4. The psalmist declared our days are limited and must be applied to wisdom (Ps 90:10-12).
5. Men may call them *golden years*, but they ignorantly or maliciously contradict the truth.
6. Living in view of death puts a good perspective on maximizing each day of life you have.
7. Life is too short to waste a single day of it, so maximize each day that God gives you.
8. Meeting your Creator after death is too sure to foolishly sin by life's joys (Ec 3:21; 12:1).
9. Solomon's purpose is the profitable and pleasant use of this life under the sun on earth.
10. Get yourself a large wall clock and let it remind you daily not to waste an hour or minute.

D. *For they shall be many.*

1. Observe the contrast between *days* of this phrase and *years* of a preceding phrase, for the good parts of life may be measured in *years*, and the evil parts in *days*, though *many*.
2. Consider Jacob's sorrowful description of his life, at age 130, to Pharaoh (Genesis 47:9).
3. Days of decay and sickness before death can be many; the dark days of death are many.

E. *All that cometh is vanity.*

1. Life's pleasures eventually end ... and all human dreams and efforts are revealed as vain.
2. Since Solomon is dealing with life under the sun, he does not write of life above the sun.
3. If all that is coming is vanity, then why waste today by allowing vanity in your life early.
4. But beyond this life we see heaven's light, which the Preacher assumes you know about.
5. There is much more for a son of God, whose life does not end with the vanity of death.
6. Jesus came to give life more abundantly than Solomon ever recommended (John 10:10).
7. Paul knew it was gain and far better to die and be with Christ than to live (Phil 1:21-23).
8. A new universe comes without any bondage, corruption, vanity, vexation (Rom 8:17-23).

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #59: *Death and Judgment Should Direct Conduct* \*\*\*\*\*

***9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.***

A. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth.*

1. Some commentators and I have chosen to regard this as Solomon's irony ... in the past.
  - a. What is irony? A figure of speech intending the opposite ... as in, *Go break a leg!*
  - b. Rather than irony, it is Solomon's command to enjoy youth and God-given blessings.
  - c. While the light is sweet and joy in God's goodness possible, take advantage of youth.
2. There are several keys that help us determine to take this verse positively, not ironically.
  - a. A key ... the verse involves the concluding *therefore* of the next verse about sorrow.
  - b. A key ... the removal of *sorrow* – opposite of joy and cheer – is to rejoice indeed.
  - c. A key ... it does not conclude by exhorting youth to remove joy from their hearts.
  - d. A key ... the prior verses are rejoicing before darkness of older days (Eccl 11:7-8).
  - e. A key ... the prior verse is sweet pleasantries before the coming of vanity (Ec 11:8).
  - f. A key ... the following verse is pleasure of younger days before it is gone (Ec 12:1).
  - g. A key ... the book very often commended joy (Eccl 2:26; 3:12,22; 5:19-20; 9:7; etc.).
  - h. A key ... the book has mentioned the joys related to youth (Ec 9:9-10 cp Pr 5:18-19).
  - i. A key ... is sight of thine eyes, which had been commended about the sun (Ec 11:7).
  - j. A key ... is joy in the heart, which Solomon said was a gift from God (Ec 5:20; 9:7).

- k. A key ... is the disjunctive *but*, which has little to no value, if the first half is ironical.
  - l. A key ... is God's judgment is not only punishment; He also finds good (Ec 12:14).
  - m. We are no more obligated to make this a prodigal son wasting his father's substance in riotous living than to believe Ahasuerus demanded a nude table dance by Vashti.
3. Youth is the time to rejoice, for it has the greatest freedom and the least responsibilities.
  4. The glory of young men is their strength (Prov 20:29), and they should use it with joy.
  5. A young man is able to work with great strength and industry, if he chooses (Ec 9:10).
  6. The glory of young women is their beauty, and they should thankfully use it with joy.
  7. A young woman can be a glorious ornament and pleasure for her father, husband, etc.
  8. God took care of young women to be cheered up by a one-year honeymoon (De 24:5).
  9. Life is too short to waste a single day not rejoicing in thanksgiving for God's goodness.
  10. It is a terrible shame for a young person to waste an hour in discouragement or worry.
  11. You will never have back the beauty, ease, liberties, strength, and opportunities of youth.
  12. Love your spouse, making love, sharing life, building a home, pregnancy, nursing babies, having children, going to school, learning a skill, increasing in ability, increasing in beauty and strength, exploring the world of food, places, music, sights, etc. ... for it will all end soon when the evil days come that these things are unpleasant and impossible.
- B. *And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth.*
1. Solomon positively taught that God answers with joy in the heart (Eccl 5:20; 8:15; 9:7).
  2. A young man in bed with a youthful wife can rejoice in each detail (Ec 9:9; Pr 5:18-19).
  3. A young husband was to stay home a full year to cheer up that dear wife (Deut 24:5).
  4. Business prosperity by promotions and productivity cheer young men (Zechariah 9:17).
- C. *And walk in the ways of thine heart.*
1. It is liberty and wisdom to walk in the ways of thine heart, and God directs (Prov 16:9).
  2. With few limitations or duties, a young man can try almost anything he can imagine.
  3. Business plans involving a change are fine, as long as submitted to God (James 4:13-15).
- D. *And in the sight of thine eyes.*
1. The immediate context has a reference to walking in the sight of your eyes (Ec 11:7-8).
  2. What joy filled Jacob's eyes when he saw the well-favoured Rachel (Genesis 29:15-20).
  3. Even pagan women could be desired by the eyes, if protocol were kept (Deut 21:10-14).
- E. *But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*
1. *But* there is a caveat ... while rejoicing in life, remember that God's judgment is coming.
  2. The disjunctive *but* puts a limitation on the joy and heart-following pleasures of youth.
  3. Life is too short to waste even a day – *but* judgment is too terrible to ever sin in your joy.
  4. God will not punish for lawful joy, cheer, and lifestyle ... *but* only for evil abuse by sin.
  5. God will judge every life activity – good and bad (Eccl 12:14; Rom 14:12; II Cor 5:10).
  6. We will give account, and God will honor all lawful pleasures enjoyed (Heb 13:4; etc.).

