

## STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON: THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

### SESSION #18: Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

#### TEXT:

#### Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

v. 1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

v. 2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

v. 3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?

v. 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

v. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

v. 6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.

v. 7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

v. 8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

v. 9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

v.10 Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

v.11 There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

v.12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

v.13 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

v.14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

v.15 What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

v.16 I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."

v.17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

v.18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

## INTRODUCTION:

(Cow Pies & Candle Lights by G. T. Burton)

### **THE ECONOMIST**

Randy Jones and Bugger Red.  
 With a tough ol' yaller houn'  
 Wuz huntin' deer out in the brakes  
 'Bout forty miles from town.  
 Almost starved, 'cause game was scarce,  
 They wondered what to do.  
 So chopped the tail off that ol' dog,  
 And cooked it down for stew.  
 They ate the meat n' drank the soup  
 Then tossed the dog the bone.  
 The grateful pooch licked Randy's hand  
 When everything was gone.  
 Then Bugger looked at Jones and said:  
 "I'll call a spade a spade;  
 If you really study what we've done,  
 It's just like Federal Aid".

p. 1

(Unedited Notes by G. T. Burton)

### THE CORAL VETS

The ringie colt had colic  
 Out there standin' by the gate,  
 His head a'droopin' to the ground  
 It was two days since he ate.  
 Randy Jones and Bugger Red  
 Had been watchin' him all day,  
 They thought he had a fever  
 'Cause his head began to sway.  
 They wuz gonna doctor him  
 So they snubbed him to a post.  
 Then they got a blind on him  
 So the pore thing could be dosed.  
 But when Bugger tried to drench him  
 That there critter came unwound,  
 He struck out with his right hoof  
 And knocked Randy to the ground.  
 He squealed and laid his ears back  
 And bit Bugger on his hand,  
 Then knocked the bottle flyin'  
 Where it spilt out in the sand.  
 He'd snort and throw his head up  
 And he'd strike out left and right.  
 He'd stomp and kick and struggle;  
 He wuz really on the fight.  
 He sat back on his haunches  
 And he broke the snubbin' rope  
 Then went buckin' round and round  
 In a wild crow-hoppin' lope.  
 Randy said: "I'll go rope him,  
 And we'll throw him on the ground.  
 If we sideline up one foot,  
 I bet you can drench him down".  
 Bugger said: "I ain't lazy,  
 And I ain't one to bicker,  
 But if this is up to me  
 I'll just wait 'till he gets sicker."

(The Unofficial Liberal Joke Book for the Politically Incorrect by Bob Phillips)

A farmer was anxious to find out how his 15-year-old son would turn out. "Mabel," the man announced to his wife, "I've devised a test that will determine what he's going to be. Watch this."

The farmer took out a box and laid its contents on the kitchen table: a \$20 bill, a Bible, a bottle of whiskey, and a girlie magazine.

"You see, Mabel, this \$20 bill stands for business, the Bible for the ministry, and the whiskey and girlie magazine stand for a life of drunken debauchery. We'll leave them on the table, go hide, and when he comes in we'll see how he'll turn out."

The parents hid behind the drapes, and soon enough their son came in and walked over to the display on the table. Examining the items, he picked up the \$20 bill, held it to the light, and put it down. Next he picked up the girlie magazine, flipped through it, and put it down. Leafing through the Bible, he uncorked the bottle and took a little sip. The boy then stuffed the twenty in his pocket, tucked the Bible and magazine under his arm, took the bottle, and strolled out of the room.

"Lord above!" exclaimed the farmer. "He's going to be a *DEMOCRAT!*"

(Forever, Erma: Best-Loved Writing From America's Favorite Humorist by Erma Bombeck)

I sympathize with the father from Illinois, but I don't know what to tell him. All my kids were born on a Monday, and you know how sloppy the production is on a day following the weekend.

I never met three children who could understand me less. When I laid out the pajamas, put the sides up on the crib and turned on the night-light, they came alive like the "big midnight show," standing on their heads, bringing out all the toys and playing patty-cake with the dog.

When I picked up the phone, like mechanical robots on schedule they gargled bleach, rolled potatoes across the floor, climbed on top of the TV set and took off all their clothes.

When I said "No," they giggled; "Not now," they bit me; "Come to Mama," they ran into the traffic; "Let me see what is in your hand," they ate it; "The strained lamb is good for you," they blew it back in my face.

Communicate with a toddler? I'd sooner take my chances with an untrained, excited puppy on a new white carpet.

p. 20

It is going to be our privilege in this eighteenth study to switch over from the HISTORICAL BOOKS to one of Solomon's own COMPOSITION in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

I personally believe there are a lot of clues in the Book of Ecclesiastes as to why Solomon experienced such a major crisis in his life. He never really did recover from it.

It is my PERSONAL OPINION that David, his father, faced his MID-LIFE CRISIS when he stayed home from battle and ended up in the affair with Bathsheba and the ultimate murder of her husband to cover their sin.

J. Vernon McGee, speaking on the Book of Ecclesiastes, says:

The key word is "vanity," which occurs thirty-seven times. The key phrase is "under the sun," which occurs twenty-nine times. Another phrase which recurs is "I said in my heart." In other words, this book contains the cogitations of man's heart. These are conclusions which men have reached through their own intelligence, their own experiments. Although the conclusions Solomon came to are not inspired, the Scripture that tells us about them is inspired. This is the reason for the explanatory: "I said in my heart," "under the sun," and "vanity."

p. 10

J. Sidlow Baxter quotes G. Campbell Morgan:

Ecclesiastes is an inspired confession of failure and pessimism, when God is excluded, when man lives under the sun, and forgets the larger part, which is always over the sun, the eternal and abiding things. If you want to know what a man of great privilege, and of great learning and great wisdom can come to, read this record of a man who has put God out of count in his actual life.

—*G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.*

p. 142

Baxter has this little philosophical rhyme that helps us understand what is going on in Solomon's life:

Thus generations come and go,  
 From youth to age they wiser grow;  
 Yet as they pass they all relate  
 They learn their lessons just too late.  
 Our junior wisecracks dodge the truth  
 That dense old parents once were youth,  
 That present youth must older grow,  
 Oft haunted by, "I told you so",  
 And all their youthful bombast rue  
 When *they* as parents suffer too!

