

ECCLESIASTES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ecclesiastes chapter 8 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we have seen over and over in our study, Solomon is trying to find satisfaction “**under the sun**” and he “just can’t get no, *SATISFACTION!*” I am not saying you will never have times of enjoyment and satisfaction, but it will be short-lived apart from God. It won’t last. We were created in the image of God and thus, our joy, our fulfillment; our satisfaction is found in Him and not apart from Him. That is something that Solomon will find out. But tragically, many today will refuse to find out. Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

Bertrand Russell was born into a Christian home and taught to believe in God, but he rejected his training and became an outspoken atheist. His daughter, Katherine Tait, said of him, “Somewhere at the bottom of his heart, in the depths of his soul, there was an empty space that once had been filled by God, and he never found anything else to put in it.”

- Source Unknown

That is what Solomon is searching for and like Bertrand Russell he is not going to find it apart from God. With that said, let’s begin reading in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

ECCLESIASTES 8**VERSE 1**

1. Solomon is acknowledging that wisdom is important, that is not the issue. The main issue is trying to find someone who is truly wise. A person who is wise has the ability to search out things more so than someone who is unwise. Now as much as wisdom is important and has its benefits and is then manifested in our physical appearance, it makes us shine, it does have its limitations **“under the sun.”** We see that in Ecclesiastes 8:17 as Solomon says, **“then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.”** Again, the key is **“under the sun”** or apart from God. You will never know what life is truly all about apart from Him and it will also affect your appearance! There is that frustration that is manifested in the lives of people who try to live their lives apart from God!

As you look at our nation today, look at how satisfied we truly are. There is much dissatisfaction in the lives of many today. And I think you know what the problem is, they are looking for satisfaction, that abundant life **“under the sun”** and they will never find it there.

Here is the wonderful thing for us. We can find that abundant life, we can find that satisfaction in the Lord! Keep in mind that true wisdom comes from the Lord and if we lack wisdom all we need to do is ask for it. James 1:5 makes this very clear as James tells us, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** There is no frustration, no worry, no discontentment because the Lord satisfies our hearts desires and He gives to us the wisdom we need in this life!

Also, remember what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 19:23, **“The fear of the Lord leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.”** Solomon is telling us that it is the fear of the Lord that is not only the beginning of wisdom but it is the source of true and lasting satisfaction. You see, having a relationship with Christ leads to eternal life, and as you continue to see all that He has done and all we have in Him, there is contentment in that. It is as Paul told Timothy, **“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”** I Timothy 4:8.

Not only that but our face will shine the love of God, we will radiate His love to others because what God has done inside of us will overflow and touch the lives of others. Paul put it like this in II Corinthian 4:1-6, **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

In other words, as we are living in the *SON OF GOD* and not *UNDER THE SUN* or apart from God, that light of God that has touched our lives will shine forth from us. It is like being out in the sun and the more time you spend in the sun the more it will affect your skin. You will either get darker or redder, whatever the case may be. And the same is true as we spend time in or with the Son of God, it will affect our nature, we will radiate Jesus! If you want to be more like Jesus, spend more time with Him! A person who comes to know the Lord radiates the love of God.

VERSES 2-4

1. First of all let's look at this in regards to earthly kings or leaders. I do realize that some commentators feel that Solomon is speaking of our heavenly King, but I think there are both applications found here and the state of mind that Solomon was in, I think he was specifically speaking of earthly kings and the power that they have!

Solomon is saying that we are to obey earthly kings because God has placed them in those positions. We are to keep the law of the land unless it is contrary to what God has said. We are told in I Peter 2:13-17, "**Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**"

In other words, we honor those who are over us, the king or president or whatever earthly government we are under not as an obligation to them but we do so to honor our Lord, we do it in obedience to Him! So both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak of us obeying those in leadership positions over us unless they tell us to do something that is contrary to the Word of God.

2. Now let's get a heavenly perspective on this. We are to **“Keep the king's commandments”** or the commandments of God because we love Him. We don't do these things, we don't work our way into heaven by doing good works, by keeping the commandments of God, we do them out of love, it is the evidence for our faith. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not of works because if it were of works we would boast about it and God would owe us heaven. We don't deserve heaven but it is because of God's grace that He gives it to us.

