

THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

SESSION #20: Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

TEXT:

v.12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?

v.13 I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

v.14 The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.

v.15 Then I thought in my heart, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless."

v.16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

v.17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

v.18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

v.19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

v.20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.

v.21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

v.22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun?

v.23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

v.24 A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,

v.25 for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

v.26 To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

INTRODUCTION:

(The Humor of the American Cowboy by Stan Hoig)

A cowboy who had lost out in a six-shooter argument was being buried by his friends. After the sod had been heaved upon his box, someone "sorta felt a few words order be said." A Church of England prayer book was produced by a rancher's wife, and someone read out the verse about the "quick and the dead." As he turned sadly from the grave, one puncher shook his head to another.

"Ol' Bill wasn't very quick," he observed, "but he sure is dead."²

²Albert W. Thompson, *They Were Open Range Days, Annals of a Western Frontier* (Denver, Colo.: World Press, Inc., 1946), p. 179.
p. 94

On another occasion a local no-good was caught cheating in a poker game and was promptly shot to death by one of his fellow participants. The fellow was married, and it was agreed that someone should notify his wife. Of course no one wanted the chore, so the matter was decided by drawing cards. The loser was a gambler. Reluctantly, with hat in hand, he knocked on the door of the victim's shack, and a big, straggly-haired female answered the door. The gambler asked to see Widow Yates.

"Widder Yates? My name is Yates, but I ain't no widder."

"Lady," the gambler said, "I have twenty dollars that says you are!"⁵

⁵Based on a story by Mody C. Boatright in *Folk Laughter on the American Frontier* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. 18-19.
pp. 95-96

(Charity: A Collection of Poems by Gail T. Burton by Gail T. Burton)

BETHEL

There is a worn and weary church
 down a lonely country lane.
 The steeple's gone, the paint is peeled,
 and the roof lets in the rain.
 The builders of that little church
 now rest beneath the clay,
 And the children of their children
 have grown and moved away.

The eighty acre farms are gone,
 the houses falling down.
 Their owners work at other jobs
 and go to church in town.
 No one comes to kneel and pray
 and hymns are heard no more.
 The only sounds are creaks and groans
 from the broken rotting floor.

Tho' changing times and passing years
 show harsh upon her face,
 her memory paints a lovely thought
 that time cannot erase.
 For in that church when just a child
 I met God face to face.
 He touched my heart, He filled my soul,
 and redeemed me with His Grace.

pp. 19-20

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

They say you can always tell how exciting your life is by the hour you get into your nightclothes. Sometimes we have to change our pajamas because we dribbled our dinner onto them. I cannot tell you the times we had said to startled guests who just dropped in unexpectedly that we both have the flu.

The other night as I sat needlepointing in my nest of pillows and his recliner body was draped over the recliner chair, the phone rang. He jumped back to reality and said, "Who could be calling at this hour?"

"I don't know," I said.

He hesitated before he picked it up. "They don't call to tell you you've won the lottery at eight-thirty at night. It must be bad news!"

There are some people who tell me I should be flattered that my husband wants to stay at home. These are the same unstable people who believe age has nothing whatsoever to do with the way you feel.

I always knew a man's home was his castle. I just never thought he'd pull up the drawbridge at 5:30 in the evening.

pp. 90-91

ON THE "D" WORD

The other day, a columnist for a large metropolitan newspaper ended his piece with the following play on words: "If lawyers can be disbarred, can electricians be delighted, musicians denoted, baseball players debased, gardeners deflowered, and cowboys deranged?"

It was impossible for me to resist expanding on his use of the "D" word into the realm of other considerations. Samples follow.

If fishermen can be debated, prisoners defiled, strip-teasers debriefed and exterminators debugged, is it possible for soda-jerks to be decarbonated?

Then consider this: If undertakers can be deceased, duck hunters decoyed, gamblers deduced and movies stars defamed—is it possible that models could be deformed? And that calendar makers be dismayed?

What about fireworks salesmen? Can they be defused, along with referees who are defrayed, and bail jumpers who are deliberated?

If fan dancers can be denuded, barbers departed, tailors depleted, dry cleaners depressed, what shall we say about highway engineers? Can they be degraded?

Can wine salesmen be deported, along with commode salesmen who are dethroned? If so, what shall we say about politicians? Can they be devoted?

If a trombone player is dehorned, a travel agent detoured, a professional writer described, a pilot deplaned, and a preacher defrocked, can a lady of the night be delayed?

These are the sorts of heavy questions that keep me awake at night. Desnored, so to speak.

—Edwin H. Cooper, Personal Communication, May 19, 1998.

(sent by Don Barker)

(More Holy Humor by Carl and Rose Samra)

Three small boys were bragging about their fathers. The first boasted that his dad owned a farm. The second said his dad owned a factory. The third boy, a pastor's son, replied: "That's nothin'. My dad owns hell."

"No way," another boy scoffed. "How can a man own hell?"

"Sure he can," the preacher's son said. "My mom told my grandma that the elders of our church gave it to him last night."

p. 40

It is going to be our purpose now to return to Ecclesiastes 2, where we left off in episode #19, and continue in that passage for study #20.

We will be picking up at Ecclesiastes 2:12 and working our way down thru verse 26 (or the end of the chapter).

Kidner says:

So, for the first time in the book but by no means the last, the fact of death brings the search to a sudden stop. If *one fate comes to all*, and that fate is extinction, it robs every man of his dignity and every project of its point. We look at these two results in turn in verses 14-17 and 18-23.

p. 34

Richard DeHaan says:

One of the problems Solomon faced all through his time of experimentation was the growing awareness that the enjoyment of physical pleasure does not last very long. When he seriously considered his future happiness, it was impossible for him to live only for the satisfaction of his physical desires.

That is why he eventually turned from revelry and wine to cultural pursuits.

p. 41

Wiersbe in his little book Be Satisfied says:

"I turned myself to behold" simply means, "I consider things from another viewpoint." What he did was to look at his wisdom (12-17) and his wealth (18-23) *in light of the certainty of death*. What good is it to be wise and wealthy if you are going to die and leave everything behind?
pp. 36-37

Wiersbe says further in his little devotional book With the Word:

At that point Solomon became cynical and hated life (vv. 12-23; see also Ps. 34:11-14; 1 Pet. 3:10-12). "Why bother to do all these things," he asked, "when I am going to die anyway? Who will remember me?" Paul's answer is found in 1 Corinthians 15:58 and John's in 1 John 2:17.

Instead of complaining about what you do not have, thank God for what you do have *and enjoy it* (vv. 24-26).
pp. 437-8

William Barker in his book Kings in Shirtsleeves says:

THE TOWNSHIP OF UPPER ST. CLAIR is on the outskirts of Pittsburgh. In 1958 this township erected an attractive red brick Township Building to house its fire and police departments, offices, and meeting rooms.

A few months after its completion, to the dismay of township officials and to the disgust of taxpayers, the new structure began to show ominous cracks in the walls. Eventually, the building broke apart in pieces. Entire sections settled mysteriously into the ground. The trouble lay far beneath the surface. Mining operations far under the building had caused the earth to sink, gradually and quietly.

This is similar to what sometimes happens to people. Unsuspected causes will undermine a personality. Often these causes are out of sight. Gradually and quietly, these unseen factors will cause a useful and attractive personality to crumble into a shambles.

p. 33

Barker says of Solomon:

He degraded himself in his love of luxury. He missed grand opportunities for service and usefulness, wasting all the precious gifts God had given him. Solomon ended life as a vain flop. Upon his death, his kingdom broke into two parts, each of which eventually lost its independence. Only five short years after his death, the Syrians ripped through the land, raided Jerusalem, and carried away most of the gold Solomon had accumulated. The love of luxury had tunneled away under his personality, a quiet, gradual process. First, the cracks appeared; finally Solomon's character caved in completely. So ends the story of a man who ruined a promising life and ruined a prosperous nation.
p. 38

v.12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?

Solomon has been considering PLEASURE and PROJECTS in the previous eleven verses and now he says here in verse 12:

"I TURNED MY THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER WISDOM, AND ALSO MADNESS AND FOLLY."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The reason Solomon passed this verdict on the ultimate value of his accomplishments was the sad fact of the universality of death.
p. 982

As Solomon continued his pursuit to "CONSIDER WISDOM, AND ALSO MADNESS AND FOLLY" he asks the QUESTION:

"WHAT MORE CAN THE KING'S SUCCESSOR DO THAN WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE?"

He means here:

WHAT CAN THE NEXT KING DO MORE THAN "WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE?" I'VE DONE IT ALL!

We are going to find that there are FIVE QUESTIONS in these remaining verses of chapter 2 and this is:

QUESTION #1

"WHAT MORE CAN THE KING'S SUCCESSOR DO THAN WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE?"

You get the feeling that Solomon is running out of projects. He has tried them all.

It reminds of that line in the old country song:

"He's walkin' in my tracks but he can't fill my shoes."

