

# Ecclesiastes 1-2 • The emptiness of life under the sun

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When we went through Proverbs last summer, you'll remember that we talked about frequently that it is considered to be the book of wisdom. Well, we come to Ecclesiastes and it's the book of foolishness, which is kind of strange because we consider it part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. But it is referred to as the book of foolishness because of a reference that is repeatedly made in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and it is a phrase; and that phrase is, under the sun.

You're going to see that. In fact, it's mentioned 29 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes – under the sun. And that's frankly what makes this book so different from the rest of the Bible, because here in Ecclesiastes (Solomon) embarks on a grand experiment to discover if there is any purpose to life apart from God.

And he refers to that life apart from God as, life under the sun. Whenever you hear that phrase, under the sun, Solomon is referring to life from a purely human perspective.

Now that's not the way that you and I are called to live, it's not the way we're told to live. We're supposed to have our hearts on things above; we're to be settled on things... But Ecclesiastes is not about things above, it's about things below, and that's why Solomon repeatedly says, under the sun. And so, we're going to see that a lot.

What Solomon is doing here is he's trying to make sense of life. The reason this is such a good study is because if you have unbelieving friends or loved ones, this is what they deal with every day. This is the life they live. This is their lot in life, frankly, apart from Christ; to live life under the sun. And they're doing their best to make sense of life. They're doing their best to live life without the satisfaction of having an eternal perspective. But you and I both know that it's not there.

They'll try, they'll try, they'll try, they'll try. And we're going to learn so much here in this book about how unbelievers are trying to live and how they're trying

to make sense of life and how they're trying to eat some kind of enjoyment out of life but they're not finding it.

In the end, the Book of Ecclesiastes, as I said, is an experiment by a man who was uniquely qualified to engage in it. Because remember something about Solomon – he was wiser than any other man on the earth. And also, in addition to that wisdom, he had nearly inexhaustible resources. I mean, the guy was filthy rich and he had the ability to do kind of whatever he wanted to do. It was just there at his fingertips to just do this experiment.

But as wise as Solomon was, his conclusions that are found written down in this book are still just the conclusions of man. And it is a man reasoning the purpose and value of life apart from God. And that means that Ecclesiastes is a book that we have to handle with care. And the reason we have to handle it with care is because it presents conclusions based on human reasoning. Do you know that the Book of Ecclesiastes actually says things that are contradictory to an eternal perspective, particularly as it relates to death and life after death?

I don't think there's anybody here in this room that's died and come back to life and has a wealth of information about the afterlife. What we know about life after death, we know from the Word of God, right? I mean, we get it from the scriptures and the scriptures give us a wealth of information about it. But Ecclesiastes does what people in the world do; it makes what it considers to be reasoning opinions based on just what it knows and it doesn't know anything really. It doesn't really have any insight or understanding because again, this is the perspective of life apart from God and under the sun.

And so, this book is actually quoted by skeptics. Sometimes it's even quoted by people who are connected to false religions because they're trying to use it to support their unbiblical beliefs. And again, particularly as it relates to death and life after death so we approach this book with caution. We understand that the perspective leaves out the revelation of God and therefore, that perspective is clearly lacking.

Now, as we get ready to start reading, you're going to notice that Solomon presents his argument in a very different way than you and I would proceed with an argument. When we're going to make an argument, what we would do is we would set our everybody up to understand whatever our argument was, and then we would finally give our conclusion.

We would say, alright, here's what I did, I decided to do an experiment..., and we would explain the experiment; we would explain the terms of it. And then

we'd say, now, let me give you my conclusion. But Solomon does it backwards, he begins with his conclusion.

And so, he begins in chapter 1, verse 1 by saying, *“The words of the Preacher. ...”* (ESV) And by the way, let me stop you right there, just to tell you that is where we get the Hebrew title of this book by the word, Preacher. Because the actual Hebrew title is essentially the word, Kohelet, and that word means, an assembler or a convener of meetings, and essentially the one who preaches at those meetings. And that's where the title comes from.