***10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.***

- A. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart.*
1. This concluding *therefore* summarizes the lesson of the previous three verses (Ec 11:7-9).
  2. You remove sorrow from your heart – all negative emotions – by rejoicing with cheer.
  3. This is the necessary consequence in order to rejoice and follow your heart with cheer.
  4. Here is the godly balance – get rid of negative emotions, and avoid sinning against God.
  5. The opposing parts of this verse are just like the one before it with opposing parts also.

6. If you have wasted even one day by anger, bitterness, covetousness, discontentment, etc., you are a fool. Life is too short to waste a single day. Days are gifts of God for holy joy.
  7. If you have wasted even one day by excessive ambition or foolishly working too many hours, you are a fool. Life is too short to waste a single day. It is God's gift for holy joy.
  8. Life is too short ... to be angry ... bitter ... critical ... depressed or discontent ... envious ... fantasize or fat ... greedy or grouchy ... haughty or hurried ... irritated or implacable ... to be jaded, jilted, or jealous ... live above your means and be strapped ... moody or mad ... odious ... provoked ... quiet ... selfish ... troubled ... worried ... etc.
- B. *And put away evil from thy flesh.*
1. This concluding *therefore* summarizes the lesson of the previous three verses (Ec 11:7-9).
  2. You remove *evil from thy flesh* – all youthful lusts of the body – by godly sanctification.
  3. Here is the godly balance – get rid of negative emotions, and avoid sinning against God.
  4. Due to raging hormones and no commitment to a family, youth are tempted to fornicate.
  5. Due to voracious appetites and peers, youth are tempted to drunkenness and gluttony.
  6. God invented sex, commands sex, and exalts sex; but He hates fornication (Gen 2:25; 29:17; Pr 5:19; Song 8:8-10; I Cor 6:9-20; 7:1-5; I Thes 4:1-8; Heb 13:4; etc.).
- C. *For childhood and youth are vanity.*
1. The Bible plainly recognizes sins of youth (Job 13:26; Ps 25:7; Pr 22:15; II Tim 2:22).
  2. Childhood and youth are vanity by the first clause in discontented frustration for more.
    - a. Solomon commanded young men to rejoice, because many are moody and sullen.
    - b. The author wasted more of his youth than he enjoyed by fretting against everything.
  3. Childhood and youth are vanity by the second clause in foolish bodily lusts of youth.
    - a. They are subject to powerful temptations to fornication, gluttony, rebellion, etc.
    - b. Experience plainly recognizes the testosterone-driven problems of a young man.
    - c. There are powerful sexual lusts and fantasies and also natural roid rages of anger.
  4. Foolishness is bound in the hearts of children and youth, and it must be guarded against.
  5. Consistent with the final conclusion, enjoying life includes obeying God (Ec 12:13-14).

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## Chapter 12

\*\*\*\*\* Lesson #60: Decay and Death Demand Youth Worship \*\*\*\*\*

### ***1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;***

#### ***A. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.***

1. You are a creature. God is your *Creator*. You are not your own. You have no rights. You have duties to Him, and you owe Him all you are and have. Get down, and lift Him up.
2. You must *remember* Him. It is easy to forget these spiritual mysteries in the excitement and discoveries of youth. It is easy to remember all else but Him and His rights and rules.
3. You must remember and obey God during the days of your *youth* to use your vitality and be saved from temptations and scarring thorns of seducing roses (Ps 25:7; II Tim 2:22).
4. Your youth is described well as *days*, for though most young people think it passes slowly, yet it races away and will quickly leave them wondering what happened to it.
5. You must do so *now*: for you cannot boast of tomorrow, the matter is crucial, your heart is deceitful, most friends are destructively foolish, and death comes faster than you think.
6. Do not give God your leftovers! Your weakness! Your inability! Your failing memory!
7. There has been very little direction toward God in this book of philosophy about life under the sun, but here it is, and it is directed to youth, who should learn this book early.
8. Childhood and youth are vanity (Ec 11:10), for they are filled with foolish lusts and optimism that deceive you to believe you can do anything and live forever (Pr 22:15).