When they as parents suffer too,  
 As with strange certainty they do,  
 They marvel at the self-sure ways  
 The *next* relay of youth displays.  
 They hear the same old arguments  
 Arrayed in fresh accoutrements—  
 The times are different, so are we,  
 Just let us have *our* way, and see.  
 For artful Nature oft repays  
 Her rebels in ironic ways.

Thus generations, as they go,  
 Perpetuate the tale of woe.  
 They will not learn from yesterday,  
 But choose to learn the harder way—  
 Experience shall be teacher, please;  
 And well he teaches—but what fees!  
 What fees he charges those he schools  
 Before he makes wise men of fools!  
 How oft his scholars have confessed,  
 "Ah yes, poor Dad and Mum knew best"!

Each generation soon is past,  
 So sure at first, so sad at last.  
 As ranks of youth successive rise,  
 Each thinks, "We are supremely wise".  
 They each a lot more knowledge know,  
 And yet a bit less wisdom show.  
 O sanguine youth, God's word revere—

Honour your parents while they're here;  
 And you will find in later days  
 What handsome dividends it pays!

pp. 157-8

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"—

Wiersbe kind of sums things up when he says:

When Solomon began his discussion, he was convinced that life was meaningless. Perhaps you feel the same way at times and for the same reasons. When you look around, you see nature functioning as it has since creation (vv. 1-8). When you look back, you see history only repeating itself (vv. 9-11). When you look within, you find (as Solomon did) that your wisdom and experience cannot explain the mysteries of life or solve life's problems (vv. 12-18). Vanity of vanities!

pp. 436-7

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says the theme for these first eighteen verses is:

The futility of human effort.  
 p. 978

I would like to suggest that for Solomon it is the "same ol' same ol'" disease. The complaint of our king is the cycles that he sees all around him and the sameness of human endeavor.

v. 1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

The words that are going to follow in this twelve chapter book are the words of:

"THE TEACHER, SON OF DAVID, KING IN JERUSALEM."

The "WORDS" are the words of "THE":

1. "TEACHER,"
2. "SON OF DAVID," and
3. "KING IN JERUSALEM."

All three of these point to SOLOMON.

(The Solomon Syndrome: For Men Who Want More Out of Life by Bob Beltz)

Solomon was the son of King David. When David turned the throne of Israel over to his son, the nation was at the beginning of its golden age. Solomon ruled Israel for forty years. They were years of peace and prosperity for the nation of Israel and for Solomon. It appeared that Solomon was a guy who had everything going for him.

Yet at the height of his career, Solomon "hit the wall." From his unique vantage point he wrote a personal reflection on the detours and dead-ends of life. This short reflection is preserved for us in the Bible under the title Ecclesiastes. p. 24



v. 2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

You can tell immediately this is the VOICE OF EXPERIENCE.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

. . . Solomon declared most emphatically that everything is futile or **meaningless**. Five times in this one verse he used *hebel*, the Hebrew word for "meaningless." Four of those times are in a twofold repetition of a Hebrew superlative construction . . .

. . . he used this metaphorical term throughout the book to refer to what is without real substance, value, permanence, significance, or meaning. Here at the outset he applied this to **everything**, by which he meant all human endeavors, as is obvious from verse 3 . . .  
p. 979

These words bring to mind the concluding words of the LORD JESUS in the SERMON ON THE MOUNT:

Matthew 7:24-27

"Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Baxter said:

He had been wrapped up in his own selfishness, viewing all others simply in relation to his own self-gratification. To live so, whatever our social status may be, sooner or later brings an ironic sense of having had no real joys at all, and makes the late Lord Beaconsfield's famous words seem all too true—"Youth is a mistake, manhood a struggle, and old age a regret."  
p. 165

McGee says:

Vanity here speaks of emptiness. It is to waste life without any purpose or any goal. It means to live like an animal or a bird lives. There are a great many people who live like that.  
p. 14

Lange says the word:

. . . is a very proper expression to mark the inconstancy, insubstantiality, and emptiness that characterize all earthly things.  
p. 37

Leupold says:

If a man assesses the worth of earthly things rightly he will not expect too much of them, and consequently when they fail him, he will not be unduly disappointed, . . .  
p. 40

He says further:

The word "vanity," *hebhel*, really means a "vapor" or "breath," something like the breath that condenses as we exhale into the cold winter air, condenses and disappears at once.  
p. 41

Leupold says further:

It is our conviction that *hebbhel* connotes primarily that which is fleeting and transitory and also suggests the partial futility of human effort.  
p. 41

He says finally:

"Oh, how utterly transitory, how utterly transitory are all things! This is the Preacher's first contention."  
p. 41

Solomon is saying that life is like COTTON CANDY. When you put it in your mouth there is no substance to it.

I am reminded of the passage in James when he describes life:

James 4:14-17

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say:

**Vanity of vanities**—Hebraism for the most utter vanity. So "holy of holies" (Exod. 26); "servant of servants" (Gen. 9:25). The repetition increases the force.  
p. 475

Hubbard says:

Strong language the Preacher used. *Everything* is empty, hollow, futile. Life is not what it seems, not what we want it to be. Not only is everything vanity, but it is the vainest kind of vanity, the most futile brand of futility. The expression conveys a superlative quality. As "Song of Songs" means the finest song and as "King of kings" points to the greatest King, so "vanity of vanities" means that life is as empty as possible; it is marked by the worst sort of futility. pp. 14-15

Hubbard says further:

Futile days and futile weeks we may have, where life loses its glue and turns leaky at the seams. But a futile life will not be our lot. Christ's news is too good to let that happen. Life is filled with meaning because he is making all things new—beginning with us. p. 21

Robert Foster translates this verse:

*"Vapor of vapors and futility of futilities, says the Preacher, vapor of vapors and futility of futilities, all is vanity—emptiness, falsity and vainglory."* —1:2

Work, eat and sleep . . . then draw your pay so you can work, eat and sleep . . . then draw your pay so you can do it all over again. This is squirrel-cage living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. p. 1

Foster says further in describing Solomon:

His head was full of its wisdom and his belly full of its "cheating treasures." p. 1

In my own book I used the illustration of:

Aliterus, a character in *The Tenth Measure*, Brenda Lesley Segal's novel about Masada. Aliterus is a Roman actor who, when he arrives in Jerusalem for the first time, makes a statement which I think aptly describes the attitude of more than a few middle-aged individuals. He says:

*I have come here . . . like one aspiring to an audition, an actor in search of a role. Meanwhile, the playwright has vanished. God of Josephus and of my own mother as well, You had better provide me with a stage direction now, or cue me, if You please. The fact is, I have lost my place in this script or wandered foolishly into the wrong theater* (Segal 1980, 276).

pp. 15-16

(Storms of Perfection: In Their Own Words by Andy Andrews)

I have always maintained that a person needs only three things to have a stable life—someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to. I had all of those things.