He refers to himself and identifies himself as *“<sup>1</sup> ...the son of David, King in Jerusalem.”* And then here's his conclusion: *“<sup>2</sup> Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”*

We'll just close the book right now and just close in prayer, I mean, we could. He hasn't given us any depth of insight as to what this experiment was or what kind of things he did in it, but he's already given us his complete conclusion here.

He goes on to ask a question and then he begins to answer it through a series of statements. The question is verse 3: *“What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?”* And there's that first reference to being apart from the revelation of God – what does a man gain by all the hard work he puts in under the sun? He's talking about all the things that the common man runs after and patterns his life after; he says in the end, what does he really gain?

And here's why he asks the question in verse 4 and following; he says: *“A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.”* We'll talk about what that means in a minute.

He says: *“<sup>5</sup> The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. <sup>6</sup> The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits, the wind returns.*

*<sup>7</sup> All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; (isn't that an interesting sort of an idea?) to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. <sup>8</sup> All things are full of weariness;”*

I want you to stop there for a minute. This is part of his first conclusion, and he's citing the weariness of life on the earth. There's a monotony. Remember, Solomon was a very deep thinker. He thought about nature and he thought about the way nature works and he tried to understand it with the wisdom that God

gave him, which was amazing. And he recognized a monotony to the cycle of life that brought about in his heart and mind an emptiness and a lack of any purpose, because you'll notice in the very first thing he says here in verse 4, look with me again there. What's the first thing he mentions when he talks about the monotony of life?

He says "*A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.*" In other words, what he's saying is, the world is full of new births and the world is full of deaths every single day. Some people are born, some people die, and yet the world just keeps on spinning and nothing really changes. People are born, people die, and the world just keeps going. And after the people die, it doesn't matter, the world keeps going anyway. New people are added, the world just keeps going.

Picking up in the middle of verse 8 now, he says: "*a man cannot utter it; (in other words, it's too much even to speak of, he says) the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*"

Again, Solomon is saying that the life that is limited to this earth and all that is under the sun is ultimately a life of dissatisfaction. No matter how much a man sees, he wants more. No matter how much a man hears, he wants to hear more. He's never satisfied.

Isn't that the testimony that some of you guys had when you came to Christ? I was looking in the world for that which satisfies, I wanted satisfaction. I believe that we're born with an innate desire to be satisfied. We want satisfaction in our lives. Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world and if we focus on the things of that world, we're not going to be satisfied. When we run after the things of this world, we're not going to be satisfied.

Verse 9, he goes on, he says: "*What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.* <sup>10</sup> *Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.*"

And this is the next part of Solomon's discovery of life apart from God. He declares there's nothing new under the sun. In other words, history is constantly repeating itself and it just comes back to replay itself in different forms.

I know that we like to think that we live in an enlightened age where people are smarter today than they ever have been before. I think the opposite is true. I think we're a lot dumber than people were, frankly, a long time ago. I think

people were a lot deeper thinkers, frankly. I think we're – I'm sorry if I'm offending anybody here, but I'm talking about myself too because... I think we're pretty superficial to be completely honest with you in our thought processes and the way we think about things.

And we like to think that because we're living in this enlightened age, we're living in this age of just everything is new. I think that what Solomon said here is absolutely the truth. There's nothing new under the sun.

Somebody might say, well, now wait a minute, pastor Paul, what about airplanes? Solomon never saw an airplane and since Solomon's day, man has conquered flight. And my response is, yeah, but birds had that dialed in a long time before man ever got around to it. And so, the issue of flight personally specifically isn't anything new.

What about the internet? What is the internet? I mean, it's just a new spin on an old reality which is communication and information acquisition, and people have been doing that since ancient days; we just found a new way to do it. We digitized it, big deal. But it's the same information retrieval that's been going on for a long time.