Kaiser says:

Now that it was clear that few if any would ever rival the king in possessions and building projects, what could any other man do who followed an act such as this one put on by Solomon?

p. 57

MacDonald says:

Because of the disheartening outcome of all his research, Solomon began to wonder whether it's better to be a wise man or a fool (v. 12). He decided to look into the matter. Since life is such a chase after bubbles, does the man who lives prudently have any advantage over the one who goes to the other extreme, having a good time in madness and folly?

Being the king, and a wise and wealthy one at that, he was in a good position to find out. If he couldn't find out, what chance did anyone succeeding him have? Anyone coming after the king could scarcely discover any new light on the subject.

p. 27

Hubbard says:

Solomon assumed that his verdict would be accepted because no one who followed him would have greater opportunity or better resources to make such tests (Eccl. 2:12).

p. 42

J. Vernon McGee says:

In other words, no one could live it up more than Solomon did. He said they would have to repeat what he had done and would find it very monotonous.

p. 28

In my own commentary I say:

After we've tasted of nearly every conceivable earthly delight and we've busied ourselves with works of the greatest magnitude, what else is there to do? Not much. So Solomon starts to reflect, turning his thoughts "to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly" (2:12). He thinks about all that he has done, all that he has accomplished, and he reaches the inevitable conclusion: "What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?" (2:12). In other words, he figures, "I've done it all! What could the next king do that could possibly surpass all that I have achieved? Nobody's going to break my records—they'll stand forever."

p. 65

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Pointing out that his experiment with the value of pleasure could perhaps be duplicated but not exceeded ("for what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what he has already done," . . .
p. 982

The Bible Knowledge Commentary also defines the words "MADNESS AND FOLLY" with the phrase:

. . . riotous hedonism . . .
p. 982

Parker says:

The man that cometh after the king can only do what the king has done, though probably on a much meaner scale. What building can be more durable than the pyramids? What can be richer than the palaces of kings? The great thing that Coheleth did for human experience was to carry a certain line of it to its uttermost extent. Suppose a man has sailed over all seas, and made special notes and charts of his voyages; suppose the whole action to have been done by the most scientific men of the time, assisted by the finest instruments, no seaman could afford to be ignorant of the researches of such voyagings and calculations. Coheleth did something like this for mankind. He tasted every cup, and wrote a label upon each: he made money do its very uttermost, and then plainly told what the uttermost was—"vanity and vexation of spirit"! This is a great contribution to have made to human history, and if people would but believe it they would be spared infinite trouble and disappointment.
pp. 17-18

v.13 I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

Here Solomon gives us another observation that:

"WISDOM IS BETTER THAN FOLLY, JUST AS LIGHT IS BETTER THAN DARKNESS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says the word "BETTER" could be translated:

... "gain" ... It refers to something excelling over something else.)
p. 982

"I SAW THAT WISDOM IS BETTER THAN FOLLY, JUST AS LIGHT IS BETTER THAN DARKNESS."

The ILLUSTRATION that Solomon chooses to use is the illustration of:

"LIGHT IS BETTER THAN DARKNESS."

John 3:19-21

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Isaiah 5:20, 21

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

MacDonald says:

His general conclusion was that wisdom is better than folly in the same way and to the same degree that light excels darkness (v. 13). The wise man walks in the light and can see the dangers in the way. The fool, on the other hand, gropes along in darkness and falls into every ditch and trap.
p. 27

v.14 The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

A **wise man** has the foresight to avoid danger while a **fool** gets into trouble as though he stumbles around in the dark . . .
p. 982

Proverbs 4:18, 19

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

Solomon is saying that:

"THE WISE MAN HAS EYES" to see where he is going and walks carefully.

Whereas

"THE FOOL WALKS IN THE DARKNESS."

"BUT I CAME TO REALIZE THAT THE SAME FATE OVERTAKES THEM BOTH."

Whereas, in verse 12 Solomon says:

"I turned my thoughts to consider."

Now in verse 14 he says:

"I CAME TO REALIZE."

It is like the PRODIGAL SON who finally comes to his senses.

That which Solomon "CAME TO REALIZE" was:

"THE SAME FATE OVERTAKES THEM BOTH."

That "FATE" is the CERTAINTY OF DEATH.

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment;

Now Solomon recognizes that both the "WISE MAN" and the "FOOL" are going to die.

Wiersbe says:

In spite of the fact that all men must die, wisdom is still of greater value than folly. They are as different as night and day! *The wise man sees that death is coming and lives accordingly, while the fool walks in darkness and is caught unprepared.*

p. 37

v.15 Then I thought in my heart, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless."

Back in verse 12 Solomon said:

"I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom."

Then in verse 14:

"I came to realize."

Now in verse 15:

"I THOUGHT IN MY HEART" and

"I SAID IN MY HEART."

Here in verse 15 we have QUESTION #2 of the FIVE QUESTIONS in this particular passage.

QUESTION #2

"WHAT THEN DO I GAIN BY BEING WISE?"

Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Even as he has "THOUGHT IN [his] HEART" to test PLEASURE and to test WISDOM, now, again he thinks in his heart that:

"THE FATE OF THE FOOL WILL OVERTAKE" him as well.

Then he asks the QUESTION:

"WHAT THEN DO I GAIN BY BEING WISE?"

There is no real meaning or purpose in the degrees after a person's name.

"I SAID IN MY HEART, 'THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS.'"

J. Vernon McGee says:

You would think that a smart fellow would find another way out. "Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity." It is interesting that modern man with all his tremendous inventions and scientific advances have not been able to extend human life very long. Oh, I know that the average life span has been extended by ten years or more. But put that ten years down by a thousand years, or put it down beside eternity, and what do you have? You don't even have a second on the clock of eternity, my friend. Man really hasn't done very much for himself here on this earth.
p. 29

MacDonald observes:

A former athlete who had achieved fame said, "The greatest thrill of my life was when I first scored the decisive goal in a big game and heard the roar of the cheering crowds. But in the quiet of my room that same night, a sense of the futility of it swept over me. After all, what was it worth? Was there nothing better to live for than to score goals? Such thoughts were the beginning of my search for satisfaction. I knew in my heart that no one could meet my need but God Himself. Soon after, I found in Christ what I could never find in the world."⁷
p. 28

"I SAID IN MY HEART, 'THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS.'"

We have the occurrence of the KEY WORD "MEANINGLESS" once again in this passage.

The word will now occur SIX TIMES in the remaining verses of this study.

J. Sidlow Baxter outlines:

The Ten "Vanies"

ii. 15-16.	The "vanity" of human wisdom,	<i>Wise and foolish alike have one end, death.</i>
ii. 19-21.	The "vanity" of human labour,	<i>Worker no better than shirker in the end.</i>
ii. 26.	The "vanity" of human purpose,	<i>Altho' man proposes it is God who disposes.</i>
iv. 4.	The "vanity" of human rivalry,	<i>Much success brings envy more than joy.</i>
iv. 7.	The "vanity" of human avarice,	<i>"Much" feeds lust for "more," yet oft eludes.</i>
iv. 16.	The "vanity" of human fame,	<i>Is brief, uncertain, and soon forgotten.</i>
v. 10.	The "vanity" of human insatiety,	<i>Money does not satisfy. Increase only feeds others.</i>
vi. 9.	The "vanity" of human coveting,	<i>Often gain cannot be enjoyed, despite desire.</i>
vii. 6.	The "vanity" of human frivolity,	<i>It only camouflages the inevitable sad end.</i>
viii. 10, 14.	The "vanity" of human awards,	<i>Bad often honoured. Good and bad get wrong deserts.</i>
p. 163		

v.16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

Why did he say in his heart "This too is meaningless"? The REASON is now given in verse 16.

"THE WISE MAN, LIKE THE FOOL":

1. "WILL NOT BE LONG REMEMBERED,"
2. "[they] BOTH WILL BE FORGOTTEN," and
3. "[they both] MUST DIE."

Once the game is over the KING and the PAWN go back in the same box.

Psalm 49:10

For all can see that wise men die;
the foolish and the senseless alike perish
and leave their wealth to others.

Bridges raises the question:

Would it not have been better for Solomon, instead of being weary of his life, rather to have been weary of his sin in seeking happiness in earthly things?
p. (unknown)

There are several HOT WORDS that jump out at us in these next verses. I came up with NINE of them. The words:

1. "FATE,"
2. "GAIN,"
3. "REMEMBERED,"
4. "FORGOTTEN,"
5. "DIE,"
6. "LEAVE,"
7. "CONTROL,"
8. "DESPAIR," and the phrase
9. "A GREAT MISFORTUNE."