Kenny Rogers  
(Entertainer)

p. 5

That is exactly what happens when you come into the relationship with Jesus Christ. You have someone to love, someone to serve, and someone to look forward to seeing in the future.

(Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On! II by Texas Bix Bender)

There's a high cost to low living.

p. 61

(A Hunger for God: Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer by John Piper)

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
 But trust him for his grace,  
 Behind a frowning providence  
 He hides a smiling face.  
 His purposes will ripen fast,  
 Unfolding ev'ry hour;  
 The bud may have a bitter taste,  
 But sweet will be the flower.  
 — WILLIAM COWPER  
*"God moves in a Mysterious Way"*<sup>1</sup>

1. Larry Libby, *The Cry of the Poor* (Bothell, WA: Action International Ministries, 1986), pp. 7-8.
- p. 154

(A Passionate Commitment: Recapturing Your Sense of Purpose by Crawford W. Loritts)

A friend of mine, Blaire Cooke, often challenges Christians with this statement: "Life is but a brief moment in history lodged between two vast eternities. What are you going to do with your moment?"

p. 109

(Churchill on Courage: Wisdom for Perseverance by Frederick Talbott)

It is very important not to underrate the problem. It is also very important not to overrate it.

Winston Churchill  
*London, November 7 1918*

(quote 23)

v. 3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?

Here Solomon raises the QUESTION that has caused him to make the previous statement:

"'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless'"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles verses 3-11 and says:

*The futility of human effort demonstrated from nature (1:3-11).*

Here in verse 3 he is saying:

THERE IS NO ULTIMATE PROFIT IN HUMAN LABOR

. . . The term "gain" [is] unique to the Book. . . . [It] refers literally to what is left over (a gain or a profit) or metaphorically to what is advantageous or of benefit.  
p. 979-80

WHAT IS THE BOTTOM LINE AS A RESULT OF ALL OF MY WORK?

I am reminded of Paul's words in:

Philippians 3:7

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary also points out:

The phrase **under the sun** . . . [occurs] (29 times) throughout the book, and refers to life "down here on the earth."  
p. 980 (paraphrased)

Leupold says:

"If a man thus busies himself with earthly values alone, what he has left in the end is practically nothing."  
p. 44

William MacDonald says:

Solomon observed in verse 3 that frail man's life is filled with labor and activity, but where does it get him when all is said and done? He is on a treadmill, a tiresome round of motion without progress. You ask him why he works, and he replies, "To get money, of course." But why does he want money? To buy food. And why does he want food? To maintain his strength. Yes, but why does he want strength? He wants strength so he can work. And so there he is, right back where he began. He works to get money to buy food to get strength to work to get money to buy food to get strength, and so on, ad infinitum. As Henry Thoreau observed, he lives a life of quiet desperation.  
p. 14

Matthew Henry says:

In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much of them, are not sufficient to make us happy. As goods are increased care about them is increased, and *those are increased that eat of them*, and a little thing will embitter all the comfort of them; and then *what profit has a man* of all his labour? As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases.  
p. 792



(Savvy Sayin's: Lean & Meaty One-Liners by Ken Alstad)

Sweat never drowned no one.  
p. 50

(Keep a Quiet Heart by Elisabeth Elliot)

St. Ignatius Loyola prayed, "Teach us, Good Lord, to labor and to ask for no reward save that of knowing that we do Thy will." As I learn to pray that prayer, I find that there are many more rewards that come along as fringe benefits. As we make an offering of our work, we find the truth of a principle Jesus taught: Fulfillment is not a goal to achieve, but always the by-product of sacrifice.  
p. 101

(Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Patty Aubery & Nancy Mitchell)

*If you don't get an award when you really know you should,  
Don't be disappointed, God knows when you are "good."  
It isn't always the best man who is honored here below,  
Because people give the awards, and there's so much they don't know.  
So when you fail or think that you have had tremendous loss,  
Remember, our Savior was perfect and his reward was a cross.  
And remember, my friend, as you travel through life with all its strife and  
sin,  
That as long as you please Christ, you're the fellow who will win!*  
p. 193

(1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking by Michael Hodgin)

### **Break Retraining**

I don't want to say he's stupid, but his boss won't give him a coffee break because it takes too long to retrain him!  
p. 194

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

It is hard: to forget, to apologize, to save money, to be unselfish, to avoid mistakes, to keep out of a rut, to begin all over again, to make the best of all things, to keep your temper at all times, to think first and act afterwards, to maintain a high standard, to keep on keeping on, to shoulder the blame, to be charitable, to admit error, to take advice, to forgive.  
BUT IT PAYS!

p. 23

Life can't give me joy and peace—

It's up to me to will it.

Life just gives me time and

space—

It's up to me to fill it.

Life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to

it.

p. 110

William Carey, when asked the reason for his success as a missionary, replied, "I can plod."

We conquer—not in any brilliant fashion—we conquer by continuing.

—George Matheson

p. 153

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

One step and then another and  
the longest walk is ended.  
One stitch and then another and  
the longest rent is mended.  
One brick upon another and  
the tallest wall is made.  
One flake and then another and  
the deepest snow is laid.  
Then do not look downhearted  
on the work you have to do,  
And say that such a task you never  
can get through;  
But just endeavor day by day  
another point to gain,  
And soon the mountain that you  
feared will prove to be a plain.

p.153

(Time-Out Leadership by Donald Luce)

*"I do not know anyone who has got to the top without hard work. That is the recipe. It will not always get you to the top, but it should get you pretty near."*

MARGARET THATCHER

p. 25

v. 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles verses 4-11 as:

CEASELESS, WEARISOME ROUNDS (1:4-11)

[In verse 4 we have] the impermanence of a person's existence.  
p. 980

The earth is just like the ENERGIZER BUNNY—It just keeps GOING, AND GOING, AND GOING!

Man, on the other hand, is a part of a "GENERATION" that:

COMES and then

GOES.

One of the hardest issues to confront when a person reaches mid-life is the willingness to ACCEPT ONE'S MORTALITY.