Thus, as Spurgeon wrote, “If he be a King, then it is a solemn hazard to your soul if you come short of the least of his commandments. Remember that one treason makes a traitor; one leak sinks a ship; one fly spoils the whole box of ointment. He that bought us with his blood deserves to be obeyed in all things with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.” Very powerful words for us to heed!

VERSES 5-8

1. The bottom line is this. True wisdom takes the truths of God and then applies them to your life. You know what is right and what is wrong. You know what to do and when not to. We can discern what to do because God has shown us. And yes, there is so much we don't know about the future. For example, we don't have power over life and death in that we don't know the days that God has given us.

Only one man has ever had that power and that is Jesus. In John 10:17-18 we read these words of Jesus, **“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”** But for man, there is an appointed time for his death which God has set. Hebrews 9:27 says, **“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”**

Thus, as Psalm 90:12 says, **“So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”** Let me ask you this question, “What would you do if you had to buy time?”

Consider this: “If we had to buy time, would there be any difference in how we would spend it? Would the days of our lives be used more wisely?” That's what time management consultant Antonio Herrera asked the participants in a seminar he conducted on the subject. Then Dr. Herrera became more specific. He asked, “What if you had to pay in advance \$100 an hour for the time allotted to you? Would you waste it?” The answer should be obvious.

Of course, we can't put a price tag on the minutes and hours we possess. They are given to us freely. But that doesn't excuse us from using them conscientiously, carefully, and wisely. The giver of time is God Himself, and that places a far greater value upon it than any monetary figure could suggest. We must therefore use our time intelligently, taking advantage of opportunities it provides for us to serve the Lord and to do His will. – R. W. D.

- Our Daily Bread, July 26

May we live out our days to the fullest for the Lord!

VERSE 9

1. As Solomon looked at life “**under the sun**” he saw that a ruler can oppress the people and bring all kinds of pain upon their lives not only hurting the people that he is to rule over but many times he ends up hurting himself! We saw that with Solomon's son Rehoboam who oppressed the people more than Solomon did and they revolted against him!

VERSE 10

1. As Solomon looked at life “**under the sun**” he saw how the wicked die and the people quickly forget all the evil that they have done. We see this more clearly in The Living Bible which says, “**I have seen wicked men buried, and as their friends returned from the cemetery, having forgotten all the dead man's evil deeds, these men were praised in the very city where they had committed their many crimes!**”

And Solomon's point is that life is shallow, it is empty and so are people. I look at the life of Michael Jackson who was so very talented and yet look at his lifestyle. He was accused of child molestation and yet, in his death he was lifted up as a king, a hero. The same people who probably would never let their children be alone with him were elevating him to some kind of god. That is how shallow, how empty people are today!

And the idea of going "**from the place of holiness**" is that this man who died was religious. He went to church you might say but it was only a façade to cover up all the evil he was doing. He dressed up to look like a saint but he lived like the devil and God is not fooled, He is never fooled. Man by miss this but God doesn't.

VERSE 11

1. When a society's judicial system is mocked, it is not long before that society disintegrates. Look at what happens today for people that are on death row waiting to be executed. Because of all the appeals, the long court process, on average we see some 13 years elapses between the time a death sentence is handed down and carried out. And it is not only with those waiting on death row. We see long delays in the trial and punishment of criminals!

Make no mistake about it; judgment should be executed speedily, either guilty or not guilty. If you don't believe that stiff and quick judgments are a deterrent to crime, look at Singapore and how drug dealers avoid that area because of its stiff penalties. Crime rates do go down when judgment is done quickly and fairly. You see, fair and impartial justice that is meted out promptly serves as a deterrent to crime! But the problem is this. All such injustice comes about because of the fallen nature of humanity.

2. Now here is something that amazes me, God's longsuffering, His patience towards sinful man who keeps hardening his heart towards God and yet God does not give up. It is as McLaren wrote, "Man's godless ingratitude is as deep a mystery as is God's loving patience. It is strange that, with such constant failure of His love to win, God should still persevere in it."

Make no mistake about it, God is very merciful towards us, He is longsuffering towards us as He desires all to be saved. If God was not gracious, if He was not merciful, if He was not longsuffering we would all be in trouble. We would all be judged and found guilty as soon as we sinned. But, as Peter tells us, **"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."** II Peter 3:9-10. I am truly thankful for His mercy and grace! But for those that refuse the free gift, judgment is coming!