He goes on in verse 11 and he says: *“There's no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.”*

And here he cites yet another bitter pill to swallow related to life on this earth apart from God. And he says we're basically all going to be forgotten and sooner than we think we're going to be forgotten.

I wonder how many of us in this room have any real sort of information on our great grandparents, for example. And if you have information, I'm willing to bet it's probably a little sketchy. I know a little bit about my great grandparents, but very little, and I don't even know what my great grandfather did for a living on my father's side, or frankly, even, well, I do know what my great grandfather did on my mother's side. He was a preacher, believe it or not. But I don't know very much at all. The information is mostly lost and then you go one more generation past that, I have nothing.

And when you think about it in terms of history, that's really not that long ago. I mean, it really isn't that long in relation to all of time so far. So historically speaking, we forget very quickly. And that's one of the things Solomon is mentioning here. This is life under the sun, it's life under the sun. When a life is

over, it's over. When people die, they die and they're forgotten. And the world looks at the death of an individual and they go, oh, that's too bad they're gone.

And when they say they're gone, they mean gone. And they mean the life is snuffed out, there's no life. They were alive one minute and then they breathed their last and now it's over, it's done.

Aren't you glad that's not our perspective from a biblical worldview perspective? Aren't you glad? I've told you guys many times; I love getting up at the funeral of a believer and telling the family, your loved one is alive and more alive now than ever in the presence of Jesus.

But see, that's our perspective that we have, that we gain through the Word of God. But you live your life under the sun? Apart from that biblical worldview, apart from the understanding and the revelation of God's Word? And people are just gone, and then they're forgotten in about one or two generations.

In verse 12, then Solomon repeats his conclusion. He says: *"I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> And I applied my heart to seek and search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven."*

By the way, this is the first way that Solomon approached life under the sun. He decided to seek and search it out. What an incredible experiment. I mean, here's a man who knows and understands that there is a God in heaven. His father was a very godly man and yet Solomon says, I'm going to take the wisdom God has given me and I'm going to apply it to understanding all there is to this life on earth, but I'm going to do it apart from God. I'm going to just do it from man's viewpoint.

And so, he undertook incredible things during his lifetime. In fact, I want to show you a passage from 1 Kings 4 up on the screen. Check this out:

**1 Kings 4:29-30, 32-34 (ESV)**

*And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.*

*He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon...*

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And when it says he spoke about him, it doesn't mean like modern day, blog posts where, I'm going to write about fishing and all these different species of, that we can... He gave intimate and specific details about their habits, and he understood with the wisdom that God gave him things that the natural man just could not apprehended. And it was so impressive that people came from all over to just listen to Solomon.

But look what he goes on – we're in the middle of verse 13. Look with me again in your Bible. He says: *“It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. <sup>14</sup> I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity.”*

And that word you're going to see a lot in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the word vanity means, empty or emptiness. When he says, *“all is vanity,”* he's going to say it's empty; it's unsatisfying. He says that, and he says, it's a striving after the wind, which you and I would say it's like a dog chasing its tail.

Verse 15, he goes on: *“What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.”* And so, Solomon even admits with the wisdom that God gave him that it's all kind of this endless puzzle that is constantly needing to be solved and then resolved.

He says, verse 16: *“I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.” <sup>17</sup> And I applied my heart to know wisdom...”*

And that's his first thing. He says, I didn't just want to have wisdom; I wanted to know wisdom. I want to have – this is almost a play on words. I want to have a knowledge of wisdom because you guys, hopefully, you know the difference between knowledge and wisdom, right? Knowledge is the knowing of something. Wisdom is the doing of knowledge. Somebody could say, I know how a car works. When I open the hood of my car, I know how that engine

works but I don't really understand how to fix it. And I don't really have any practical working wisdom when it comes to a combustion engine, but I know it from a knowledge standpoint, not from an experiential wisdom of how to deal with it.