MacDonald in his book quotes Will H. Houghton:

Each one dreams that he will be enduring,  
How soon that one becomes the missing face!  
WILL H. HOUGHTON

p. 15

In my own commentary on Ecclesiastes, I say:

Life goes on. Sometimes it does seem "hardly worth the effort" as the seasons roll by in what appears to be endless repetition. We eat, work, and sleep. Eventually somebody else takes our place. The monotony of it all can be intolerable. It is, however, a poignant reality to the man at mid-life who has viewed the continual overlapping of forty-odd years of activities.

p. 37

(Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On! II by Texas Bix Bender)

Before you let anybody measure you for the big wooden overcoat, make sure  
you've wrung all the life out of your livin'.

p. 16

(Living Somewhere Between Estrogen and Death by Barbara Johnson)

You know you're getting older when . . .  
"Happy Hour" is a nap!

p. 19

(The Joyful Journey by Patsy Clairmont, Barbara Johnson, Marilyn Meberg, and  
Luci Swindoll)

Robert Frost said he could sum up everything he had learned about life in three  
words: "It goes on."

p. 49

(The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs & Wacky Wit by Vern McLellan)

Let us endeavor to so live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be  
sorry. **Mark Twain**

Life's greatest tragedy is to lose God and not to miss him.

**F. W. Norwood**

Did you hear about the undertaker who closed his letters with the words,  
"Eventually yours"?

p. 142

(Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest by Edgar A. Guest)

*Autumn*

I want to come to autumn with the silver in my hair,  
 And maybe have the children stop to look at me and stare;  
 I'd like to reach October free from blemish or from taint,  
 As splendid as a maple tree which artists love to paint.  
 I'd like to come to autumn, with my life work fully done  
 And look a little like a tree that's gleaming in the sun;  
 I'd like to think that I at last could come through care and tears  
 And be as fair to look upon as every elm appears.  
 But when I reach October, full contented I shall be  
 If those with whom I've walked through life shall still have faith in me;  
 Nor shall I dread the winter's frost, when brain and body tire,  
 If I have made my life a thing which others can admire.

p. 568

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

The clock of life is wound but  
     once,  
 And no man has the power  
 To tell just when the hands will  
     stop,  
 At late or early hour.  
 To lose one's wealth is sad indeed  
 To lose one's health is more.  
 To lose one's soul is such a loss  
 That no man can restore.

pp. 110-11

(Lambs Among Wolves by Bob Briner)

But the company's effect on the local culture has not stopped there. In 1994, Taproot staged *The Cottonpatch Gospel*. It consists of just four supporting actors and Scott, who plays a Southern countrified version of Jesus. At one point, Scott's Jesus character says, "Come unto me, all of you who have had a bellyful of emptiness. Get in the harness with me." What a powerful message for the lost and lonely children strewn through Seattle's streets.  
p. 55

v. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

Whereas he speaks of the:

"earth" in verse 4 he now speaks of the

"SUN" in verse 5.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

**The sun** and **the wind** are in constant motion but never arrive at any fixed goal or lasting rest. . . . [the word] **hurries** in v. 5 means lit., "pants [from exhaustion] . . . without effecting any progress or reaching any fixed goal."  
p. 980

(God Isn't in a Hurry by Warren Wiersbe)

"One of the great disadvantages of hurry," said Gilbert Chesterton, "is that it takes such a long time."  
p. 14

v. 6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes,  
ever returning on its course.

Whereas the FOCUS is on:

"the earth" in verse 4,

"the sun" in verse 5, it is on

"THE WIND" here in verse 6.

John 3:8

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."



v. 7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

It was:

"the earth" in verse 4,

"the sun" in verse 5,

"the wind" in verse 6, and now it is

"THE STREAMS" in verse 7.

Keil & Delitzsch observe:

This is just what these four examples are meant to show, viz. that a restless activity reaching no visible conclusion and end, always beginning again anew, pervades the whole world—all things, he says, summarizing, are in labour, *i.e.* are restless, hastening on, giving the impression of fatigue.  
p. 224

v. 8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

MacDonald has a little poetic piece that kind of summarizes these verses:

Worldy joy is fleeting—vanity itself;  
Vain the dazzling brightness, vain the stores of wealth;  
Vain the pomp and glory; only Thou canst give  
Peace and satisfaction while on earth we live.  
There is none, Lord Jesus, there is none like Thee  
For the soul that thirsteth, there is none like Thee.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

p. 16

(Churchill on Courage: Wisdom for Perseverance by Frederick Talbott)

Neither the length of the struggle nor any form of severity which it may assume shall make us weary or shall make us quit.

Winston Churchill

*Ottawa, Canada, December 30, 1941*

(quote 91)

(The Finishing Touch: Becoming God's Masterpiece: A Daily Devotional by Charles R. Swindoll)

The man or woman who is hardy can withstand adverse conditions, is firm in purpose, and has a vigorous outlook on life. We might say that many missionaries and most mountain climbers are hardy folks.

The hardy person remains productive under difficult situations, all the while maintaining emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

It should be remembered, however, that hardiness is not an inherent attitude, temperament, or gift. It is a quality that must be consciously developed.

p. 549

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

Galatians 6:9

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

Proverbs 20:12

Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both.

v. 9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

*The repetition of human endeavors* (1:8-11)

What is observable in the realm of nature is also true of all human endeavor.  
p. 980 (paraphrased)

"WHAT HAS BEEN WILL BE AGAIN, WHAT HAS BEEN DONE WILL BE DONE AGAIN."

Parker says:

Man longs for variety, and cannot secure it. The same things are done over and over again. Changes are merely accidental, not organic.  
p. 5

(God Isn't in a Hurry by Warren Wiersbe)

"God examineth with trials," said the Puritan Henry Smith, "the devil examineth with temptations, the world examineth with persecutions."  
p. 61

He CONCLUDES verse 9 with the phrase:

"THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN."

We had the little phrase "under the sun" back in verse 3:

"What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?"

v.10 Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

This is QUESTION #2 in our passage.

Question #1 was back in verse 3 and now here in verse 10:

"IS THERE ANYTHING OF WHICH ONE CAN SAY, 'LOOK! THIS IS SOMETHING NEW'?"

Parker reminds us:

New things are promised in the apocalyptic day: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." It will be found in the long run that the only possible newness is in character, in the motive of life and its supreme purpose. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."  
p. 6

v.11 There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

This verse takes us BACK to verse 4 where Solomon says:

"Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever."