#### ***B. While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh.***

1. The evil days are those of darkness and trouble leading to death that follows (Ec 12:2-7).
2. The years are coming on quickly when you will lose all the advantages and joys of youth.
3. It is during these youthful years, if you will hear the wise man, you should live for God.
4. Do not be foolish and think you will turn to God when you have no joy or strength left.
5. Do not plan to sow wild oats now and repent later, for He may not grant it (Heb 12:17).

#### ***C. When thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.***

1. There is much pleasure from life in youth, which this book and context have commended.
2. With death in view, your life should take on greater importance toward God and profit.
3. There are days coming in which your senses and pleasures will be reduced to nothing.
4. The world calling these days and years the *golden years* shows their lying ignorance.

#### ***D. Solomon's inspired metaphors to describe bodily decay that follows are incredibly creative.***

1. The divine library of the Bible has this precious volume of Ecclesiastes on the shelves.
2. Within this book of Ecclesiastes is this creative and accurate description of old age.
3. For another presentation of this chapter ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/what-happens-at-30.pdf>

### ***2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:***

#### ***A. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened.***

1. The literal sun, light, moon, or stars will not be darkened, but your perception will be.
2. The preceding context described pleasures of youth, including sunlight (Eccl 11:7-8).

3. Failing sight reduces an old man's ability to see (Ec 12:3), but this is a general metaphor.
  4. Good times of pleasure and prosperity will end, which in Scripture are described as sunny, bright days (II Samuel 24:3; Isaiah 30:26; 60:20).
  5. Bad days are described as lacking such lights as these (Isaiah 13:9-10; Joel 2:10; 3:15).
- B. *Nor the clouds return after the rain.*
1. Most persons desire sunshine after rain, but what if more and new rain clouds appeared?
  2. Physical maladies are described by unwanted rain coming again and again (Prov 26:1).
  3. It is a fact of aging that old people have bodily issues one after another with little relief.
  4. As soon as modern medicine relieves symptoms of one issue, another problem arrives.
  5. In younger years, you know good days will return after a bout with most any sickness.

***3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,***

- A. *In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble.*
1. The house in this context is the body, also called a tabernacle (II Cor 5:1; II Peter 1:14).
  2. Men keep their bodies in every way, from top to bottom, by their two coordinated hands.
  3. Man's hands, which have done everything, will shake and tremble, which all have seen.
- B. *And the strong men shall bow themselves.*
1. The strong men, plural, in this context are the legs – his strongest members (Ps 147:10).
  2. Man's legs will be unable to fully straighten and lift the body as they once did easily.
  3. Back braces, leg braces, and walkers are witty inventions to help assist men standing.
- C. *And the grinders cease because they are few.*
1. The grinders, or teeth, will fall out and be unable to do their former work of chewing.
  2. Man's teeth decay, fall out, and force him to eat soft and mushy food like applesauce.
  3. Dentures are witty inventions to replace rotten teeth and keep the ability to chew (grind).
- D. *And those that look out of the windows be darkened.*
1. The eyes are the windows of the soul with an outward view and shades that cover them.
  2. Man's eyes lose their acuity and ability to see and discern color, print, and details.
  3. Glasses, contact lenses, and magnifying glasses are witty inventions to help failing sight.

***4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;***

- A. *And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low.*
1. Continuing the figurative terms for failing body parts, what changes when teeth fall out?
  2. The Holy Spirit chose to call your lips the doors of your mouth (Psalm 141:3; Micah 7:5).
  3. Man's lips flop closed when the teeth fall out; they can no longer hold themselves apart.
  4. Your lips are the doors and opening to the two-way streets of digestion and respiration.
  5. They must close completely to hold food; and they are seldom opened to speak any more.
  6. When does it occur? *When grinding is low* ... when teeth fall out and leave lips closed.
  7. Dentures are a witty invention to slow down this bodily decay with temporary teeth.
- B. *And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird.*
1. With old age, waking and rising is no longer a matter of choice, for sleeps leaves easily.
  2. Slight sounds like a bird singing will bring an old person fully awake, unlike earlier days.
  3. Man's ability to sleep soundly and long disappears, in stark contrast to slumbering youth.

4. Children and youth will sleep on and on when tired, and hardly any noise will wake them.
- C. *And all the daughters of musick shall be brought low.*
1. Ears, which detect musical tones, lose ability to hear and discriminate among sounds.
  2. Man's ears become too dull to hear music from others or hear enough to sing himself.
  3. No matter how delightful the musical presentation or how much once loved, the decaying function of hearing will not allow the wonderful sounds of good music to be appreciated.
  4. Hearing aids are a witty invention to slow down this bodily decay to retain some hearing.