DeHaan says:

The second goad in Solomon's thinking was his realization that death is both inevitable and impartial. If he could only have kept himself from thinking about eternity, he could have found a great deal more satisfaction in his cultural achievements and worthwhile attainments. But he could not! The awareness that life is but a moment compared to eternity, and that nothing earthly can satisfy, forced itself upon him at the least expected times.
p. 42

Delitzsch says:

Death thus sinks the wise man, as it does the fool, in eternal oblivion; it comes to both, and brings the same to both, which extorted from the author the cry: How dieth the wise man? as the fool! Why is the fate which awaits both thus the same!
p. 248

Patrick & Lowth say:

For as both wise and foolish are alike subject unto death, so, when they are dead, their names live not long after them, but they and all their famous achievements are forgotten; there being few of those things which are now done, that will be so much as thought of in the next generation; much less in future ages, when the memory of them will be utterly lost, and cannot be recovered: and is not this a lamentable case, that a wise man hath no more privilege than a fool, either from death, or from its inseparable companion, oblivion?

p. 123

In my own commentary I say:

The king wraps up his lament with one last reflection, mourning the fact that the "wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered"; indeed, "in days to come both will be forgotten" (2:16). It's the same old story. We work, strive, and sweat to achieve a measure of success and in the end we discover that we've used the wrong set of tools. What we've built won't last, and what we are will be forgotten. The Nobel Prize winner will meet the same fate as the man who cannot spell his own name. As Solomon reiterates in verse 16: "Like the fool, the wise man too must die!"

p. 66

(Living Somewhere Between Estrogen and Death by Barbara Johnson)

Well, consider what the late Dorothy Parker suggested for the epitaph on her own tombstone:

Excuse my dust.¹

Don't you love it! This is the same attitude that caused comedian Bill Cosby, as he approached his fiftieth birthday, to laugh when he quoted his grandfather's advice, "Don't worry about senility. . . . When it hits you, you won't know it." ²

1. Dorothy Parker, quoted in Lois L. Kaufman, *Old Age Is Not for Sissies* (White Plains, N.Y.: Peter Pauper Press, 1989), 57.

2. Bill Cosby, quoted in Kaufman, *Ibid.*, 55.

p. 6

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

Someone once said that life is made up of the tender teens, the teachable twenties, the tireless thirties, the fiery forties, the fretful fifties, the serious sixties, the sacred seventies, the aching eighties . . . shortening breath, death, sod, God. That is our journey, and a happy ending awaits us after we make our way through all the tough stuff.

I love the cartoon that shows Ziggy standing before an Exit sign hanging on a brick wall.
pp. 50-51

(The Book of Wisdom by Multnomah Books)

Everyone faces at all times two fateful possibilities; one is to grow older, the other not.

anonymous

. . . old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you're aboard, there's nothing you can do. You can't stop the plane, you can't stop the storm, you can't stop time. So one might as well accept it calmly, wisely.

Golda Meir

Quoted in *Le'Europeo*

Aging seems to be the only available way to live a long time.

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber
Dictionnaire Encyclopédique

p. 489

(Cactus Tracks & Cowboy Philosophy by Baxter Black)

ANONYMOUS END

*I'm here at an old pal's funeral.
Not too many people have come.
Just a few of us boys from the outfit
So he don't go out like a bum.*

*Seems like I've known him forever
As I look back over the years.
We've rode several wagons together
And shared a couple of beers.*

*He never quite made it to foreman
But then, of course, neither have I.
He always sorta stayed to the center
Just kind of a regular guy.*

*He'd always chip in for a party
Though he was never one to get loud.
Everything that he did was just average.
He never stood out in a crowd.*

*He was fair with a rope and a rifle,
He was never early or late,
In the pickup he rode in the middle
So he'd never open a gate.*

*Conversin' with him was plum easy.
He never had too much to say,
No matter what question you'd ask him
The answer was always, "Okay."*

*Well, they've lowered him down to the hardpan
And we've sung "Shall we gather at."
They've asked for a moment of silence
And everyone's holdin' their hat.*

*Now the preacher is askin' me kindly
To say a few words at his death
So I mumble, and say, "He was steady."
Then I pause and take a deep breath,*

*But I'm too choked up to continue.
The crowd thinks I've been overcame
But the mason has screwed up his tombstone*

And I can't remember his name!
pp. 13-14

THE STORY OF TAPS

It all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Capt. Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of this narrow strip of land. During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moan of a soldier who lay mortally wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead.

The captain lit a lantern. Suddenly he caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, he enlisted in the Confederate Army. The following morning, the heartbroken father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status. His request was partially granted. The captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for the son at the funeral. That request was turned down, since the soldier was a Confederate. Out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician. The captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform.

The wish was granted. That music was the haunting melody we now know as "Taps," used at military funerals.

—Lt. Col. W. Lewis Kirkpatrick, AUS (Ret.), "The Officer," May 1998.

Dear Ann Landers:

The enclosed appeared in the *Schenectady Gazette*. It was written by a teenage boy who died from cancer. His parents were divorced and he and his sisters were being raised by grandparents. Please try to find room for this farewell message in your column. We went to school with Kevin, and he was truly one in a million.

A Very Special Thank You

If I were back on earth, I would want to express my thanks:

To the doctors and nurses at Ellis Hospital who attended me and made sure I did not suffer any unnecessary pain during my illness.

To all my school friends for your concern and kindness; for the many visits you made to the chapels and churches to pray for me; for the many hours you spent at the hospital helping to cheer me up and lift the spirits of my family. For the memorial services you held on the steps of Draper High School the day I left this earth.

To all who came by the funeral home to pay their last respects. I stopped counting when the number reached 400.

To all who sent cards and sympathy letters. They were so helpful.

To you dear friends and neighbors who cooked all that delicious food and baked those wonderful pastries. Your goodies just about covered every flat surface in our home. How I wish I could have tasted some of them.

To the thoughtful friends, relatives and neighbors who sent donations to charities in my name—and, oh, those gorgeous flowers! What a beautiful array! It was almost as if I was back in the Hawaiian islands again—a place I truly loved. Many of the plants and flowers are now in our home, being tenderly cared for by my grandmother.

To those who made up the funeral cortege. What a sight that was! There were over 30 vehicles—one after the other, all with their lights on. What a great send off. I loved it!

To my family—Kelly, Celia, Gina and Katie. I am proud to have been your one and only brother. I'm sorry I had to leave you, but I know you will all grow up to be good citizens and a credit to our grandparents.

To Gram and Grandpa. Thanks for everything. Too bad God called me just when I was reaching the age when I could have been of help to you. I realized a long time ago that you were exceptional people. I was a lucky guy to be your grandson.

To all: This isn't the end. We are sure to meet again. I'll be on hand waiting when you arrive, and we'll take up where we left off.

—Kevin Dolan, 1964-1981

Dear Friend in Schenectady: Thank you for sharing that extraordinary message. For those who may be wondering how Kevin knew the number of vehicles in the funeral cortege and the fact that more than 400 passed his coffin, his farewell message was written several days before he passed away. He left blank spaces for his older sister to fill in after his death.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

WILL IT LAST?

Dr. James Dobson writes: "If you live long enough, life will trash your trophies. No matter how important something seems, the passage of time will render it old and tarnished.

"Who cares today that Zachary Taylor or William Henry Harrison won their elections for President of the United States? What difference did it make that the Brooklyn Dodgers defeated the Yankees in the 1955 World Series?

"John Gilbert was the biggest romantic male movie star of the 1920s, by far the highest paid actor in Hollywood. Almost everyone in the country knew his name, but within two years, no studio would hire him.

"Gilbert died in 1936 from a heart attack brought on by alcohol and drug abuse. He was just 36 years old. Have you ever heard of him? I doubt it. Even the most awesome triumphs lose their sizzle in time.

"That's the way the system works. Your successes will fade from memory, too. That doesn't mean you should try to achieve them, but it should lead you to ask, why are they important to me? Are my trophies for me, or are they for Him?"

[*Life on the Edge* by James Dobson. Word, 1995.]

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Charity: A Collection of Poems by Gail T. Burton by Gail T. Burton)

DAD

When the silver thread of earthly life
 has finally reached the end,
 And I have walked along the path
 that God has set for me.
 When my allotted time on earth
 runs it's completed course,
 Through deepened valleys, mountains high.
 and on life's restless sea.

I pray that as you contemplate
 the life that I have lived
 And add the score upon the slate
 that gives my last receipt.
 You'll find the world a better place
 because I passed your way
 And footprints of my passing life
 made you[r] life more complete.

p. 18

v.17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Once again, in verse 17, we have clustered together all **THREE KEY PHRASES** to this book.

You will remember that this also happened back in:

Ecclesiastes 1:14

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

The **THREE KEY PHRASES** are:

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

This is the **SECOND OCCURRENCE** of "MEANINGLESS" in our passage. We will see the word **FOUR MORE TIMES** before we complete this study.

Solomon is telling us that he has a hatred for life itself and the **REASON** being is:

"WORKING THAT IS DONE UNDER THE SUN WAS GRIEVOUS,"

"MEANINGLESS," and

"A CHASING AFTER THE WIND."

Charlie Jones in his book Life is Tremendous says:

Do you know what I like? I like to relax; I like to *talk* about work. I like vacations, conventions, commissions, salary increases, long luncheons. What do I get? Headaches, heartbreaks, turndowns!

But you know what I've been learning? If I don't get excited about what I don't like to do, I don't get much that I do like to be excited about.