Leupold says:

So, then, all that has been said is not an unhappy lament of a disappointed soul which has been dealt some rough blows by life. Nor does it stem from a chronic pessimist. All that needs to be borne in mind is the basic declaration of v. 3. If you consider purely earthly values, what is your work? What do you achieve? What is life? Merely a dreary part of a ceaseless round, which keeps going on all about us in nature, in the coming of generations, in the sun, the winds, the streams, and in all things. Your own activity is futile; the world appears equally futile. All this is, of course, an indirect way of saying: Do not rule out or eliminate the higher values; then everything takes on a different outlook, including your daily task wherein you toil.  
pp. 49-50

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Grow old along with me,  
The best is yet to be;  
The last of life  
For which the first was made;  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith, "A whole I  
planned,  
Youth shows but half; Trust God,  
See all, nor be afraid!"

—Robert Browning

pp. 143-4

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

In the central place of every heart there is a recording chamber. So long as it receives a message of beauty, hope, cheer, and courage—so long are you young. When the wires are all down and your heart is covered with the snow of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then, and only then, are you grown old.

—Douglas MacArthur

Youth is not entirely a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not wholly a matter of ripe cheeks, red lips, or supple knees. It is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions—nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

—Douglas MacArthur

p. 144

v.12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

This verse sounds very SIMILAR to verse 1:

"The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem."

Keil & Delitzsch title these verses from verse 12-18 as:

*The Unsatisfactoriness of striving after Wisdom*, i. 12-18.

After this prelude regarding the everlasting sameness of all that is done under the sun, Koheleth-Solomon unfolds the treasure of his life-experience as king.

p. 226

v.13 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

Solomon says he:

"DEVOTED [himself] TO STUDY AND TO EXPLORE BY WISDOM" and his study involved "ALL THAT IS DONE UNDER HEAVEN."

His CONCLUSION, then, is:

"WHAT A HEAVY BURDEN GOD HAS LAID ON MEN!"

There are some KEY PHRASES that stand out in these verses:

"All things are wearisome, more than one can say" (verse 8),

"there is nothing new under the sun" (verse 9),

"There is no remembrance of men of old" (verse 11), and now

"WHAT A HEAVY BURDEN GOD HAS LAID ON MEN!" (verse 13).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says of the word "BURDEN":

[It is] "a bad or unpleasant task" . . . "a miserable business" . . .  
p. 981

DeHaan says:

The failure of man's wisdom is vividly expressed by Solomon in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. After unsuccessful attempts to find God and spiritual satisfaction in a study of nature and history, he turned to the literature of his day. Again he was frustrated. "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this severe travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecc. 1:13-14, 18).

The Preacher says his long hours of study become burdensome (a "severe travail"), but he pressed on in the conviction that his search would lead to satisfactory answers.  
p. 27

Robert Foster uses the poem by John Newton at this point in his commentary:

### **THE KITE—PRIDE MUST HAVE A FALL**

My waking dreams are best concealed.  
Much folly, little good, they yield;  
But now and then, I gain, when sleeping,  
A friendly hint that's worth the keeping.  
Lately I dreamt of one who cried,  
"Beware of self, beware of pride;  
When you are prone to build a Babel,  
Recall to mind this little fable."

Once upon a time a paper kite  
Was mounted to a wondrous height,  
Where, giddy with its elevation,  
It thus expressed self-admiration:  
"See how yon crowds of gazing people  
Admire my flight above the steeple:  
How would they wonder if they knew  
All that a kite like me can do!  
Were I but free, I'd take a flight,  
And pierce the clouds beyond their sight;  
But, ah! like a poor pris'ner bound,  
My string confines me near the ground:  
I'd brave the eagle's towering wind,  
Might I but fly without a string."



It tugged and pulled, while thus it spoke,  
 To break the string:—at last it broke!  
 Deprived at once of all its stay,  
 In vain it tried to soar away;  
 Unable its own weight to bear,  
 It fluttered downward through the air;  
 Unable its own course to guide,  
 The winds soon plunged it in the tide.  
 Ah! foolish kite, thou hadst no wing,  
 How couldst thou fly without a string?

My heart replied, "O Lord, I see  
 How much this kite resembles me!  
 Forgetful that by Thee I stand,  
 Impatient of Thy ruling hand;  
 How oft I've wished to break the lines  
 Thy wisdom for my lot assigns?  
 How oft indulged a vain desire,  
 For something more or something higher!  
 And but for grace and love divine,  
 A fall thus dreadful had been mine."

—John Newton

p. 1+

(Will God Heal Me? by Ron Dunn)

In other words, these things that we seek to be rid of in the here and now will not be taken away until the then and there.

p. 161

(The Christian in Complete Armour by William Gurnall)

If the heart of the saint—no matter how famous and respected—is defiled by a lust which has not yielded to repentance, God's promise will not speak peace. This person has become a disorderly walker, and no joy and peace can reach him in his self-made prison. The Spirit knows how to use His rod of correction.

(September 1)

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Earthly prosperity is no sign of the special love of heaven; nor are sorrow and care any mark of God's disfavor, but the reverse. God's love is robust and true and eager—not for our own comfort, but for our lasting blessedness.

—F. B. Meyer

pp. 207-8

(Future Grace by John Piper)

Satan began by calling God's goodness into question and that has been his primary strategy ever since. His aim is to subvert trust by influencing us to believe that the promise of sin is more satisfying than the promise of God.

p. 327

(Strength of Soul: The Sacred Use of Time by W. Phillip Keller)

Searching for the silver linings, more often than not, entails searching our own souls. It calls for checking up on our own composure, our own charity, our own inner attitude toward others. If my outlook is askew with anger; if it is warped with resentment; if it is clouded with distrust; if it is perverted with impatience, it is not likely I shall ever see the silver edge—because I have been blinded by my own behavior.

p. 43

It is the capacity, the ability, to actually *look for the hand of God in all the events of life, be they good or evil* that enables us to find the silver edge. This practice puts steel in our souls and ignites a flame of gratitude in our spirits. It even brings well being to our bodies when we discover in living truth that His mercies to us are new, fresh, every morning.

p. 44

v.14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

This is SOLOMON'S CONCLUSIONS as a result of his study in verse 13. He says that:

"ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE DONE UNDER THE SUN; ALL OF THEM ARE MEANINGLESS, A CHASING AFTER THE WIND."

In this verse we have THREE of the KEY PHRASES that occur in the book numerous times:

1. "UNDER THE SUN,"
2. "MEANINGLESS," and
3. "A CHASING AFTER THE WIND."