***5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:***

- A. *Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high.*
1. Equilibrium declines as sight and hearing decline in ability and legs and back in strength.
  2. His sense of balance leaves and brings vertigo, so that he fears ladders, heights, or flying.
  3. Activities they once laughed about now become quite terrifying due to changes in ability.
- B. *And fears shall be in the way.*
1. Confidence and courage decline with physical deterioration, and the mind increases fears.
  2. Man's boldness leaves him, so that he imagines many dangers and prefers to stay home.
  3. Activities they once laughed about now become quite terrifying due to changes in ability.
- C. *And the almond tree shall flourish.*
1. Hair turns white and/or gray, as the leaves of a blossoming almond tree (Pr 16:31; 20:29).
  2. Man's hair turns from youthful color to the white-gray of old age (Lev 19:32; Job 15:10).
  3. Hair coloring or hair pieces are witty inventions for man to deceive others about his hair.
- D. *And the grasshopper shall be a burden.*
1. Commentators speculate that (1) old men are too weak to carry a chance grasshopper that jumps on their shoulders, (2) old men with deteriorating posture and protruding bones look like grasshoppers, or (3) a crippled grasshopper has a gait like an old man.
  2. These uneducated guesses are foolish and leave Solomon quite ignorant about old age.
  3. What wise man would ignore the sexual dysfunction of old age, when it is one of the most disconcerting and discouraging consequences of aging, especially for men?
  4. What wise man would ignore sexual dysfunction, especially in light of the next phrase?
  5. This is the same man who wrote details plainly about sexual pleasure, so there is no need to be prudish about his real meaning (Song 1:13; 4:5-7; 7:1-9; 8:8-10; Prov 5:19).
  6. The male member, like a grasshopper, hops or jumps up easily and often in virile youth.
  7. His erectile ability becomes difficult – a burden – medically called erectile dysfunction.
  8. Pfizer sells one of the world's most popular drugs to deal with this burden – Viagra.
  9. Solomon had one thousand wives and concubines, so he would rue the difficulty greatly.
- E. *And desire shall fail.*
1. Sexual desire, a great impulse of youth and health, disappears. Men can hardly believe it.
  2. What was once his constant companion, burning loins, disappears into the mist of death.
  3. Man's sexual drive declines to nothing by hormone levels of testosterone steadily falling.
  4. Desire to live and survive also declines greatly, but not as universally as sexual desire.
- F. *Because man goeth to his long home.*
1. Death and burial, the appointed end of all men, puts the body in its long home, the grave.
  2. Man's body corrupts, as described above, to the point where it stops living and is buried.
  3. Unless Jesus returns soon, you will spend more time underground than on the ground.

4. Since Solomon wrote about life under the sun, there is nothing here about resurrection.

G. *And the mourners go about the streets.*

1. It is at funerals that mourning becomes the only acceptable sound (Luke 8:52; Matt 9:23).
2. A life once full of vitality, promise, and pleasure is now the song of mournful minstrels.
3. It is a common expression that a sad, slow, mournful song must be a funeral dirge.
4. There were shouts of joy for birth, puberty, driver's license, marriage ... now mourning.

**6 *Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.***

A. *Or ever the silver cord be loosed.*

1. The spinal cord, carrying nerve impulses to your body, loses its grip in the death process.
2. Man's life ends when the brain and spinal cord no longer connect and communicate.

B. *Or the golden bowl be broken.*

1. The brain, which directs the body and is kept in the bowl-like cranium, stops functioning.
2. Man's life ends when the brain is no longer directing bodily functions ... thus brain dead.

C. *Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain.*

1. The heart, which receives and pumps blood for circulation, is like a pitcher and fountain.
2. Man's life ends when the heart stops beating and pumping blood throughout the body.

D. *Or the wheel broken at the cistern.*

1. The heart, receiving and pumping blood for circulation, is like a water wheel and cistern.
2. Man's life ends when the heart stops beating and pumping blood throughout the body.

**7 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.***

A. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was.*

1. The body corrupts and decomposes rapidly back into the clay and dust it was made from.
2. God made man from dust with a spirit of life, and a body without a spirit returns to dust.
3. The human spirit animates the human body, and the body without one is dead (Jas 2:26).
4. Since Solomon wrote about life under the sun, there is nothing here about resurrection.

B. *And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

1. Your spirit, which is your living soul and personality, shall return to its Creator God.
2. He created it and placed it on earth in the first place, and now it returns to its true owner.
3. Solomon has already distinguished between an animal and human spirit (Eccl 3:19-21).
4. You cannot choose to avoid meeting God ... so prepare to meet thy God (Amos 4:12)!

C. For more about death and eternal life ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/eternal-life-is-a-gift.pdf>.

D. For death declared, defied, destroyed ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/death-declared-defied-destroyed.pdf>.

E. For other aspects of overcoming death ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/till-death-do-us-part-funeral.pdf>.

## **8 *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.***

### **A. *Vanity of vanities.***

1. This expression used to open and close the book is a superlative description against life.
2. Since it is found in both places, we use it to mark both the introduction and conclusion.
3. Any hope built on our natural or physical life will be brought to nothing by bodily death.
4. Solomon has identified and explained many factors that make early life quite hopeless.
5. The great enemy that makes anything and everything in life vanity is death (I Cor 15:26).
6. If Christianity is limited to hope in this life only, it is a miserable religion (I Cor 15:19).