I've been learning that life is not doing what you like to do. Real life is doing what you *ought* to do. I've been learning that people who do what they like to do eventually discover that what they thought they like to do, they don't like to do, but people who are learning to do what they don't like to do but ought to do, eventually discover that what they thought they didn't like to do they do like to do.

p. 23

It was Mark Twain who said:

"Life is just one darn thing after another."

p. 68 (Anderson commentary)

According to the The Bible Knowledge Commentary the antonym for the word "GRIEVOUS" is:

... "good" or "worthwhile" ... If, he concluded, it does not ultimately make any difference how one lives and if there is nothing ultimately worthwhile to do, then **all** of life and all its accomplishments are futile or **meaningless, a chasing after the wind** ...

p. 982

The word "SO" introduces the RESULT of Solomon realizing that the "WISE" and the "FOOL" both are going to die.

They "WILL NOT BE LONG REMEMBERED."

They will "BE FORGOTTEN."

This is the RESULT:

"I HATED LIFE."

Then he gives us a REASON:

"BECAUSE THE WORK THAT IS DONE UNDER THE SUN WAS GRIEVOUS TO ME. ALL OF IT IS MEANINGLESS, A CHASING AFTER THE WIND."

TWENTY-ONE TIMES we have the words:

"I,"

"ME," and

"MY"

occurring in this passage.

G. H. Morrison said:

Nine-tenths of our unhappiness is selfishness and is an insult cast in the face of God.

p. (unknown)

(Shade of His Hand by Oswald Chambers)

If a man builds his life over a volcano, one day there will come terrific havoc. If we ignore the safety valves in mother earth, we will have to pay the penalty. Mount Vesuvius is one of the pumps that keeps the earth in proper order; the Creator has put His danger signals there, and yet people ignore them and plant their vineyards on its slopes, then when an eruption occurs we blame God and say how cruel He is to allow it.

p. 96

(Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On!: A Cowboy's Guide to Life by Texas Bix Bender)

Nobody ever drowned
himself in
his own sweat.

p. 100

(The Book of Wisdom by Multnomah Books)

Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at
work worth doing.

Theodore Roosevelt
Labor Day address, Syracuse, New York, 1903

p. 83

If you want to be successful, it's just this simple:

Know what you're doing.

Love what you're doing.

And believe in what you're doing.

Will Rogers

p. 111

Delitzsch says:

"Then life became hateful to me; for the work which man accomplishes under the sun was grievous to me: because all is vain and windy effort." He hated life; and the labour which is done under the sun, *i.e.* the efforts of men, including the fate that befalls men, appeared to him to be evil (repugnant).

p. 248

J. Sidlow Baxter says:

We can never read it without being reminded of the poet Byron's words, written shortly before his premature death, after a life lived wholly for the world and its pleasures—

My days are in the yellow leaf,
 The flowers and fruit of love are gone;
 The worm, the canker, and the grief
 Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
 Is lone as some volcanic isle;
 No torch is kindled at its blaze—
 A funeral pile.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
 The exalted portion of the pain
 And power of love I cannot share,
 But wear the chain.

p. 164

Warren Wiersbe in his book With the Word says:

The Cynic

Henry Ward Beecher described a cynic as a person who "never sees a good quality in a man, and never fails to see a bad one. He is the human owl, vigilant in darkness, and blind in light, mousing for vermin, and never seeing noble game."

p. 438

Leupold says:

The conclusion that is now drawn from the preceding statements is worded in somewhat strong terms: "Therefore I was disgusted with life; because everything that is done under the sun seemed wrong to me; for everything is vanity and striving for wind." It is only fair to say that not every man's reaction would necessarily be quite as strong as is this one, and so the statement may be said to have something of a subjective and autobiographical element in it and need not be regarded as normative for all.
p. 69

Matthew Henry says:

Have we so often bored into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign of it, but been always frustrated in the search, and shall we not at length despair of ever finding it? At length he *hated life itself* (v. 17), because it is subject to so many toils and troubles, and a constant series of disappointments.
p. 794

NOTHING TO LIVE FOR

The number of people who commit suicide after experiencing the fame or fortune of worldly success is astonishing.

Multimillionaire George Vanderbilt killed himself by jumping from a hotel window. Lester Hunt, twice governor of Wyoming before being elected to the U.S. Senate, ended his own life. Actress Marilyn Monroe, writer Ernest Hemingway, and athlete Tony Lazzeri represent a host of highly influential and popular people who become so disenchanted with earthly success that they took their own lives.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

ONLY THE TASTE OF ASHES

In 1966, about a year before he died, the brilliant physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer said, "I am a complete failure!" This man had been the director of the Los Alamos Project, a research team that produced the atomic bomb, and he had also served as the head of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. Yet, in looking back, he saw his achievements as meaningless. When asked about them, he replied, "They leave on the tongue only the taste of ashes."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

One out of four people in this country is mentally imbalanced. Think of your three closest friends. If they seem okay, then you're the one.

Ann Landers

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

One man gets nothing but discord out of a piano; another gets harmony. No one claims the piano is at fault. Life is about the same. The discord is there, and the harmony is there. Study to play it correctly, and it will give forth the beauty; play it falsely, and it will give forth the ugliness. Life is not at fault.

<Unknown>

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

A businessman who was near death asked that his remains be cremated and the ashes be mailed to the Internal Revenue Service with the following note attached: "Now You Have It All."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

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

HE CARES

When you feel the midnight of your life
 is crashing down at noon,
 And the songs you sang of life and love
 Have ended much too soon.
 When your back is pressed against despair,
 As the hounds of fate rush in,
 And when no one seems to know, or care,
 And you're all alone, again.
 When your desperate silent cry for help
 is met with vacant stares;
 There is still someone who understands.
 God loves you, and He cares.

p. 75

I think it would be good for us to stop for a moment and listen to the cowboy for a moment in the music that he sings.

"My mind can't take my body running around anymore!"

"My heart's making promises my body can't keep!"

"I don't mind getting burned, if I can just be near the glow!"

"He little thinged her out of my arms."

"Hey! Barnum and Bailey, can you use another clown!"

"It wouldn't be so bad if it hadn't been so good."

"I've closed my eyes to the cold hard truth I'm seeing."

"The work we done was hard. At night we'd sleep 'cause we was tard."

v.18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

In verse 17:

"I hated life."

Now in verse 18:

"I HATED ALL THE THINGS."

Whereas, it was "life" itself that he hated because of all the hard "work that is done" in verse 17.

In verse 18 he hates all the possessions that he has "TOILED FOR UNDER THE SUN."

The REASON he does is in that last phrase:

"BECAUSE I MUST LEAVE THEM TO THE ONE WHO COMES AFTER ME."

David, his father, certainly left an awful lot of things and he did it with a sense of joy and fulfillment. He left a kingdom he had established and all of the materials and preparations necessary for the building of the temple when he died.

Luke 12:19, 20

And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?"

Ecclesiastes 7:2

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.

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"—

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Having discussed the futility of human achievements in general (1:12-15) and the futility of his own achievements (2:1-11) in view of death (2:12-17), Solomon then turned to consider the value of the toil he had expended in accomplishing them (2:18-20) and the value of human toil in general (2:21-6:9). He shifted from using "I" and "my" in 2:1-18 to using "he," "a man," and "his" in 2:19-20.

p. 982

David Hubbard says:

We toil to build our little pyramids of remembrance, our modest monuments to our wisdom, and death sweeps over the terrain like a hot, dry sirocco and turns our pyramids into sand dunes—all of which look alike.

And death, the ultimate reality, has one other vicious whim: *it leaves all of our accomplishments for others to use*. . . .

p. 43

In my commentary I say:

Solomon is like many of us. In the words of American humorist Will Rogers: "Too many people spend money they haven't earned, to buy things they don't want, to impress people they don't like" (Tan 1984, 826).
p. 69

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

Posterity! You will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom! I hope you will make good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that I ever took half the pains to preserve it.

—John Adams

p. 131

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

What is the use of living if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?

Winston Churchill
Dundee, October 9, 1908

(quote 7)

v.19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

Here in verse 19 we have:

QUESTION #3

"WHO KNOWS WHETHER HE WILL BE A WISE MAN OR A FOOL?"

We also have the THIRD OCCURRENCE of the word "MEANINGLESS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Life was not the only thing Solomon found to be ultimately repugnant; he also viewed all his labor with distaste. . . . literally, "I hated all my toil." . . . what he accomplished (vv. 4-6) and accumulated (vv. 7-8) . . . he would have no **control** over how it would be used after his death . . . pp. 982-3

When you read the account of Solomon's son Rehoboam and what he does to immediately divide the kingdom helps us understand that his fears were certainly justified.

The record of Rehoboam fiasco is found in 1 Kings 11:43-12:17.