This is the THIRD TIME we have had the phrase:

"UNDER THE SUN."

It was back in verse 3, verse 9 and now here in verse 14.

Keil & Delitzsch say:

. . . by no means superficial and limited seeing, was a discovery of the fleeting, unsubstantial, fruitless nature of all human actions and endeavours.  
p. 228

Parker says:

The man who describes himself in this text, though a king, is little better than a lawless and self-indulgent child. He wants to see the rivers filling up the sea, instead of eternally falling through a sieve; he wants new toys. He becomes tired of things, and cries for something better. His world has no perspective; his world has no outlook. He does not know that there is an altar-stair leading up through the darkness to other and fairer worlds.  
pp. 8-9

Here is a little COWBOY POETRY to illustrate that life "UNDER THE SUN . . . [is] MEANINGLESS, A CHASING AFTER THE WIND":

(Cow Pies & Candle Lights by G. T. Burton)

### THE LAST EMBRACE

He reached his hand across the bed,  
and drew her to his side.  
His warm breath came in shaking gasps,  
and groans he could not hide.  
The burning deep inside him  
showed in his blushing cheek.  
He held her tightly for a while  
then he began to speak.

I've told you that I love you,  
and my love shines like the sun,  
But darling I must tell you now  
You're not the only one.  
"Save your strength", was her reply,  
"you've told me nothing new.  
I've always known of your affairs,  
that's why I've poisoned you".

p. 49

(Rainbows: The Book of Hope edited by George W. Humphreys)

### On Down the Road

Hold to the course, though the storms are about you;  
 Stick to the road where the banner still flies;  
 Fate and his legions are ready to rout you—  
 Give 'em both barrels—and aim for their eyes.

Life's not a rose bed, a dream or a bubble,  
 A living in clover beneath cloudless skies;  
 And Fate hates a fighter who's looking for trouble,  
 So give 'em both barrels—and shoot for the eyes.

Fame never comes to the loafers and sitters,  
 Life's full of knots in a shifting disguise;  
 Fate only picks on the cowards and quitters,  
 So give 'em both barrels—and aim for the eyes.  
*Grantland Rice.*

p. 20

v.15 What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Human effort and action cannot remedy all the irregularities or counteract all the deficiencies observable in the nature of **things** (1:14-15; cf. 7:13).  
 p. 981

Keil & Delitzsch say:

The judgment contained in the words, "vanity and a striving after the wind," is confirmed: "That which is crooked cannot become straight; and a deficit cannot be numerable," *i.e.* cannot be taken into account . . . as if as much were present as is actually wanting; for, according to the proverb, "Where there is nothing, nothing further is to be counted."  
 p. 228

Derek Kidner in his commentary says:

. . . verse 15 throws in two more reminders of our limitations, with the curtness of a proverb. TEV catches it well: 'you can't straighten out what is crooked; you can't count things that aren't there.' Whether this crookedness and this lack mean our own flaws of character or the circumstances that we can do nothing to alter, we are faced again with the meagreness of what man can do.  
pp. 29-30

Robert Foster, speaking about this verse, first of all translates it:

*"What is wrong cannot be righted; it is water over the dam; and there is no use thinking of what might have been."* —1:15

"What a mess I have made of things . . ."

So confessed a youthful Columbia singing star and Hollywood actor. His confession continues: "Success came too early, too fast and there was too much. Life was too good, too exciting, too luxurious. I just couldn't believe it would last. Hence, somewhere along the line in my fierce clawing to reach the top. I must have lost my sense of values."

A messed-up life . . . disillusioned living . . . loss of values. Stale, insipid and flat became this young man's investment of life. His value rating was zero! With mixed emotions and hazy values he concluded the article: "Fears brought wild panic. I wrestled at night. I jumped like a pogo stick during the day. I took pills to go to sleep and I took pills to stay awake . . . what a mess!"

This is the honest appraisal of a worldling's success. He had latched on to perishables and found himself clinging to soap bubbles. His greed for gold and clamour for glamour left him empty and alone. As with Solomon . . . the years of his life had been propped up with crutches and finally they gave out under the weight of time and true values.

p. 2

(Reality and the Vision by Philip Yancey, Editor)

"God writes straight with crooked lines," says a Spanish proverb, and it is true. The line he has traced across my life is all zigs and zags.  
p. 122

(Walking With Saints: Through the Best and Worst Times of Our Lives by Calvin Miller)

Our broken past is largely unfixable. The writer of the *Rubiyat* wrote:

**The Moving Finger writes, and having writ,  
Moves on.  
Nor all thy Piety or Wit shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.**<sup>15</sup>

15. Omar Khayyam, "Rubiyat" from *A Treasury of the World's Best Loved Poems* (New York: Crown Publishers, Avenel Books, 1961) p. 67.  
p. 201

(In the Grip of Grace: You Can't Fall Beyond His Love by Max Lucado)

Some years ago I witnessed one man's inner war and chronicled these thoughts:

From where I sit I can see a redbird. He is on the roof across from my office. He has been there for three days. A splendid sight: deep crimson chest, crown of feathers which stands upon command. He sings the same song over and over—a long chirp followed by four short ones. The rhythm never varies. The pattern never changes.

He flies to the top of the building and perches on the highest point of the roof. He opens the feathered fan on the back of his neck, cocks his head back, and calls, "Chiiirrrup, chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp." Then he stands as if looking for the one he called to respond. But there is never an answer.

He will repeat the effort. The feathers will flash and the call will sound and he will wait. But there is never a reply.

After a few moments he will nose-dive into the patio. He will see his reflection in a plate-glass window and fly into it—beak first. The crash will echo in the patio, and he will retreat. For just a moment. He gathers himself, then sees his reflection and off he goes . . . *slap!* Backward he staggers, scrambling to keep control, only to open his eyes and see the reflection and "*Pop!*" the sad drama is repeated.

I shake my head. "Why won't you learn?" I wonder. "How many times will it take for you to learn that the bird in the window is only an illusion?"

But he remains . . . flying into windows.

Minutes later a young man walks into my office. Sharp, well-dressed. Firm handshake, tanned face, flashy smile. Small talk about basketball, busy work schedules, and airports. I'm tempted to cut the chatter short . . . but don't. He needs time to gather courage. We know why he is here. We've had this talk before. He has a wife. He has a lover. He abandoned the first and lives with the second.