### **B. *Saith the preacher.***

1. These are not speculative words of an ignorant philosopher, but of an inspired teacher.
2. God made Solomon special to write this book ... David's son, king, wise, rich, inspired.

### **C. *All is vanity.***

1. In a perspective of death, all the things that men dream and labor for become worthless.
2. Solomon has taught much about maximizing life, but the real knowledge is in the gospel.

## **9 *And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.***

### **A. *And moreover, because the preacher was wise.***

1. Moreover means *in addition to*, so we are about to have something added to the lessons.
2. The book of Ecclesiastes, meaning The Preacher, is a godly philosophy for wise living.
3. But in addition to the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon also taught knowledge by proverbs.
4. A preacher is a public teacher, as the whole verse indicates; Solomon taught the people.
5. Solomon referred to himself in the third person, but said he was the preacher (Ec 1:12).
6. The preacher was wise – he had wisdom to communicate, and he had wisdom to do it.
7. Solomon's wisdom included the content of Proverbs, and the creative choice of the genre.
8. God gave Solomon more wisdom than any man of his generation (I Kings 3:12; 4:29-31).
9. Solomon magnified his gift and office, like Paul (Rom 11:13; I Cor 15:10; II Cor 11:5).
10. The words here help promote what Ecclesiastes contains and what Proverbs contains.
11. A wise man should use his gift, and others should seek it (Proverbs 10:21; 11:30; 20:5).
12. Knowledge, wisdom, and truth should be communicated to give answers (Pr 22:17-21).

### **B. *He still taught the people knowledge.***

1. He did not end with his observations, analysis, and writing of the book of Ecclesiastes.
2. Though Ecclesiastes provides a foundation for life, Proverbs provides the many details.
3. He continued using wisdom to teach knowledge to Israel without deferring or quitting.
4. A wise man does not keep his wisdom to himself – his lips feed many (Pr 10:21; 11:30).
5. It is a great gift, when gifted men give their lives to teach others by God's gift to them.
6. This clause encourages us to assume Solomon wrote this mid-life, before backsliding.

### **C. *Yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.***

1. Proverbs are short, pithy sayings that convey a great lesson of wisdom for prudent living.
2. They are creative ways of stating a lesson; they are dark sayings requiring interpretation.
3. He gave good heed – he was attentive, cautious, careful, deliberate, diligent, and prudent.
4. He diligently observed and analyzed life to determine simple rules for profitable living.
5. He sought them out primarily by using creative genius to convert his rules to proverbs.
6. But he also sought them out by discovering the proverbs of others (Pr 30:1-33; 31:1-31).

7. He sought out the best proverbs that conveyed the most wisdom by use of the best words.
8. He set them in order by arranging his lessons and rules into the literary form of a proverb.
9. He set them in order by determining the most valuable and organizing them for good use.
10. Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs (I Kgs 4:32); we have only about 500 (Pr 1:1; 10:1; 25:1).
11. Consider a few examples of how certain expressions and words trigger our memories and remind us of knowledge learned ... *there is that scattereth ... a soft answer ... go the ant ... put a knife ... foolishness bound ... a friend loveth ... a gracious woman ... trust in the Lord ... the fear of the Lord ... honour the Lord ... a good name ... favour is deceitful ... who can find ... with all thy getting ... keep thy heart with all diligence ... let her be ... witty inventions ... it is better to dwell ... a companion of fools ... Wine is a ... withhold not ... buy the truth ... he that loveth pureness of heart ... he that loveth pleasure ... the king's heart ... better is little with ... there is a way ... etc., etc.*
12. See this link to study Proverbs ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/proverbs.php?chapter=1>.

## ***10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.***

### ***A. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words.***

1. Solomon is the preacher (Ec 1:12), and he carefully selected the best words to teach truth.
2. Acceptable words are words that are desirable, delightful, and well worthy of acceptance.
3. Acceptable words are also words that are proper, profitable, righteous, helpful, and wise.
4. Every sincere preacher desires, prays, and studies to find acceptable words to give the sense of God's words in a pleasant, profitable, gripping, helpful, and practical way.
5. Solomon wrote inspired words, as he will explain in the next verse about one shepherd.
6. Though God inspired the words in Solomon, he was not entirely passive in their writing.
7. Solomon's words, as all inspired words, are acceptable words sent by God to each of us.
8. David wrote about inspiration as his heart dictating words for him to write (Psalm 45:1).
9. God spoke words; Jeremiah repeated to Baruch, who wrote (Jer 36:1-4,17-18,27-28,32).
10. Peter described the process as the Holy Ghost moving men to speak or write (II Pet 1:21).
11. The inspired words of scripture are necessary for the soul of every elect man (Luke 4:4).
12. Thank God for His divine library that He has given you to benefit by for life and eternity.