Patrick & Lowth make a similar observation:

Or, if my son succeed me in the possession of them, there is no man can assure me, whether he will wisely preserve and improve what I have gotten, or foolishly squander all away; in short, whether he will prove a worthy or an unworthy inheritor of my labours: and yet, such as he is, he must have an absolute power over all that I leave, to dispose of it as he pleaseth; and sottishly, perhaps, to waste in a little time, what I, with prudent care and diligence, have been heaping up all my life long. This is a great addition to human misery; and renders even the study of wisdom very vain, which cannot find a remedy for these evils.

p. 123

MacDonald says:

This really nettled Solomon. Perhaps he had a premonition that it would happen in his own family. Perhaps Solomon foresaw that his son, Rehoboam, would squander by his folly all that he had worked so hard to accumulate. History tells us that Rehoboam did just that. By refusing to listen to his older counselors, he precipitated the division of the kingdom. When the Egyptians invaded Judah, he bought them off by giving them the temple treasures. "The shields of gold went to swell the coffers of Egypt, and Rehoboam had to substitute shields of brass in their stead" (see 2 Ch 12:9-10).

p. 29

Lange, quoting Luther, says:

Therefore it is better to commend the highest government of all things to the God who made us. Let every one perform his duty with all diligence, and execute what God places to his hand; if things do not always turn out as we expected, let us commend them to God. What God gives, that accept; and again, what He prevents, that accept also as good. What we are able to do, that we ought to do; what we cannot do, we must leave undone. The stone that thou art not able to lift, thou must leave lying.

p. 68

He says further:

It is hard for flesh and blood to leave the fruits of its toil to others; but a Christian arms himself against this with the reflection that every thing that he has or does is given to him by God, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

p. 63

(Game Plan: Winning Strategies for the Second Half of Your Life by Bob Buford)

As Ben Franklin put it, "I want to be useful, even after my death."

p. 102

v.20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.

It was Charles Haden Spurgeon who said:

Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing and therefore they cry to Him for Him in the work. For acceptance of their efforts and the establishment of their designs.

p. (unknown)

Lange says:

On account of the painful truth of what has just been demonstrated, one must despair of all external earthly success of this earthly life, as does the Preacher at the evening of his life.

p. 59

Baxter says:

There are three causes. First, he views life *selfishly rather than socially*. He has lived to get, instead of to give; and he has found what all such persons find, namely, that the more one lives for self the less do earthly things satisfy. When one lives just to "get," the more one gets the less one really has. It is a true paradox that the more one gives the more one gets. And those who do most for others do most for themselves. Koheleth had been a great social mixer, but only outwardly. Inwardly he had been an isolationist. 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

Wiersbe says:

As the rustic preacher said, "We all must learn to cooperate with the inevitable!" p. 39

Every man may be observed to have a certain strain of lamentation, some peculiar theme of complaint, on which he dwells in his moments of dejection.

Samuel Johnson

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

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

Victim of Fear

He feared so much the growing old
 And poverty's grim curse
 That he refused to let the gold
 Escape his tight-locked purse
 And let his youth turn gray with mould—
 A tragedy much worse!

He robbed his middle-age of all
 That makes a lifetime sweet
 And walked, with fortune as his call,
 A poor man down the street,
 Fearing that when the shadows fall
 Such poverty he'd meet.

In giving he found no delight.
 With fortune at his side
 He thought with failing strength and sight
 He'd need what coins provide.
 He lived a poor life that he might
 Be rich the day he died.
 p. 937

(Don't Whiz on a 'Lectric Fence: Grandpa's Country Wisdom by Roy English)

You have to bust some clods to make a crop.
 p. 61

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

**Don't let
 "Well done" on
 your tombstone
 mean you were
 cremated!**

p. 196

This is the THIRD USAGE of the word "HEART" in this passage.

Back in verse 15:

"Then I thought in my HEART," and also

"I said in my HEART. 'This too is meaningless.'"

Now here in verse 20 it is culminated by:

"SO MY HEART BEGAN TO DESPAIR."

v.21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

He now gives us the REASON that his "heart began to despair" and that is seen in the fact that:

"A MAN MAY DO HIS WORK WITH WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL, AND THEN HE MUST LEAVE ALL HE OWNS TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT WORKED FOR IT."

Solomon then EVALUATES THE DILEMMA by saying:

"THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS AND A GREAT MISFORTUNE."

This is the FOURTH USAGE of "MEANINGLESS" in the passage.

Coupled with the word "despair" in verse 20, we now have the phrase

"A GREAT MISFORTUNE" here in verse 21.

MacDonald says:

Martin Luther felt he could trust his family to God as he had trusted himself. In his last will and testament he wrote:

Lord God, I thank Thee, for thou hast been pleased to make me a poor and indigent man upon earth. I have neither house nor land nor money to leave behind me. Thou hast given me wife and children, whom I now restore to Thee. Lord, nourish, teach and preserve them, as Thou hast me.

p. 30

1 Timothy 6:6-8

But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

Patrick & Lowth say:

For what hath happened to others may to me; who have observed a man no way defective, either in wise contrivance, or prudent management, or upright dealing, but as eminent for honesty, as he was for diligence; whose estate fell to the share of an idle person, nay, of an ignorant, silly, unjust, and ungrateful wretch; who prodigally consumed upon his lusts that which cost him no pains, not so much as a thought to acquire. This likewise, it cannot be denied, is not only a dissatisfaction, but a torment, nay, a great torment, to the mind of man.

p. 123

You could almost call the:

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON as a

PARABLE OF GREAT MISFORTUNE.

What is the use of leaving a lot for someone who will not use it wisely or appreciate it. And so, Solomon's verdict is that it is:

"MEANING AND A GREAT MISFORTUNE."

When it comes right down to the tuff-stuff of life there are just a lot of things that Bank Americard, MasterCard, or American Express can not handle.

Psalm 73:25, 26 (NASB)

Whom have I in heaven but thee?
 And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.
 My flesh and my heart may fail;
 But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

There will be no cleaving to God until the vanity of all in comparison with Him has been experimentally acknowledged. Oh, my God, may I feel the vanity of everything that turns away my heart from Thee!

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

v.22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun?

Verse 22 is QUESTION #4 in the passage.

QUESTION #4

"WHAT DOES A MAN GET FOR ALL THE TOIL AND ANXIOUS STRIVING WITH WHICH HE LABORS UNDER THE SUN?"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these next two verses:

... labor is not worth the effort (2:22-23)
p. 983

Delitzsch says:

What comes out of his labour for man? Nothing comes of it, nothing but disagreeableness.
p. 250

In my commentary I say:

I'm reminded of that Hal David/Burt Bacharach song, "I'll Never Fall in Love Again," from the Broadway musical *Promises, Promises*. An excerpt from David's lyrics follows:

What do you get when you fall in love
A guy with a pin to bust your bubble
That's what you get for all your trouble
I'll never fall in love again
I'll never fall in love again

What do you get when you kiss a guy
You get enough germs to catch pneumonia
After you do, he'll never phone you
I'll never fall in love again

Don't tell me what it's all about
'Cause I've been there and I'm glad I'm out
Out of those chains, those chains that bind you
That is why I'm here to remind you

What do you get when you fall in love
You only get lies and pain and sorrow
So for at least until tomorrow
I'll never fall in love again
I'll never fall in love again.

(Lyrics by Hal David. Copyright 1968 by Blue Seas Music, Inc. and Jac Music, Inc. International copyright secured. All rights reserved.)

pp. 71-72

TUMMY TABLE TENNIS

Nervous man: "I've got butterflies in my stomach."

Doctor: "Here, take an aspirin."

Nervous man: "No thanks. I took one an hour ago, and they're still playing ping-pong with it."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

WAITING FOR THE ROOSTER

The story is told of a man who raised chickens, and among them was a rooster that occasionally crowed and greatly annoyed the next-door neighbor. Early one morning, disturbed and angry, he called the owner of the flock and made this complaint, "That miserable bird of yours keeps me up all night!" "I don't understand," was the reply. "He hardly ever crows; but if he does, it's never more than two or three times in a whole day." The man quickly retorted, "That isn't my problem. It's not how OFTEN he does it that irritated me! It's not knowing when he MIGHT that keeps me awake!"

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(The Weight of Your Words: Measuring the Impact of What You Say by
Joseph M. Stowell)

The story is told of an elementary teacher who patiently put boots on thirty-two students before sending them out into the snow. As the last boot was going onto the thirty-second student, the child said, "These aren't my boots." The teacher, by now out of patience, furiously ripped off the boots. The child then continued, "They are my sister's boots, but she let me wear them today."

p. 97

v.23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

"HIS WORK" is described in THREE WAYS:

1. It is PAINFUL,
2. It is filled with "GRIEF," and
3. "HIS MIND DOES NOT REST."

Solomon then SUMMARIZES it with the KEY WORD in the passage:

"THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS."

This is the FOURTH TIME the word is used in this passage.

You would gather from this passage that he has become a WORKAHOLIC.

What a description of men today who find that their work is a "PAIN AND [a] GRIEF." And even at night they bring their work and problems home with them. Their "MIND DOES NOT REST." Solomon renders the same verdict:

"THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS."

Delitzsch says:

Even in the night he has no rest; for even then, though he is not labouring, yet he is inwardly engaged about his labour and his plans. And this possession acquired with such labour and restlessness, he must leave to others; for equally with the fool he falls under the stroke of death: he himself has no enjoyment, others have it; dying, he must leave all behind him, . . .
p. 251

Hubbard describes it as follows:

Strain, toil, pain, vexation, insomnia—this is the currency with which we pay for success that we can neither truly gain nor keep.