"Have you gone home?" I ask.

"No," he sighs, looking through the window into the patio.

"I tried, but I didn't."

"Have you spoken to your wife?"

"I haven't got the nerve."

"He's just a kid," I say to myself. Underneath the Italian suit and sharp talk, he's a frightened six-year-old who knows he shouldn't but doesn't know how to stop. What is this vacuum within him that can't be filled by marriage? What is this person which takes him to other beds?

I look out the window over his shoulder and see the redbird slap his beak against the pane. I look across my desk and see the man bury his face in his hands. "I know what I should do, but I can't."

What will it take for both to stop? How long will they hurt themselves before they wake up?

The next day I came to the office and the bird was gone. Soon after I called the man and he was gone. I think the bird learned a lesson. I'm not sure the man ever did.

pp. 143-4



v.16 I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."

The KEY PHRASES are:

"GROWN AND INCREASED IN WISDOM" and

"EXPERIENCED MUCH OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE."

1 Kings 10:23, 24

King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

(Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On! II by Texas Bix Bender)

If you're ridin' a high horse, there ain't no way to get down off it gracefully.  
p. 48

(Savvy Sayin's: Lean & Meaty One-Liners by Ken Alstad)

Some men get callouses from pattin' themselves on the back.  
p. 86

(God's Little Devotional Book by Honor Books, Inc.)

A young ensign had nearly completed his first overseas tour of sea duty when he was given an opportunity to display his ability at getting the ship under way. With a stream of crisp commands, he had the decks buzzing with men and soon, the ship had left port and was steaming out of the channel.

The ensign's efficiency had been remarkable. In fact, the deck was abuzz with talk that he had set a new record for getting a destroyer under way. The ensign glowed at his accomplishment and was not all that surprised when another seaman approached him with a message from the captain. He was, however, a bit surprised to find that it was a *radio* message, and he was even more surprised when he read, "My personal congratulations upon completing your underway preparation exercise according to the book and with amazing speed. In your haste, however, you have overlooked one of the unwritten rules — make sure the captain is aboard before getting under way."

p. 23

(In the Grip of Grace: You Can't Fall Beyond His Love by Max Lucado)

The thought of it is almost comical. We who jump three feet look at the fellow who jumped one inch and say, "What a lousy jump." Why do we engage in such accusations? It's a ploy. As long as I am thinking of your weaknesses, then I don't have to think about mine. As long as I am looking at your puny jump, then I don't have to be honest about my own. I'm like the man who went to see the psychiatrist with a turtle on his head and a strip of bacon dangling from each ear and said, "I'm here to talk to you about my brother."

p. 39

I kind of get the feeling from this particular verse that SOLOMON HAS FORGOTTEN THE SOURCE OF HIS WISDOM.

1 Kings 10:24

The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart

I sometimes wonder if he hasn't forgotten where much of his wealth has come from.

v.17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

He renders the same verdict here in verse 17 that he did back in verse 14:

"I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

. . . **madness and folly** (i.e., foolish ideas and pleasures . . .  
p. 981

(A Dangerous Grace by Charles Colson with Nancy R. Pearcey)

Long ago enlightenment thinkers argued that through education man could eradicate sin and eventually build a perfect society. This, the prevailing myth of the twentieth century, was neatly capsuled in the second Humanist Manifesto: "By using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty . . . modify behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development . . . and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life."

This is the humanist doctrine of sanctification by the free gift of progress.  
pp. 124-5

In my commentary I make the following observations:

I am certain that some of us can identify to an extent with the difficulties described by Solomon in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. Maybe the foundation for a mid-life crisis has already been laid in our lives. Possibly we are racing out of control, desperately looking for an exit ramp as life becomes increasingly futile. Wherever we are, there is an answer to the problem.

What is it? The hymnist, Clara Scott, put it so well when she wrote:

Open my eyes, that I may see  
 Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;  
 Place in my hands the wonderful key  
 That shall unclasp and set me free.  
 Silently now I wait for Thee,  
 Ready, my God, Thy will to see;  
 Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

We must open our eyes to Christ, and get them off ourselves. With Peter, we're going to sink in the waves the minute we start looking only at our circumstances. (See Matthew 14:22-32.) Instead, let's concentrate on the Lord, letting His Spirit renew and refresh us. The key is getting through the trouble spots is found by "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2 NASB).

pp. 49-50

v.18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

Here is the REASON the results of his study of wisdom is "a chasing after the wind":

"FOR WITH MUCH WISDOM COMES MUCH SORROW; THE MORE KNOWLEDGE, THE MORE GRIEF."

Keil & Delitzsch say:

In every reference, not merely in that which is moral, there is connected with knowledge the shadow of a sorrowful consciousness, in spite of every effort to drive it away. The wise man gains an insight into the thousand-fold woes of the natural world, and of the world of human beings, and this reflects itself in him without his being able to change it; hence the more numerous the observed forms of evil, suffering, and discord, so much greater the sadness . . .  
p. 232

Derek Kidner says:

But wisdom is concerned with truth, and truth compels us to admit that success can go bad on us, and that nothing on earth has any permanence.  
p. 31

Leupold says:

Just to look at one side of wisdom for a moment will show how true this observation is. There is always a large element of "knowledge" in wisdom. So here this increase of knowledge, which is mentioned in the parallel member of the verse, leads a man to find out many disturbing things that may militate strongly against his peace of mind. Had he left well enough alone and not engaged in the quest after wisdom he would have been spared all this "vexation" or irritation (*ka'as*). To get at the root of a practical understanding of things, helpful as it may be, always carries this unpleasant feature with it. And as long as higher values are left aside, the unpleasantness of the experience is bound to be much accentuated. "Sorrow," too, grows out of getting "more knowledge," for much of the growth in knowledge brings with it a deeper insight into the many things that are wrong and out of great in this world.  
pp. 55-56

(The Royal Way of the Cross: Letters and Spiritual Counsels of Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, edited by Hal M. Helms)

The future is in God's hands, not yours. God will rule it according to your need. But if you seek to forecast it in your own wisdom, you will gain nothing but anxiety and anticipation of inevitable trouble. Try only to make use of each day; each day brings its own good and evil, and sometimes what seems evil becomes good if we leave it to God, and do not forestall Him with our impatience.  
p. 43

(Will God Heal Me? by Ron Dunn)

*God often draws outside the lines we have drawn for him.*  
p. 177

(I'm So Glad You Told Me What I Didn't Wanna Hear by Barbara Johnson)

This is absolutely as bad as it can get—  
Unless, of course, it gets worse!  
p. 98

(Churchill on Courage: Wisdom for Perseverance by Frederick Talbott)

You must not blind yourselves to the fact that many grievous difficulties lie ahead.