### ***B. And that which was written was upright.***

1. Solomon used his wisdom from God, by inspiration, to write three books of the Bible.
2. Solomon's inspired words in three books are upright – correct, right, and true before God.
3. All the words of wisdom, Solomon's inspired words included, are very righteous (Pr 8:8).
4. The prophet Agur taught his pupils every word of God is pure and inviolate (Pr 30:5-6).
5. What is *righteous and very faithful*? The Bible's words are like no other (Ps 119:138).
6. How about *perfect, sure, and right*? Do God's words rejoice your heart (Psalm 19:7-11)?
7. Every book written by man has lying deception, whether written in malice or ignorance.
8. There is no lie in the words of God (I John 2:21). But the modern versions have many.

### ***C. Even words of truth.***

1. The Bible's words are God's, not man's; they are effectual words of truth (I Thess 2:13).
2. You do not want any other words, but the certain words of truth to speak (Prov 22:17-21).
3. A word is the most elementary and simple component of communication. Love each one.
4. We trust every word of the King James Bible, even if we cannot explain every single one.
5. There is no lie in the words of truth (I Jn 2:21), and we argue from each one (John 10:35).
6. Are you thankful for true words (Ps 119:160)? Do you rejoice as with spoil (Ps 119:162)?
7. How should you value such words? More precious than your necessary food (Job 23:12).

8. Every book written by man has subtle deception, whether written in malice or ignorance.
9. Many examples of one-word arguments ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/one-word-arguments-titus.pdf>.

## ***11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.***

### ***A. The words of the wise are as goads.***

1. The wise here are like Solomon, inspired writers of scripture – prophets and teachers.
2. Here is a simile, by the word *as*, where a wise man’s words have the effect of a goad.
3. A goad is a long, pointed stick used to poke and prod oxen or other pulling beasts from behind, with the intent of urging or pressing them on in their movements forward.
4. A wise man – one of God’s preachers, especially those inspired – uses words like goads.
5. The goads of God’s words enter our hard hearts or dull minds to quicken and provoke us.
6. A minister takes words to crush any thinking contrary to God (Jer 23:29; II Cor 10:4-6).
7. God charged N.T. preachers to be *instant* – insistent, urging, and pressing (II Tim 4:1-2).
8. God’s ministers are to lift up their voices like a trumpet to expose sins (Is 58:1; Mic 3:8).
9. The goad effect of the gospel has different responses based on the heart (Acts 2:37; 7:54).
10. When they speak or write, or when the words are taught, do not despise it (I Thess 5:20).
11. The consequences of rejecting the words of the wise are very great (Jer 25:4-7; 44:4-6).

### ***B. And as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.***

1. Nails are used to build things by fastening pieces of material together, and preaching builds or edifies the hearers by fastening God’s words to them (I Cor 14:3; II Cor 10:8).
2. Nails go deep into material and stick there permanently. O for such with scripture in us!
3. The masters of assemblies were the main rulers or teachers for preaching to assemblies.
4. We understand masters of ceremonies, which are hosts and leaders to oversee meetings.
5. Ezra was a perfect example in Nehemiah 8, where he led Levites in preaching scripture.
6. They were called rulers of the synagogue, as in Acts 13:15, who invited Paul to speak.
7. Jesus referred to Nicodemus as a master, or teacher, in Israel (John 3:10 cp Luke 4:20).
8. God gave gifts to men, and these men are to use their gifts in teaching (Eph 4:11-14).

### ***C. Which are given from one shepherd.***

1. Here is a beautiful description of wise men and masters of assemblies using God’s words.
2. Though God used near 40 writers, there is only one Author of scripture (II Pet 1:20-21).
3. All scripture is given by inspiration of God – the words came from God (II Tim 3:16-17).
4. Jesus Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop of the sheep and of His men and their words.
5. Israel sought God’s law (His words) at the mouth of messengers – the priests (Mal 2:7).
6. Knowledge and understanding comes from God’s words, by His pastors (Jeremiah 3:15).
7. “The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it” (Ps 68:11).
8. No wonder the Bible describes these preachers with beautiful feet (Is 52:7; Rom 10:15).
9. When you hear God’s word taught, be sure you receive it as God’s words (I Thes 2:13).
10. If you reject the messenger with God’s words, then you are rejecting God (I Sam 8:7).
11. The unity of scripture is glorious, from beginning to end, from one genre to another.
12. The Creator God has revealed truth to you in writing and confirmed it by much evidence.