We spend all our human resources and borrow against energy we do not have to build our pyramids by which to be remembered. Then death slips into the scene, erases our name from the cornerstone, and engraves in larger letters the name of someone less deserving. Our expensive legacy has been stripped from us by death, the consummate swindler.

p. 44

ANXIETY METER

Three out of four things you worry about happening never do, and three out of four things you don't worry about happening do. Which all goes to prove that even if you're worrying about the wrong things, you're doing just about the right amount of worrying.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Many folks worry about things that never happen. It is like the patient in the mental hospital, holding his ear close to the wall, listening intently. The attendant finally approached.

"Sh!" whispered the patient, beckoning him over.

The attendant pressed his ear to the wall for a long time. "I can't hear a thing," he finally said.

"No," replied the patient, "it's been like that all day!"

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

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

A small-town chamber of commerce once invited a man to address their annual banquet. The speaker was asked to be motivational, since the town's economy had been bad that year and people were discouraged.

During his presentation, the speaker took a large piece of white paper and made a black dot in the center of it with a marking pen. He then held the paper up before the audience and asked, "What do you see?" One person replied, "I see a black dot." The speaker said, "Fine. What else do you see?"

Others chimed in, "A black dot." The speaker asked, "Don't you see anything besides the dot?" The audience responded with a resounding "No!"

"But you've overlooked the most important thing," the speaker replied. "You've missed seeing the sheet of paper!" He then went on to explain, "In our lives, we are often distracted by small, dot-like failures. They keep us from seeing the blessings, successes, and joys that are far more important than the disappointments that try to monopolize our energy and attention. I encourage you to focus on the big picture of what is right rather than the small view of what is wrong."

Are you so preoccupied today with what *is*, that you've lost sight of what *can* be? Step back and see the bigger picture!
p. 119

"ALL HIS DAYS HIS WORK IS":

1. "PAIN,"
2. "GRIEF," and
3. "EVEN AT NIGHT HIS MIND DOES NOT REST."

"THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS."

It was Harris who said:

I am in the prime of senility.
p. (unknown)

1 Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

v.24 A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,

Wiersbe observes:

This is the first of six "conclusions" in Ecclesiastes, each of which emphasizes the importance of accepting life as God's gift and enjoying it in God's will (3:12-15, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:9-10).
p. 40

Leupold says:

The thought of this passage is, true enjoyment is possible, but it does not lie within man's power to bestow it upon himself. Man is not the fountain of good. Such good is for the present defined as "eating and drinking and getting satisfaction." Even that does not lie within man's power to bestow upon himself.
p. 76

Kaiser says:

Only now are we prepared to receive Solomon's hard-hitting conclusion in 2:24-26:

- There is nothing (inherently) good in man.
- No one can appreciate such elementary things as eating and drinking apart from a personal relationship with the living God.
- God alone—not things or wisdom—is the giver of satisfaction and joy.
- God also gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please Him.

pp. 58-59

(In the Hands of God: Inspiration From Daily Life by William Barclay)

Robert Browning's best-known stanza is:

*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!"*
p. 71

(When God Interrupts: Finding New Life Through Unwanted Change by M. Craig Barnes)

For All the Saints

The phone rang at 11 a.m. on Thanksgiving. I hesitated before answering it because I knew it could mean an interruption in our plans for the day. I was right. A nurse was calling from the intensive care ward. "Pastor Barnes, Jean Bonfield had another heart attack. It looks like she's dying."

Jean, age seventy-eight, was a member of my congregation. She and her husband, Bill, always sat in the third pew, right-hand side. She had taught Sunday school for over thirty-five years and quit only after her sight failed. Since then she had settled into a ministry of prayer.

When I arrived at the hospital, the family members were standing in a circle around her bed. I went into her room, took her hand and said, "Jean, it's Craig. Can I pray for you?" She smiled softly.

I had visited Jean in the hospital on several occasions. Praying for her was like asking God to give more faith to the apostle Paul. Jean believed in the grace of God. She believed that in Jesus Christ her sins were forgiven, and she believed she would live eternally with him when she died. She never understood my sermons about "I believe, help my unbelief." Jean had very little unbelief.

Beside her bed, I started to read some Scripture passages. I would start reading, and she would finish the passage, quoting it from memory. Her voice was weak, but her mind seemed strong even through the fog of the pain-deadening morphine. Someone whispered it was a shame that she was dying on Thanksgiving. But Jean responded, "What a glorious Thanksgiving. Soon I'll be with my Lord. I'm almost there."

Then she began to pray. She prayed for everyone around the bed: her husband, her children and her grandchildren. She even prayed for her pastor. She asked God to help me believe the words of my own sermons. Shortly after her prayer, Jean died. As we watched the lines that measured her vital signs level out on the monitor, the room was overcome by a quiet spirit. It was a sacred moment, and no one dared defile it by trying to say something meaningful. Jean was passing from our hands into God's.

After she was gone, we each took a moment beside her to say goodbye. Then we held hands and began to pray again. In the middle of my prayer I discovered that I was already missing her very much. Someone else had to finish my prayer.

As I drove away from the hospital, it occurred to me for the first time that Jean was a saint. An ordinary and unadorned one, but clearly a saint whose clarity of faith and vision made it easier for me to believe. What I was missing was not just a favorite parishioner, but one of my windows into heaven.

I was very late for the Thanksgiving dinner party. When I walked through the door, I could hear my friends laughing at the table. At first I wondered if I was ready for this. One of the hardest things about being a pastor is the transitions. My heart never moves as fast as the schedule of events. But to my surprise, this transition was easy. Jean made it easy. I sat down at the table and simply said, "What a glorious Thanksgiving!"
pp. 13-15

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It is best to enjoy labor's fruits as God enables (2:24-26)
p. 983

v.25 for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

Here is the REASON for the observations that he has made in verse 24:

"WITHOUT HIM, WHO CAN EAT OR FIND ENJOYMENT?"

This is QUESTION #5 in a series of 5 questions in the passage.

Let us just review the questions for a moment.

QUESTION #1

"What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?" (verse 12).

QUESTION #2

"What then do I gain by being wise?" (verse 15).

QUESTION #3

"Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?" (verse 19).

QUESTION #4

"What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun?" (verse 22).

QUESTION #5

"FOR WITHOUT HIM, WHO CAN EAT OR FIND ENJOYMENT?"
(verse 25).

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Delitzsch says:

In enjoyment man is not free, it depends not on his own will: labour and the enjoyment of it do not stand in a necessary connection; but enjoyment is a gift which God imparts, according as He regards man as good, or as a sinner.

p. 253

FAMILIES IN THE PRESSURE COOKER

It matters not how great the pressure is, only where the pressure lies. As long as the pressure does not come between me and my Savior, but presses me to Him, then the greater the pressure, the greater my dependence upon Him.

—Hudson Taylor

Christian families in America today constantly face pressures from every side. Whether it's from the unrealistic expectations we put on ourselves, the depressing ungodliness of our society, or just the ordinary frustrations of living, pressure is an everyday affair. The unrelenting nature of the pressures families face can sap our strength and set us up for failure.

Christians frequently get themselves overcommitted and begin to let higher priorities slip. When we try to cram too many things into a day, something has to give. Often it's time with the Lord that gets bumped. Even though nearly eight out of ten Christians in the United States think that people ought to read the Bible, over 27% of them admit that during the course of an average week they never get around to reading any Scripture. Of those who do read the Bible, 19% say that they read only once a week. People are just too busy to open their Bibles and hear what God wants to say to them.

Another area that gets slighted when we join the rat race is time with our children. Fathers in particular are prone to putting so much of their energy—both physical and emotional—into their work that they have virtually nothing left to give to their sons and daughters.

When we neglect these all-important relationships because of busyness we frequently begin making decisions according to the world's values rather than God's. Divorce seems a viable option as the daily pressures cause spouses to feel isolated from one another. Hoping to find the love and acceptance they crave, as many as 50% of American husbands and 33% of wives commit adultery at some point during their marriage.

All these pressures make some Christians feel defeated. Yet they are afraid they will be branded as intolerant if they attempt to change anything. They experience hopelessness because of their inability to find success in their own family life. Pressure, however, doesn't have to be bad. As the famous missionary Hudson Taylor pointed out, pressure can lead us to depend more on God. In order to allow that to happen, we must not be afraid of slowing down. We must evaluate not only where we are going but what we are becoming. This may involve, as it did in the case of the writer, a conscious decision to accept fewer social invitations in order to have adequate time with God and with our families. The only person in history who can really help us cope with pressure is the One who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

"Families in the Pressure Cooker" by Dennis Rainey with David Boehi. Moody, Sep 1991. Pages 14-16.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

HOW TO AVOID WORRY

A widow who had successfully raised a very large family was being interviewed by a reporter. In addition to six children of her own, she had adopted 12 other youngsters, and through it all she had maintained stability and an air of confidence. When asked the secret of her outstanding accomplishment, her answer to the newsman was quite surprising. She said, "I managed so well because I'm in a partnership!" "What do you mean?" he inquired. The woman replied, "Many years ago I said, 'Lord, I'll do the work and You do the worrying.' And I haven't had an anxious care since."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

v.26 To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

God has **THREE SPECIAL GIFTS** for those **"WHO PLEASE HIM"**:

1. "WISDOM,"
2. "KNOWLEDGE," and
3. "HAPPINESS."