VERSES 12-13

1. I think here in verse 12 Solomon is looking at things from a different perspective. Remember what we have seen so far and the perspective that Solomon was looking at life by. He said, **"All this I have seen . . ."** Ecclesiastes 8:9. We are told in Ecclesiastes 8:10, **"Then I saw . . ."** In other words, Solomon has been looking at life **"under the sun"** or as I have said often, apart from God. He is coming to his own conclusions as he is looking at life.

But notice what he says here in verse 12, “**yet I surely know that . . .**” Do you see the change? This Solomon knows by faith and that is very important. If you are walking with the Lord, if you fear the Lord then you will walk through life aware of what God desires and you will rest in Him and not by what you see through your physical eyes.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 8:28, “**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**” You see, God knows the end from the beginning, He is all wise and what He is doing is for His purpose, He is working in us so that He may work through us.

And thus, the big picture is this. As we are going through tough times, difficult situations, we **KNOW** that God will use these things for good even though I may not **UNDERSTAND** it; I may not **SEE** it or **FEEL** it. Then what can I do? I can rest in Him because I **KNOW** God is sovereign, He loves me. That means as I read God’s Word, as I read the precious promises that He has given to me, to you, then we can **KNOW** that all things will work together for good! It is as Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, “**For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**”

2. The point that Solomon is making is that as he looks out with his physical eyes he **SEES** the wicked prosper, that he can do more and more evil and he seems to get away with it. He **FEELS** that he is getting away with these things and he just can’t **UNDERSTAND** it. But then he puts on his spiritual glasses in a sense and now he **KNOWS** that it is better to walk in the fear of the Lord and endure some hardships in this life than to walk with the wicked and maybe prosper in this life but suffer in the life to come.

That is Paul's point in Romans 8:18-25 as he wrote, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”**

Yes, like I have said, things may be tough for us, but the sufferings in this present life don't even compare to what the Lord has for us as we go to be with Him. We will have an eternity to live with Him, it will never end and righteousness will fill heaven and earth! There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more tears, no more sin! This life is just like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow. That is what the Scriptures tell us to prepare to meet our Maker, to prepare ourselves for heaven because that is going to be our home. In fact, our citizenship is in heaven! Thus, we need to have a good perspective of things and that is only going to happen as we walk in the fear of the Lord and trust in His promises that He has given to us in His Word!

3. Now verse 13 tells us that it is not going to go well for the wicked, for those who are not walking in the fear of the Lord. You see, their life is also like a vapor when you compare it with eternity! Like with Solomon, the problem for many Christians is that they look at this life from a human perspective. They look out and see that the wicked do live long, they do prosper at times. But in the end, they don't get away with anything. Proverbs 29:1 says, "**He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.**"

Solomon has given us a powerful contrast of the righteous and the wicked and to have a correct perspective of things you have to look at life through the lens of God's Word or you will be all messed up!

VERSE 14

1. Solomon is saying that the wicked prosper and the righteous or good suffer, what is wrong with that statement? The Bible tells us that, "**... 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.'**"

Romans 3:10-12.

So Solomon is starting from a faulty premise or viewpoint. No one deserves the blessings of God upon their life. No one deserves heaven. But God, because of His great love towards us sent His Son to die in our place that by His shed blood our debt of sin could be paid in full. In other words it is all about God's grace and none of us deserve it but we can receive it into our lives by faith!

We also need to understand that God is gracious and merciful and that **“... He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”**

Matthew 5:45. We might not always understand it, but everything the Lord does is righteous, it is fair, it is just. We may not **SEE** it, we may not **FEEL** it, and like I have said, we may not **UNDERSTAND** it but we can **KNOW** it because of what God’s Word has to say and what the Spirit of God is showing us in accordance with the Word of God!

Again this was a struggle for Solomon because he saw the righteous, in his mind, suffering and the wicked prospering. And here in verse 14 we see the key to this problem. **“There is vanity which occurs on earth . . .”** On this earth it does seem unfair but again, as I have said, the wicked will not get away with anything, they will not prosper but for a short time on this earth and then it will be over for them. Yes things don’t seem to make sense from a human perspective on this earth, but God is in control and as much as this life is just a vapor that precedes heaven, God will make all things right by then! Perspective is everything!

VERSE 15

1. Notice this conclusion that Solomon comes to because life is short, it is a vapor, that it doesn’t matter if you do good or not. If that is the case, if life is here today and gone tomorrow, then you might as well eat, drink and be merry because tomorrow you die! What else is there under the sun? That is a hedonist philosophy in regards to life!