## ***12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.***

### ***A. And further, by these, my son, be admonished:***

1. What are *these*, which Solomon exhorts his son to consider for admonition? Consider it.

2. Commentators make *these* to be words of the wise that were just described (Ec 12:9-11).
  3. However, for five reasons we look ahead: (a) *further* moves forward to an additional thought, (b) a colon identifies things following that have been described, (c) the two warnings in 12b need to be connected, (d) the two warnings are great admonitions and warnings following the positive description of scripture, and (e) the demonstrative pronoun *these* should be satisfied from its own sentence rather than a previous paragraph.
  4. In addition to exalting and commending wonderful words of inspired truth (Ec 12:9-11), Solomon warned his son against the never-ending and body-exhausting words of men.
  5. **Admonish.** To put (a person) in mind of duties; to counsel against wrong practices; to give authoritative or warning advice; to exhort, to warn.
  6. A man has only so much ability, energy, resources, and time ... so choose God's words.
  7. Grasp the contrast between the profitable words of the wise and profitless books of men.
  8. The admonitions lead to verse 13, which reduces the real issues of life to a simple few.
- B. *Of making many books there is no end.*
1. There was no end, even in Solomon's day, to making books of merely human words.
  2. Solomon wrote nearly 3000 years ago, so there are many more books today than he saw.
  3. A trip to a big library or surfing a bookseller's website will reveal the millions of books.
  4. Philosophers and other speculators have published their ideas about life for many years.
  5. Today, anyone can afford to publish a book or website or blog or other communication.
  6. A king, Solomon or his son, would have accessibility to books more than most others.
  7. It is easy for us with deceitful hearts to be distracted reading most anything but scripture.
  8. Things that Solomon did not have were the insidious evil of television and the Internet.
- C. *And much study is a weariness of the flesh.*
1. You have limited energy and time, and there is much study that pays little in dividends.
  2. This is not a warning that studying the words of the wise is a weariness of the flesh.
  3. A priority in reading and studying must be remembered, with emphasis on scripture.
  4. God's word is not that big or long. Ecclesiastes builds a philosophy of life in a few pages.

### ***13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.***

- A. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.*
1. Here are wonderful words summarizing Solomon's study of the purpose and profit of life.
  2. All children should memorize these verses if nothing else from this book of philosophy.
  3. How do we view and live our physical life on earth, when it is all vanity and vexation?
  4. After 60 lessons in living wisely and pleasantly on earth, here is the bottom line of it all.
  5. After all his observations and analyzing of life, Solomon comes to this simple summary.
  6. If you love bottom lines of philosophy, which other theories avoid, embrace this one.
  7. King Solomon by God's inspiration/preservation told you the secret of life in few words.
- B. *Fear God.*
1. Solomon has preached this briefly throughout the book (Eccl 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13).
  2. This is one of the most important concepts of the Bible from its beginning to its end.
  3. You have an infinite, divine Creator, and you owe Him your entire life in all its aspects.
  4. Fearing God is your deep reverence to please and honor Him by your perfect obedience.
  5. It is belief in the Creator God of the Bible with awestruck consciousness of His glory and greatness and a loving desire to obey all He requires to please Him and avoid His anger.
  6. This fear is completely compatible with and part of loving God (Deut 6:4-5 cp 10:12-13).
  7. For much more about the fear of God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/fear-of-the-lord/sermon.php>.

C. *And keep his commandments.*

1. Fearing God by definition and nature means obeying all His commands (Deut 10:12-13).
2. The Bible exalts men who delight in God's commandments (Ps 1:1-6; 112:1; Rom 7:22).
3. His commandments are for our own good in this sin-cursed world (Deut 6:24; I John 5:3).
4. Obeying Him brings His supernatural blessings (Lev 26:3,14; Deut 28:1,5,15; Ps 84:11).
5. The happiest and most confident persons on earth are those that keep all His commands.
6. Keeping His commandments is the evidence and proof of eternal life second to no other.
7. How can all His commands be best summarized? Love of God and love of neighbor.
8. We must hate all inventions, not just those relating to women and sex, but all commands.

D. *For this is the whole duty of man.*

1. There is nothing deep or mysterious about pleasing God and enjoying life and eternity.
2. God is not looking for any ceremonial or sacramental religion other than His plain word.
3. Adam had a simple command to keep, which he did not, but which we must keep all.
4. Walking with God and keeping His commands trumps any Great Commission confusion.
5. Solomon did not end yet; he told you ... *why* ... beyond pleasure in life and God's favor.

**14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.**

A. *For God shall bring every work into judgment.*

1. *For* is a coordinating conjunction that indicates an explanation for what was described.
2. Fearing God and keeping His commandments is in light of giving an account of our lives.
3. You may be able to deceive other authorities in your life, but you will never deceive God.
4. Solomon had taught twice in this book that our spirits return to God (Eccl 3:21; 12:7).
5. You will give an account of every deed done in your body during the time under the sun.
6. There are consequences for all actions, even if God's providence does not show it in life.
7. Recall, God's love or hate cannot be known by life circumstances, but judgment comes.

B. *With every secret thing.*

1. Most of each person's character and conduct can be easily observed by others on earth.
2. Every man, woman, and child has secret deeds, words, or thoughts that shall be judged.
3. *Be sure your sin will find you out ...* is God's warning through Moses (Numbers 32:23).
4. It is for your life now and later that you should examine yourself and get rid of all sins.
5. Do not have any secrets. Hate hypocrisy. God sees anyway. Hiding from others is vanity.

C. *Whether it be good.*

1. Jesus and Paul described the remembrance of good deeds at Judgment (Matt 25:31-46).
2. Because they will be remembered, work to have many (I Tim 6:17-19; II Tim 1:16-18).
3. God is not unrighteous to forget the good things you do in life (Heb 6:10; Isaiah 32:8).
4. Any good deeds remembered by God will also bring you pleasure and profit on earth.