Winston Churchill

*Political Broadcast, London, February 17, 1950*

(quote 141)

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

To take all that we are and have, and hand it over to God, may not be easy; but it can be done, and when it is done, the world has in it one less candidate for misery.

—Paul Scherr

p. 195

It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one.

—C. S. Lewis

p. 188

The other day I was having a little bit of a "down time" and I received two letters in the mail with the same message. The ironic part of the message is that it was a message from me that I had written for the *Senior's Devotional Calendar* for November 16th. It read:

"Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Want to be a contender in the last lap of life? When suffering strikes, I recommend the three A's to assist in fighting the good fight all the way home. Acceptance—realize suffering is coming, accept it. Attitude—know positively that something good is going to result from your suffering. Action—anticipate the victory. The coach always picks the best players to play the hardest quarters. This may be your finest hour.  
(November 16)

(The Blessings of Brokenness by Charles Stanley)

The following poem speaks to the breaking process that Peter experienced and that we all experience:

*When God wants to drill a man,  
And thrill a man,  
And skill a man,  
To play the noblest part;  
When He yearns with all His heart  
To create so great and bold a man  
That all the world shall be amazed,  
Watch His methods, watch His ways!  
How He ruthlessly perfects  
Whom He royally elects!  
How He hammers him and hurts him,  
And with mighty blows converts him  
Into trial shapes of clay which  
Only God understands;  
While his tortured heart is crying  
And he lifts beseeching hands!  
How he bends but never breaks  
When his good He undertakes;  
How He uses whom He chooses,  
And with every purpose fuses him;  
By every act induces him  
To try his splendor out—  
God knows what He's about.*

—UNKNOWN

p. 103-104



## CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: All of life truly is meaningless without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

LESSON #2: Paul says, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7 NASB).

LESSON #3: "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2 NASB).

LESSON #4: "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23 NASB).

LESSON #5: We are losing our lives for something. The question is, "For what?"

LESSON #6: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21 NASB).

LESSON #7: The key to overcoming monotony is to keep our eyes on the finish line.

LESSON #8: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18 NASB).

LESSON #9: We may grow weary in His work, but not weary of His work.

LESSON #10: The world may forget us and what we have done, but the Lord will never forget us.

LESSON #11: "Casting all your care upon Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

(God's Little Devotional Book on Prayer by Honor Books, Inc.)

*O Lord, You are never weary of doing me good. Let me never be weary of doing You service. But as You have pleasure in the prosperity of Your servants, so let me take pleasure in the service of my Lord, and abound in Your work, and in Your love and praise evermore. O fill up all that is wanting, reform whatever is amiss in me, perfect the thing that concerns me. Let the witness of Your pardoning love ever abide in my heart.*



— John Wesley

p. 290

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

The important question is not "Do I enjoy being a Christian?" but rather, "Do I want what God wants?" Confess your faults. Do not be too attached to things of this world. Trust God. Love Him more than yourself. Love His glory more than your life. If you do not want these things, ask to want them. God will come to you with His love, and put His peace in your heart.

p. 182

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

Louise Fletcher Tarkington wrote for all of us when she mused,

*I wish that there were some wonderful place  
Called the Land of Beginning Again,  
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches  
And all of our poor selfish grief  
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door  
And never put on again.*

There is such a place. It is found in the grace of God—a grace that not only completely forgives our past and puts it away, but uses it to make us better than ever before. "Even from sin," Augustine said, "God can draw good."

p. 50

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

"No amount of falls will really undo us," wrote C. S. Lewis, "if we keep picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. . . . The only fatal thing is to lose one's temper and give up."  
p. 199

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

God can't give us happiness and peace apart from Himself because there is no such thing.

—C. S. Lewis

p. 84

Farewell, vain world; my soul can  
bid adieu;  
My Saviour taught me to abandon  
you.  
Your charms may gratify a sensual  
mind;  
But not please a soul wholly for  
God designed.  
Forbear to entice, cease then my  
soul to call:  
'Tis fixed through grace; my God  
shall be my all.

—David Brainerd

p. 218

(Churchill on Courage: Wisdom for Perseverance by Frederick Talbott)

We shall proceed through our course with firmness and patience.

Winston Churchill

*Dundee, September 11, 1912*

(quote 11)

(Walking With Saints: Through the Best and Worst Times of Our Lives by Calvin Miller)

May we be worthy of Jean-Pierre de Caussade's final counsel:

**Forgive me, divine Love, for speaking only of my shortcomings and not having yet understood what it means to let your will be done, not having allowed myself to be poured into that mould. I have been through all your galleries and admired all your paintings, but I have not yet surrendered myself sufficiently to be worthy to receive the strokes of your brush. . . . I will devote myself exclusively to the duty of the present moment to love you, to fulfill my obligations, and to let your will be done.**<sup>21</sup>

21. Epigraph, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*. trans. Kitty Muggeridge, from the original text of *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982) pp. 75-76.

p. 207

Swindoll in his little book The Lonely Whine of the Top Dog concludes his meditations with this prayer:

### A Prayer

Lord, thank you for telling us the truth and not leading us down blind alleys and mocking us because we have made a mess of things. Thank you for making possessions so that they can be enjoyed, but never worshiped without consequence. Thank you for simple solutions in a complex world.

Thank you for Your patience as we work through the priorities. Thank you for steering us through the competitive business jungle of a materialistic world like ours. You are so gracious to allow us time to learn . . . to discover that life does not consist of things we can buy or sell. The very best possessions have no price tag: things like happiness, hope, contentment, purpose, and forgiveness.

I pray for a very special group of people: the "lonely dogs" at the top. Enable them to come to terms with the way life really is. Free them so that they might use their possessions generously in Your work . . . that they might use part of their time and their wisdom for eternity . . . that they might help other people not so blessed . . . and that they might become models of grace and generosity, who relieve others' pressure rather than add to it.

Finally, I pray for those who have never met Your Son, Jesus Christ. I ask You to bring them to this all-important decision; and then, having believed, may they find You faithful to guide them as they discover how to put first things first and other things in proper place. It is in the strong name of Christ I pray these things. Amen.

p. 24