Listen to what this writer had to say regarding hedonism or the pursuit of pleasure in life. This is from Intelligent Life magazine from September 2007 and we are told,

The would-be hedonist must take care to ensure that the pain of overreaching desire does not ruin his peace of mind and thereby defeat his original aim of securing a balance of pleasure over pain.

The best sort of life, says Epicurus, is one that is free from pain in the body and from disturbance in the mind. That sounds a rather negative credo for a 21st-century devotee of the good life. Were he writing self-help books today, Epicurus would probably acknowledge that you can aim a little higher than that. He might point out in his own defense that health and peace are essential preconditions of happiness, and are easy to belittle if you are lucky enough to have them. But perhaps his most useful observation for the discerning hedonists of today, when such an intoxicating variety of gratifications are dangled before them, is a reminder of *caveat emptor* [which means “Let the buyer beware”]: “No pleasure is in itself evil, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail annoyances many times greater than the pleasures themselves.”

- <http://moreintelligentlife.com/story/a-practitioners-guide-to-hedonism>

I think that speaks of our society today. We are living for pleasure and yet we are not satisfied and we keep look for it all over the place. Thus, we engage in all kinds of sinful practices because nothing is evil, nothing is really wrong as long as it feels good and you are not hurting anyone, although the last point is sometimes left out. And yet they are not satisfied in all the sin they are involved in. You see, the world just can't figure it out and thus, they say, “Let's party!” If that was truly where it is at then why are so many people not happy, why are so many people dissatisfied with life?

Because apart from Christ you will never be satisfied, you will never find what you are looking for. Now let me also say this. If you are going to reject Christ, if you refuse to come to Him and ask Him to be Lord and Savior of your life, you might as well eat, drink and be merry because this is as good as it will get for you.

But if you come to Christ, this is the worst that it will be. Eternity with the Lord will be awesome and I guarantee you no one will be saying, “I wish I partied a little harder” when they get to heaven! But apart from Christ people embrace this hedonist philosophy and that is the emptiest philosophy of life that anyone can have. I want it all and I want it now and in the end they will lose everything!

VERSES 16-17

1. Solomon went out to seek wisdom. He went to find the answers to life. He looked at the philosophies that were out there. And what a task it was, you could try to figure this out day and night, never getting any sleep and you will still come up short!

Why is that? Because God has arranged that man cannot put all the pieces of the puzzle together you might say! And look at how hard man is trying today apart from God and they just can't do it! Make no mistake about it; we are not always going to understand an all-knowing God. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”**

Paul put it like this in the New Testament, in I Corinthians 1:20-25 he wrote, **“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”**

No matter how hard we try we will fail in finding the answers to all our questions. I don't care how smart you are, I don't care how many degrees you have, you will not be able to do it. Now for some, they may feel that this is not fair. But think about this, first of all how can we know everything that there is? We can't but God can and He does!

Thus, all we can do is trust in Him, be sensitive to His leading and be comforted by the fact that God loves us and will do what is best for our life no matter how difficult things might get. When we walk in the light of God we will find true joy, contentment, no matter what we are going through. Yes we can ask God for wisdom in situations and He will give to us what we need but there are those times that God wants us to just trust in Him and ***KNOW*** that it will work out for good even though it may not ***FEEL*** good, we may not ***SEE*** it, we may not ***UNDERSTAND*** it. Remember what Paul said in Romans 8:28, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”** The Lord is the answer to all of our questions!

ECCLESIASTES 9**VERSE 1**

1. Solomon continues to look at life “**under the sun**” and he sees life apart from eternity, just the here and now! He wants to know these things, he wants to understand them so he can tell others, but it seems to be out of his grasp. It is all in the hand of God.

And with this perspective the whole future is unknown; anything can happen and if the good that you receive is God’s favor or not, we can never really know. Yes that is true as you look at life “**under the sun**” or apart from Him. Apart from Him we would not know anything!

2. Let me say this, from a perspective of the Scriptures. We should not look at life, look at the things that happen to us to measure God’s love for us. Sin has affected this world and our own lives. Then how do we measure God’s love for us? We measure God’s love by what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary! The debt that He paid as He sacrificed his life for us showing us that His love is so wide anyone can come to Him!