D. *Or whether it be evil.*

1. Jesus and Paul described the remembrance of bad deeds at Judgment (Matt 25:31-46).
2. Paul warned clearly two times about the Day of Judgment (Rom 14:10-12; II Cor 5:9-11).
3. The books will be opened; we will be judged; the book of life will save us (Re 20:11-15).

E. For much more about the Day of Judgment ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/judgment-seat-of-christ.pdf>.

F. For much more about the danger of hell ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/warnings-about-hell.pdf>.

G. For salvation by Christ's Cross at Judgment Day ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/cross-at-judgment-day.pdf>.

# ECCLESIASTES: A Godly Philosophy for Life

## For Further Study

1. Solomon's Proverbs (intro slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/proverbs.php?chapter=1>.
2. Solomon's Proverbs (full commentary) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/proverbs-intro.php>.
3. Knowing God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/knowning-god-complete-01-08-2018.pdf>.
4. The Fear of God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/fear-of-the-lord/sermon.php>.
5. The Dominion of God ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.
6. God of Confusion ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/god/is-god-the-author-of-confusion/sermon.php>.
7. God Distortions ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/god-distortions.pdf>.
8. The Problem of Evil ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/problem-of-evil.pdf>.
9. Search for Wisdom (Job 28 slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/search-for-wisdom-ppt.pdf>.
10. Search for Wisdom (Job 28 outline) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/search-for-wisdom.pdf>.
11. Judgment Day ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/judgment-seat-of-christ.pdf>.
12. Death and Eternal Life ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/eternal-life-is-a-gift.pdf>.
13. Warnings of Hell ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/warnings-about-hell.pdf>.
14. Vain Thoughts ... <http://letgodbetrue.com/pdf/vain-thoughts.pdf>.
15. Famous Last Words ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/famous-last-words.pdf>.
16. What Is Truth? ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/what-is-truth.pdf>.
17. Reversal of Fortune ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/reversal-of-fortune.pdf>.
18. God's Ordinance of Authority ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/authority-ordinance-of.pdf>.

19. The Christian and Politics ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf>.
20. Mighty Man's Life ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/managing-your-life.pdf>.
21. Measuring a Man's Life ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/make-your-life-count.pdf>.
22. Marriage – Only in the Lord ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/marriage-in-the-lord.pdf>.
23. Rules of Marriage ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/marriage-rules-preached.pdf>.
24. Finding a Virtuous Woman ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/practical/rate-a-date-women.php>.
25. The Joy of the Lord ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/joy-of-the-lord.pdf>.
26. Christian Work Ethic ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/christian-work-ethic.pdf>.
27. What about Wine? ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/wine-seminar-92.pdf>.
28. Lesson of the Locust ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/church/lesson-of-the-locust/sermon.php>.
29. True Worship ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/church/true-worshippers/sermon.php>.
30. Swearing and Oaths ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/swearing-and-oaths.pdf>.
31. Rules of Charity ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/practical/charity-haiti-earthquake/sermon.php>.
32. Getting Ahead on the Job ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/getting-ahead-on-the-job.pdf>.
33. A Cause for Mirth ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/cause-for-mirth.pdf>.
34. Christian Ethics ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/christian-ethics-case-studies.pdf>.
35. Making Wise Decisions ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/practical/making-wise-decisions.php>.
36. Right Side Up in an Upside Down World ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/right-side-up.pdf>.
37. Marvel Not at Oppression ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/living-under-obama-2.pdf>.
38. Living under Obama ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/living-under-obama-2.pdf>.

39. Family Sin Cycles ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/breaking-family-sin-cycles.pdf>.
40. How Much Do You Love God? ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/do-you-love-god.pdf>.
41. Life of David ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/david-traits.pdf>.
42. A Good Name ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/good-name.pdf>.
43. Running Your Race ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/running-your-race.pdf>.
44. Overwhelmed Women ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/overwhelmed-may-june-2016.pdf>.
45. Take Your Medicine ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/take-your-medicine.pdf>.
46. Four Things Small and Wise ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/four-things-small-and-wise.pdf>.
47. God Wrote the Bible ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/scripture/why-i-believe-the-bible.php>.
48. Bible Hermeneutics ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/scripture/knowning-the-scriptures.php>.
49. A Preaching Service ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/exposition/preaching-service/sermon.php>.
50. One-Word Arguments ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/one-word-arguments-titus.pdf>.
51. You Need a Lawyer ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/christ/you-need-a-lawyer/sermon.php>.
52. Cross of Christ on Judgment Day ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/future-glory-of-cross.pdf>.
53. The Glory of the Cross ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/glory-of-the-cross-2.pdf>.
54. He Is Altogether Lovely ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/he-is-altogether-lovely-2.pdf>.
55. Unsearchable Riches of Christ ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/unsearchable-riches.pdf>.
56. Salvation by Works ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/salvation/salvation-by-works/sermon.php>.
57. Forgotten Sins ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/forgotten-sins.pdf>.
58. Ending Your Life Well ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/ending-life-well.pdf>.