He says, I want to know wisdom, but that wasn't all. Look what he goes on to say, I'm in the middle of verse 17. He says, I want to know madness. Your Bible may say something similar, and folly, which is foolishness. This is crazy. He says, I want to know wisdom, I also want to know insanity, that's madness. I want to know foolishness, I want to understand foolishness, because you've got to understand the point.

The point is to see if there's any purpose to life. The point is to see if there's any reason to recognize purpose to life under the sun as man sees it. In other words, can I look at the fool and say, well, you know what? He's actually the smartest one on the planet. Is that true? Or is it the wise man? Is it the one who's insane? Is he better off than all of us? I want to understand these things. I want to know what this is, I want to get it.

You can tell he's being very thorough in his experiment and we're still in verse 17. He says: *"I perceive that this also is but a striving after (the) wind."* Or this is also a dog chasing its tail.

Verse 18: *"For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge (look at this) increases sorrow."* Isn't that an interesting statement? You can tell, can't you, that from these words that the gift that God had given Solomon became a burden to him from the standpoint that he said with great wisdom comes great vexation.

I love the word vexation, that's just one of my favorite words. I don't use it all that often, but it's great because it takes several English words to define vexation. I think it's more of a British English word, but essentially means, it's a combination of being confused, bewildered, and grieved all put together.

And that's what he says having wisdom is. It creates vexation because you know and understand so much, right? And notice he says that with the increase of knowledge there's an increase in a person's misery or sorrow. And if you don't believe that, just get on to drmd.com or whatever they call (webmd.com) it and try to see if your symptoms are serious. And you'll find out that with more knowledge comes misery. Have you ever done it? You ever got online, I got to take my symptoms and put them into Google and figure out, webmd.com and you read it and you go, oh, I'm going to die any day now. Right? Hey, have you

ever heard that saying, ignorance is bliss? Yeah, shut your computer off. Anyway, it's really true.

Ecclesiastes chapter 2, he says, *“I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.”*” He's going to do something else; same experiment, but this time he's going to try out pleasure. And by the way, this is the same experiment that is being attempted in the United States of America by most unbelievers, and it spills over into a lot of believers as well. Because we get hoodwinked by the unbelieving society that we live among to think that this is actually a cool way to live; to run after pleasure, to run after that sensation of joy and happiness and that sort of thing.

But do you know what it's called? It's called hedonism. A hedonist is essentially a person who considers pleasure the highest aim to life. The greatest aim of living is to understand and to experience pleasure, that's hedonism. Do we live in a hedonistic society? Oh, heavens, are you kidding me? Yeah, I mean it's the United States of hedonism that we're basically living in today. So is there any real and lasting meaning to a life lived ultimately for pleasure and pleasure alone?

Look at the end of verse 1, Solomon gives the answer. *“But behold, this also was vanity”* or it was emptiness. He says, you know what? I even sought to just figure out, is there any purpose and meaning to living a hedonistic lifestyle where you run after pleasure for the sake of pleasure? And he says, I found out it was empty, it didn't fill me up, it didn't fill my tank.

He goes on in verse 2: *“I said of laughter, “It is mad”* (or madness; your Bible may say foolishness. And he says,) *and of pleasure, (he says,) “What use is it?”*

He's saying, I tested life to see if laughter and pleasure and happiness were going to meet my needs, and they didn't. They didn't satisfy me when all was said and done. It was empty.

Verse 3: *“I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine – my heart still guiding me with wisdom – and how to lay hold on folly, or foolishness, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.”* Solomon goes on with his test to see what life is like if he's just living for having fun, having pleasure.

He says, I even used wine in my experiments because wine is supposed to gladden the heart. So I'm going to see if it does. I'm going to see if it works. I'm

going to see if it satisfies and if it brings purpose and meaning to life. But he didn't stop there.