VERSES 2-3

1. Here is the frustration as Solomon examines life “**under the sun.**” It doesn’t matter if you are righteous or wicked. It doesn’t matter if you are clean or unclean. It doesn’t matter if you worship God or you don’t worship Him. It doesn’t matter if you are clean or you sin. Life just doesn’t seem to matter!

Death is the end result of all, so what is the point in life? Why do good? Why is it that a person can live the most heinous life and another person can live a good life and in the end there is death for both of them? Make no mistake about it, death is not a respecter of people - it will affect all. That is how he is viewing this apart from God, "What is the use, I may as well do as I please because it really doesn't seem to matter!" A sad state to be in and maybe that is why so many are having such a hard time, they are looking at life apart from God, apart from eternity and it just does not seem fair!

VERSE 4

1. Keep in mind that Solomon is looking at this from the perspective of "**under the sun**" and in that aspect this makes perfect sense. You see, this dog is a wild dog, mean, nasty and of course the lion is the king of beasts, powerful and majestic. So what Solomon is saying is that it is better to be alive even though you are a mean, nasty dog than being a dead lion. In his perspective death brings an end to all existence so the only thing that really matters is life. And the reality is if that were true and it is not, then nothing really matters! And if you doubt that is what Solomon is thinking about, death, then as we read on you will see very clearly that in death he sees the end of everything!

VERSES 5-6

1. Keep in mind that this is not God's view but Solomon's. It is based on what he has observed in life "**under the sun.**" Imagine if you saw a person die. You watched as they lowered him into the grave and you understand that this body that was placed in this grave will return back to the dust of the earth. What conclusions, from a human perspective, would you come to? Like Solomon you would think, "This is the end of life. No more consciousness. My friend can't see, he can't talk, he can't do anything. He has forgotten everything and soon everyone will forget him."

I know, not a pleasant thought but by human observation what other conclusion are you going to come to? There is no other. And that is why when people read what Solomon said here and what Job said they come to the conclusion that there is soul sleep and what that means is that when we die we go to sleep and we are not aware of anything, we feel nothing. Now we have seen that Solomon approached life and came to his conclusions by his observations "**under the sun.**" So his perspective is wrong.

Secondly, God rebuked Job for coming to the wrong conclusions about death. God said to Job, "**Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? . . . Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this.**" Job 38:2, 17-18.

If you want to go to an authority on death, go to Jesus. In Luke chapter 16 we read that death apart from God has pain, thirst, torment, and of course, consciousness for the wicked, and there is the blessings, there is peace, joy, comfort for those in Christ. Paul clearly tells us in II Corinthians 5:8, **“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”** And even Job said in Job 19:26, **“And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God.”** Yes, at times Job and Solomon did get it right but when you are looking at things from a human perspective chances are you will be wrong and you will never know if you got it right. God’s Word shows us what is right and you have to look at the totality of the Scriptures. Thus, now it is up to you. Do you want to believe the words of man, or of God?

VERSES 7-8

1. With this perspective of life ceasing in death and life is short, Solomon is saying, “Life is meaningless. There is nothing to it. All we have is death before us. So put on your best clothes and go out and have a good time because before you know it life will be over! God has set things in motion and there is not much you can do about it. Party on!” I guess that is all there is apart from God.

VERSES 9-10

1. Please keep in mind that Solomon is looking at life from an earthly perspective and he sees it as meaningless. Thus, his point is that we should make our vain, our empty life a little better by trying to enjoy what we have. I think it was back in the 1960's when Schlitz beer came out with this advertising slogan, "You only go around once in life, so you've got to grab for all the gusto you can." I think that is what Solomon is saying here.

But that is life apart from Christ, it is vain, it is empty, it is hopeless, it is meaningless. In Christ there is that abundant life, that joyful life and in death it is not the end, it is just the beginning. Do you see how messed up you can get when you turn from the Lord and His truth! Solomon is really messed up.

2. I want to share with you these words from Denis Alexander as he summarizes what humanism has to offer us. This is what he wrote at the end of the last century,

The humanist model does seem a very big pill to swallow. As a representative of a late twentieth-century generation of under-thirties, I am first asked to believe that I am the result of a purely random evolutionary process. The only prerequisites for this process are the presence of matter, time and chance. Because by some strange whim of fate, I and other men are the only physical structures which happen to have bestowed with a consciousness of their own existence, I am supposed to think of both myself and others as being in some way more valuable than other physical structures such as rabbits, trees or stones, even though in a hundred years time the atoms of my decayed body may will be indistinguishable from theirs. Furthermore the mass of vibrating atoms in my head are supposed to have more ultimate meaning than those in the head of a rabbit.