"BUT" forms the **CONTRAST** to the one **"WHO PLEASES HIM"** in the words:

**"TO THE SINNER HE GIVES THE TASK OF GATHERING AND
STORING UP WEALTH TO HAND IT OVER TO THE ONE WHO
PLEASES GOD."**

Then he renders his **FINAL VERDICT**:

"THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS, A CHASING AFTER THE WIND."

This is the SIXTH and FINAL USAGE of "MEANINGLESS" in this passage.

I learned from these three, final verses that the fruit of pleasing God is THREE-FOLD:

1. "satisfaction" (verse 24),
2. "enjoyment" (verse 25), and
3. "HAPPINESS" (verse 26).

Kaiser sums it up by saying:

The purpose of life cannot be found in any one of the good things found in the world. All the things that we call the "goods" of life—health, riches, possessions, position, sensual pleasures, honors, and prestige—slip through man's hands unless they are received as a gift from God and until God gives man the ability to enjoy them and obtain satisfaction from them.

p. 59

Wiersbe says:

It is not enough to possess "things"; we must also possess the kind of character that enables us to use "things" wisely and enjoy them properly.

Not so with the sinner. (The Hebrew word means "to fall short, to miss the mark.") The sinner may heap up all kinds of riches, but he can never truly enjoy them because he has left God out of his life. In fact, his riches may finally end up going to the righteous.

p. 41

1 Timothy 6:10

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

Robert Foster has a little poetic piece called:

MIDDLE-TIME

Between the exhilaration of Beginning
and the satisfaction of Concluding
is the Middle Time
 of enduring, changing, trying,
 despairing, continuing, becoming.

Jesus Christ was the man of God's Middle Time
between Creation and . . . Accomplishment.
Through him God said of Creation,
"Without mistake."
And of Accomplishment,
"Without doubt."

And we in our Middle Times
 of wondering, waiting, hurrying,
 hesitating, regretting, revising;
We who have begun many things—
and seen but few completed;
We who are becoming more—and less;
through the evidence of God's Middle Time
have a stabilizing hint
 that we are not mistakes,
 that we are irreplaceable,
 that our Being is of interest
 and our Doing is of purpose,
 that our Being and our Doing
 are surrounded by AMEN.

Jesus Christ is the Completer
 of unfinished people
 with unfinished work
 in unfinished times.

May he keep us from sinking, ceasing,
wasting, solidifying—
that we may be for him
experimenters, enablers, encouragers,
and associates in Accomplishment.

—Lona Fowler

p. 4a

Alexander Whyte says:

What malice there must be in our hearts when God's very best gifts to us, and our very best blessings, are turned by us to be our temptation and our snare! David's terrible fall took place not among the cruel rocks of his exile, but on the roof of the king's palace in Jerusalem. And it was Solomon's very wisdom and wide understanding; it was his great riches; it was his wide dominion; it was his largeness of heart and his long and peaceful life that all worked together to make his path so slippery and so deadly.
p. 282

Whyte says further:

And Bishop Butler, as I think, the very wisest of all our English writers, though he does not, like Sir Henry Taylor, name Solomon, he surely had him in his eye when he penned that memorable and alarming passage about those men who go over the theory of wisdom and virtue in their thoughts, talk well, and paint fine pictures of it, till their minds are hardened in the contrary course, and till they become more and more insensible to all moral considerations.
p. 290

Matthew Henry says:

God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he gives him *wisdom, and knowledge, and joy*, to enjoy them cheerfully himself and to communicate them charitably to others. He makes them a punishment to a bad man if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him. *Godliness, with contentment, is great gain.* Ungodliness is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment.
p. 795

(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)

He Only Takes the Best

God saw she was getting tired
and a cure was not to be.
So he put her arms around her
and whispered, "Come with me."

With tear-filled eyes we watched her
suffer and fade away.
Although we loved her deeply,
we could not make her stay.

A golden heart stopped beating,
hard-working hands put to rest.
God broke our hearts to prove to us
he only takes the best.

Author Unknown

p. 238

(More Stories for the Heart: Over 100 Stories to Warm Your Heart compiled by Alice Gray)

Don't Forget What Really Matters

adapted from Paul Harvey

Carl Coleman was driving to work one morning when he bumped fenders with another motorist.

Both cars stopped, and the woman driving the other car got out to survey the damage.

She was distraught. It was her fault, she admitted, and hers was a new car, less than two days from the showroom. She dreaded facing her husband.

Coleman was sympathetic; but he had to pursue the exchange of license and registration data.

She reached into her glove compartment to retrieve the documents in an envelope.

On the first paper to tumble out, written in her husband's distinctive hand, were these words:

"In case of accident, remember, Honey, it's you I love, not the car."

p. 154

The following verse seems to really capsule the right approach to what Solomon is experiencing:

Isaiah 49:3,4 (New Living)

He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory." I replied, "But my work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose at all. Yet I leave it all in the Lord's hand; I will trust God for my reward."

CONCLUSION:

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

LESSON #1: "Nine-tenths of our unhappiness is selfishness and is an insult cast in the face of God" (G. H. Morrison).

LESSON #2: A man shows what he is by what he does with what he has.

LESSON #3: Once the game is over the king and pawn go back in the same box.

LESSON #4: The hot words in the passage are: "fate," "gain," "remembered," "forgotten," "die," "leave," "control," "despair," and "great misfortune."

LESSON #5: The wise and fool alike are going to die, "they will not be long remembered" and "both will be forgotten."

LESSON #6: Solomon has come to the painful realization that when he dies, he must leave everything behind that he has toiled for through the years of his life.

LESSON #7: Will the person who inherits the fruit of his labor be a wise man or a fool?

LESSON #8: The fruit of pleasing God is three-fold: (1) "satisfaction" (verse 24); (2) "enjoyment" (verse 25); and (3) "happiness" (verse 26).

LESSON #9: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58 KJV).

LESSON #10: "He said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory.' I replied, 'But my work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose at all. Yet I leave it all in the Lord's hand; I will trust God for my reward' (Isaiah 49:3, 4 New Living).

Wiersbe says:

"Life isn't like a book," says Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship ministry. "Life isn't logical, or sensible, or orderly. Life is a mess most of the time. And theology must be lived in the midst of that mess." p. 42

Swindoll asks two haunting questions:

Two Haunting Questions

When you boil all these words down to the bare essentials, two questions emerge: First, are you telling yourself the truth about possessions? Do you know what the truth will do? It will make you free. You count on the truth to do that, my friend. So, are you telling yourself the truth about possessions?

Second, are you hearing God's warning about priorities? Just where is God in your business or your profession? As you climb that ladder, at which rung do you plan to meet Him and come to terms with things? Are you hearing God's warning about priorities?

It will help you if you never forget Yussif, the Terrible Turk—the three-hundred-and-fifty-pound wrestling champion in Europe a little over two generations ago. After he won the championship in Europe, he sailed to the United States to beat our champ, whose name was Strangler Lewis—a little guy who weighed a shade over two hundred pounds.

Strangler had a simple plan for defeating his opponents. He'd put that massive arm of his around the neck of his opponent and he'd pump up that bicep and cut the oxygen off, right there at the Adam's apple. Many an opponent had passed out in the ring with Strangler Lewis.

The problem he had when it came to fighting the Turk was that the European giant didn't have any neck! He just went from his head to those massive shoulders. Lewis couldn't ever get the hold, so it wasn't long before Yussif flopped Lewis down on the mat and pinned him. After winning the championship, the Turk demanded all \$5,000 in gold. After he shaped the championship belt around his vast, equator-like middle, he stuffed the gold into the belt and boarded the next ship back to Europe. He was not the possessor of America's glory and gold. He had won it all . . . all except immortality.

He set sail on the *SS Bourgogne*. Halfway across the Atlantic, it sank. Yussif went over the side with his gold still strapped around his body. The added weight was too much for the Turk, and he sunk like an iron anvil before they could get to him with the lifeboats. He was never seen again.

"What a fool!" you think. I mean, he should've had a lot more class than that! Successful people don't wear their gold! But you know where

yours is, don't you? You've got it stashed away. Whenever you need it, you can cash it in. Right?

But the bottom line is this: Gold won't get you into glory! Because it isn't going to help you. You see, you're not really ready to live until you're ready to die. If you aren't absolutely certain that heaven is your ultimate destination, then it is very doubtful you'll be able to handle earth's pressures.