Look what he goes on to say in verse 4: *“I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. <sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and parks and planted (in them) all kinds of fruit trees. <sup>6</sup> I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.*

*<sup>7</sup> I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves that were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.*

*<sup>8</sup> I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and check out this, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of men.”*

We've read about the incredible amassing of wealth that Solomon did over his lifetime and the amassing of wives that he also did over his lifetime. These were all part of his experiment, the experiment that he was doing right here. Let me show you another passage from 1 Kings 11. Check this out on the screen, it says:

**1 Kings 11:1-3 (ESV)**

*Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives who were princesses and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.*

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Wasn't a very wise thing for the wisest man to do, was it? Because he took his wisdom and he basically said, I'm smarter than God.

God gave him this incredible breadth of wisdom, and he thought that with his wisdom, he could violate the wisdom of God's Word. And Solomon forgot that there's someone smarter, and that's God. And so, he embarked on this incredible experiment where he actually amassed a thousand women between wives and concubines; a thousand women.

And he did it as an experiment to see, he thought, I'm not going to withhold anything, any pleasure. I'm not going to withhold any pleasure from my life because I'm testing to see if there's any purpose here. The problem was in the midst of his experiment, he got tangled, he got ensnared. And even with his great wisdom, it says that he loved these women and he held fast to them in love to the point where he then compromised God's Word. In other words, he chose his wives over his love for God. And we're told here at the end that his wives turned his heart away; that's what we saw in that passage. Again, this is all part of Solomon's grand experiment.

Verse 9 in your text: *"So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also, my wisdom remained with me."* In other words, he never stopped analyzing; testing, seeing if these things have meaning. Is there any purpose for life?

Verse 10: *"And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart (look at this, my heart found) pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil."*

Did you hear that? Solomon said, I kept nothing from my heart. I decided I wasn't going to keep anything from my heart. And he's the king, nobody can say, don't do that because he's the king and he's filthy rich. He can afford anything and he says, I'm just going to, anything I want, I'm going to take; I'm going to have anything I want.

And he tells you here, his heart found pleasure. Don't tell anybody that sin isn't enjoyable because it is, but it's only enjoyable for a season. That's what the Bible tells us.

But look what he goes on to say. He says, *"my heart..."* I'm in the middle of verse 10, *"My heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward..."* He says, my heart found pleasure, but that was the only reward I got. It was just the pleasure."

Now, if you're a pure hedonist, then that's good enough, right? Ultimately, though, Solomon had the wisdom to know that is going to cause you to still

come up empty. It's still going to be meaningless in the end, and it's not going to satisfy, even though there are these pleasures along the way.

Verse 11, he says: *“Then I considered all that my hands had done and all the toil that I had expended in doing it. And behold, all was vanity.”* He says it was emptiness and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. And that's the key; there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

He's basically saying that pleasure as an end in itself is ultimately unsatisfying. But remember guys, if you have an unbeliever living next to you, that's their world. Their world is this world, and they have nothing else but to live for daily pleasure and for what they can get out of their daily routine.

That's all they've got, there's nothing more for them. They don't have an eternal perspective. They don't have anything to live for beyond this life and this is what dominates their every day, right?

Verse 12: *“So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.”<sup>13</sup> Then I saw that this is more that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.”*

If you have a different Bible translation that you're reading, your Bible may say that their wisdom excels folly, just as light excels darkness. And what Solomon is doing is making a very simple kind of a conclusion here. He's simply saying there's more benefit in wisdom than there is foolishness. There's more benefit in light than there is darkness. Very simple.

Verse 14: *“The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.”* What's the same event he's talking about? He's talking about death.

He says the man who's walking in the light can see where he's going. The fool is walking in the darkness. He's constantly stumbling, but you know what? They both die. But that's life under the sun, isn't it? Again, that's the perspective; you can't avoid death.