At the same time I am told that death is the end of the line. In the time-scale of evolution my life is a vapour which soon vanishes. Whatever feelings of justice or injustice I may have in this life, all my strivings, all my greatest decisions, will be ultimately swallowed up in the on-going march of time.

In a few million years' time, a mere drop compared with the total history of the earth, the memory of the greatest literature, the greatest art, the greatest lives will be buried in the inexorable decay of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Hitler and Martin Luther King, James Sewell and Francis of Assisi, Chairman Mao and Robert Kennedy, all will be obliterated in the unthinking void.

So, I am told, I must make the best of a bad job. Even though I have strong feelings of transcendence, a deep sense that I am more than just a blind whim of evolution, I must nevertheless forget such troubling questions, and concern myself with the real problems of trying to live responsibly in society. Even though my job involves studying man's brain as a machine, like any other of nature's machines, I must still believe that man has some special intrinsic worth, and while my emotions tell me that it may be true, I am not given any more objective reason for believing it.

- Denis Alexander, *Beyond Science*, pp. 132-133

That truly is the problem for Solomon and for man today. Apart from God, if we are here by random chance happenings and then we die; we go back to the dust of the earth and will never be seen again, what is the point of life? There really is none and thus, life is meaningless to so many today and thus, there is no hope. That is why Solomon said, **“Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.”** Ecclesiastes 9:9. And that is what man, apart from God is saying today. How much better it is to come to the Lord and live for Him! As you do you will see that your life has purpose, it has meaning and thus that hope, that joy you were looking for you will find in Jesus!

VERSES 11-12

1. As Solomon looked at life he saw how unpredictable it is. It is not always the fastest runner who wins. The strong don't always win. The wise are not always rewarded. The best man doesn't always win. Life is not always fair, but that is just the way it is. When J. Paul Getty was asked to explain his success, he said this, “Some people find oil. Others don't.” What did he mean? He is basically saying that life is a roll of the dice and who knows what will come up. Again, that is man's view of life.

And yes, life is very frail; it can be taken away so quickly. None of us know when that will happen. The bigger question is not when are we going to die but are we prepared to meet our Maker when we do?

VERSES 13-15

1. The picture here is that wisdom is not always appreciated. Now we are not sure of the situation that Solomon saw, but what we do know is a mighty king came to overtake a small city. And before he could accomplish his goal a poor wise man of the city came up with a plan to defeat this enemy and his plan worked. Unfortunately, after the city was safe again, the people forgot how this man delivered them. That is life, meaningless, vain, it really doesn't matter what you do. At least that is the conclusion that Solomon came to. But make no mistake about it; God never forgets what you have done for Him!

VERSES 16-17

1. It seems that the person who makes the most noise is the one who is heard, no matter if he is a fool or not. And when you begin to digest what a fool has said, you are left hungry. Their words are unsatisfying. It is like that old Wendy's television commercial when the old woman is purchasing a hamburger and as she looks at what she just purchased she says, "Where's the beef?" God's Word is not empty, it is not vain, it does not leave you wondering "Where's the beef?"

As Paul said, "**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**" Hebrews 4:12. Never forget that!

VERSE 18

1. How true this is. Wisdom is better than all the weapons of war you can imagine. Remember the story in II Samuel 20:14-22 of Sheba who tried to rebel against King David, and Joab and the armies of Israel went after him. They cornered him in the city of Abel of Beth Maachah and as Joab was ready to besiege the city to capture this man a wise woman was able to deliver the city. How did she do it? We are told in II Samuel 20:20-22, “**And Joab answered and said, ‘Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! That is not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.’ So the woman said to Joab, ‘Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall.’ Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.**” Wisdom saved the city, not an army!

2. Solomon also speaks of one sinner destroying much good and we see that with Adam’s sin, how it infected the whole human race. We see that with the sin of Achan and how what he did caused some of the soldiers in Israel to die in battle. We as Christians need to be careful in all that we do because our sin can cause much harm in the body of Christ and for the work of God. Be wise! Let me close with these words from Paul as he wrote in Colossians 3:16-17, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”