Remember, some things ought to be, but they never will be. Possessions ought to satisfy, but they never will. Priorities ought to come automatically to smart people, but they never will. That's why we need God's Book, the Bible. No other book except that one keeps bringing us back to the truth concerning possessions. No other book keeps bringing us back to the basics concerning priorities.

p. 20-22

Baxter says:

Oh, what a different view of life we get when we see it through the eyes of the Lord Jesus! With Him there is no viewing of life selfishly rather than socially. None was ever so social-minded as the Son of Man. There was pure "otherism" and absolutely no egoism. He "went about doing good." He was the best of all mixers. He was at home in every circle, for wherever He was, He was there to forget Himself in the good of others. And with Him there was no viewing of human life as apart from God. He saw the Father's hand everywhere. Everything was significant of good purpose and of faithful Divine supervision. And with Him there was no viewing of life as bounded by the grave. The very opposite! It is there, beyond the mortal present, that the vast issues of our life are. There is no "vanity of vanities" with Jesus! He comes to declare *the reality of realities*, that there is a Divine meaning and purpose running all through our human life. Even the Cross, if it be the Father's will, is the pathway to a throne. There is benevolent purpose everywhere in the universe. We may trust God. We may know His love and presence in our lives. Life is not a mockery. God is *LOVE*. Behind every frowning providence there is a smiling face. God is not only Creator, King, and Judge: He is the *FATHER!*

p. 167

(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)

I'm Here!

If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes and I will not blot your names out of the Book of Life; but I will confess your name before My Father and before his angels.

Rev. 3:5

The Rogers are devout Christians who have built a strong family. The father has a special interest in the spiritual condition of each of his children and often would quiz them in order to know if they were sure of their salvation. Occasionally he would ask them to share in their own words about their relationship with Jesus Christ.

One day it was seven-year-old Jimmy's turn to express how he knew he had eternal life. Jimmy told his version: "I think it will be something like this in Heaven. One day when we all get to go to Heaven, it will be time for the big angel to read from the big book the names of all the people who will be there. He will come to the Rogers family and say, 'Daddy Rogers?' and Daddy will say, 'Here!' Then the angel will call out, 'Mommy Rogers?' and Mommy will say, 'Here!' Then the angel will come down to call out Susie Rogers and Mavis Rogers, and they will both say, 'Here!'"

He paused, took a big deep breath and continued, "And finally that big angel will read my name, Jimmy Rogers, and because I'm little and maybe he'll miss me, I'll jump and shout real loud, 'HERE!' to make sure he knows I'm there."

Just a few days later there was a tragic accident. A car struck down little Jimmy Rogers as he made his way to catch the school bus. He was rushed by ambulance to the hospital, and all the family was summoned. He was in critical condition.

The little family group gathered around the bed in which little Jimmy now lay with no movement, no consciousness and no hope for recovery. The doctors had done all that was in their power. Jimmy would probably be gone by morning.

The family prayed and waited. Late in the night the little boy seemed to be stirring a bit. They all moved closer. They saw his lips move; just one word was all he uttered before he passed from this life. But what a word of comfort and hope for a grieving family he was to leave behind. In the clear voice of a little boy, loud and clear enough so all could hear and understand, little Jimmy Rogers said the one word: 'HERE!' And then he was gone to another life beyond this world, where a big angel was reading the names of all those written there.

Excerpted from
 Moments for Mothers

pp. 243-4

(Future Grace by John Piper)

Evelyn Harris Brand, the mother of Paul Brand, the world-renowned hand surgeon and leprosy specialist, grew up in a well-to-do English family. She had studied at the London Conservatory of Art and dressed in the finest silks. But she went with her husband to minister as missionaries in the Kolli Malai range of India. After about ten years her husband died at age 44 and she came home "a broken woman, beaten down by pain and grief." But after a year's recuperation, and against all advice, she returned to India. Her soul was restored and she poured her life into the hill people, "nursing the sick, teaching farming, lecturing about guinea worms, rearing orphans, clearing jungle land, pulling teeth, establishing schools, preaching the gospel." She lived in a portable hut, eight feet square, that could be taken down, moved and erected again.

At age 67 she fell and broke her hip. Her son, Paul, had just come to India as a surgeon. He encouraged her to retire. She had already suffered a broken arm, several cracked vertebrae and recurrent malaria. Paul mounted as many arguments as he could think of to persuade her that sixty-seven years was a good investment in ministry, and now it was time to retire. Her response? "Paul, you know these mountains. If I leave, who will help the village people? Who will treat their wounds and pull their teeth and teach them about Jesus? When someone comes to take my place, then and only then will I retire. In any case, why preserve this old body if it's not going to be used where God needs me?" That was her final answer. So she worked on.

At the age of 95 she died. Following her instructions, villagers buried her in a simple cotton sheet so that her body would return to the soil and nourish new life. "Her spirit, too, lives on, in a church, a clinic, several schools, and in the faces of thousands of villagers across five mountain ranges of South India." Her son commented that "with wrinkles as deep and extensive as any I have ever seen on a human face . . . she was a beautiful woman." But it was not the beauty of the silk and heirlooms of London high society. For the last twenty years of her life she refused to have a mirror in her house! She was consumed with ministry, not mirrors. A coworker once remarked that Granny Brand was more alive than any person he had ever met. "By giving away life, she found it."³ This is what happens, paradoxically, when ministry is more important than life.

3. The facts and quotes of this story of Evelyn Brand are taken from Paul Brand with Philip Yancy, "And God Created Pain," *Christianity Today*, January 1, 1994, pp. 22-23.
pp. 288-9

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

The road to victory may not be so long as we expect. But we have no right to count upon this. Be it long or short, rough or smooth, we mean to reach our journey's end.

Winston Churchill
House of Commons, August 20, 1940

(quote 62)

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

Prayer is conversation with God.



The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him sincerely and in truth.

Psalm 145:18 AMP

The story is told of an old Scotsman who was quite ill. The family called for their minister. As the pastor entered the man's room and sat down, he noticed another chair on the opposite side of the bed. The pastor said, "Well, I see I'm not your first visitor for the day."

The old man looked up, puzzled for a moment, then realized that the pastor had noticed the empty chair drawn close to his bedside. "Well, pastor," he said, "let me tell you about that chair. Many years ago I found it difficult to pray, so one day I shared this problem with my pastor. He told me not to worry about kneeling or about placing myself in some pious posture. Instead, he said, 'Just sit down, put a chair opposite you, imagine Jesus sitting in it, and then talk with Him as you would a friend.'" The old Scot added, "I've been doing that ever since."

A short time later, the daughter of the old man called the minister to tell him her father had died very suddenly. She said, "I had just gone to lie down for an hour or two. He seemed to be sleeping so comfortably. When I went back he was gone. What was odd was that his hand was on the empty chair at the side of the bed. Isn't that strange?" The minister replied, "No, that's not so strange. I think I understand."⁹⁰

⁹⁰*Illustrations Unlimited*, James S. Hewett, ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), p. 416. pp. 194-5

(Will God Heal Me? by Ron Dunn)

“I’ve Come to Help You Die”

There are no cures, only postponements

In a small town in England a young mother lay dying of cancer. She believed God wanted to heal her. Every day people from her church gathered around her bed, praying for her healing, claiming her healing, urging her to claim her healing. “You are healed,” they’d say to her. She agreed.

One day a pastor who knew the young family ran into her husband.

“How is your wife doing?” he asked. The husband dropped his head and said, “She’s much worse. Two weeks ago, she began to deteriorate rapidly.”

The pastor asked, “Are her friends still coming by to pray for her?”

“No. They haven’t been around in two weeks.”

“Would it be all right if I came to see her?” the pastor asked.

“Would you please?”

The next day the pastor quietly entered the bedroom and was shocked to see the change since his last visit. Her body was shrunken, her face pale and sunken. The familiar smell of death smothered the room. The pastor, thinking she was asleep, tiptoed to the bed. Suddenly her eyes opened and saw the pastor.

“Oh, Pastor,” she whispered, “have you come to pray for my healing?”

The pastor gently sat down on the edge of the bed, and taking her hand in his, said, “No, Doris. I haven’t come to pray for your healing. I’ve come to help you die.”

Tears filled her eyes.

“Oh, Pastor,” she cried, “thank you! Thank you!”

And for the next hour the pastor read scripture after scripture to her, assuring her of God’s presence, pointing her to the glory that awaited her.

As the pastor told me the story, one beautiful phrase kept repeating itself in my mind: “I’ve come to help you die.”

pp. 189-90

C. H. Spurgeon, commenting on death for the Christian, observed that it's wonderful to "have the tenement gradually taken down, and yet not to feel any trouble about it, but to know that you are in the great Father's hands, and you shall wake up where old age and infirmities will have passed away, and where, in everlasting youth, you shall behold the face of Him you love."

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

Edith Schaeffer chose to have her husband brought home. She said, "I believe when my husband leaves his body, he will be with the Lord. I don't want him to leave me until he's with the Lord. Therefore, I am sure he would want to go to the house he asked me to buy and be there for the time he has left."

The doctors agree with her and told her they wished more people would do things the same way. Francis Schaeffer was taken home, and Edith surrounded his bed with the things he loved, and had music playing in his room. She said, "One after another, we played his favorite records: Beethoven, Bach, Schubert, and Handel. Ten days later, on May 15, 1984, with the music of Handel's *Messiah* still in the air, Francis Schaeffer breathed his last breath."

—*Christianity Today*

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)