Here's the conclusion – verse 15: *“Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?””* In other words, Solomon is saying, what's the point? What's the point? You see life under the sun – he's got this gift from God but he's looking at everything now under the sun from man's perspective, and he goes, what's the point? What's the

point of having this gift? If it's just for me, if it's just for this life, if it's just for this current amount of time that I'm on this earth, what is the point? Because you know what? I'm going to die like the biggest fool that ever lived on this planet. I may be the smartest man who ever lived, but I'm going to have the same end as the most foolish man.

And verse 15, he says: *“And I said in my heart that this also is (emptiness or) vanity.”*

Verse 16: *“For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten.”* We've already talked about that, how the wise dies just like the fool.

*“<sup>17</sup> So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all this vanity and a striving after the wind.”* Isn't that interesting? He says, I got to thinking about it and I ended up, I hated life, I didn't want to live. I didn't want to live anymore.

Have you ever wondered why people want to take their life? They hate it, they hate what's going on. It's like, I'm just going to die anyway. I'm just going to die and if I'm hurting now, if I'm in pain now, and when I'm dead, I'm not going to have that pain any longer. I might as well get to getting rid of the pain, right? Because this life is just painful. That's really all it is. It's just kind of one long painful experience so I might as well get to the end. I might as well bring the end right up to the present. I hate life.

See, from our perspective as believers, the Bible tells us that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, right? (Romans 8:28) And that includes the painful experiences we endure as children of God. Every one of those painful experiences, every one of those challenging times, every one of those very, very difficult circumstances, God is using in your life to form Christ in you; to form the image of His Son in us. That's what God is doing – every single one.

So we're told to take painful circumstances, difficult trying situations, and we're to consider them all joy, why? Because we're being disciplined by our Heavenly Father, trained if you will, and that's what discipline means. We're to consider all difficulty as discipline, we're told in the Word, because God is doing a work.

Oh, praise the Lord. We just got a Biblical perspective. We just breathed into this depression that Solomon has dug himself into here. He says, I hate my life. What is it for? What is the pain all about? There's no purpose. There's no

redeeming value to the pain that I endure. Oh, yes, there is brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. There is redeeming value in everything you go through, everything you endure. Christ is being formed in you, and it will have an eternal benefit; you just can't see it right now. But by faith, we understand from the scripture that this is the situation. He says these things are all vanity.

Verse 18: *“I hated all my toil in which I toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,<sup>19</sup> and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is emptiness, vanity.*

*<sup>20</sup> So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,<sup>21</sup> because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is emptiness, it's vanity, and a great evil.”*

And you'll notice here that he's admitting that he gave his heart up to despair. Have you ever despaired? And that means to despair of life. Have you ever been there? Gotten so low that you despaired of life?

And he goes, I've done all these things. He set about creating these beautiful parks and, plantings and groves of fruit trees and buildings. And of course, under Solomon the temple was built, his own palace. He built up whole cities, with his wealth and so forth.

And then he started thinking, the guy who comes after me could be a total idiot and you know what? He was because the king who came after him was his own son, Rehoboam, and Rehoboam was not the sharpest knife in the drawer. Under Rehoboam, he split the kingdom in half. First thing he did, he split the kingdom in two, he was so dumb.

And as Solomon thought about that, he says, I got to the place where I just, I despaired over the whole thing. He says, I don't know, who knows if there – I worked hard for all these things. I applied my wisdom. Who knows if the guy who comes after me if he's just going to fritter it all away. And that's exactly what happened.

Verse 22: *“What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun?<sup>23</sup> For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night, his heart does not rest. This also is (emptiness) vanity.”*

Have you ever laid awake at night thinking about what you're doing, the things you have to do and so forth, and you're just like, oh, it just never ends. I want to go to sleep, but I can't turn my brain off. I wish there was an off switch. He says, man, that is just – talk about vexation.

He says, you know what? Verse 24, I like this: *“There's nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup>for apart from him, who can eat or can they have enjoyment?”* This is the first time Solomon brings God kind of into a consideration into this whole thing.

And he ends then with this observation in verse 26. He says: *“For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God.”*

His final observation of this chapter is that God seems to give wisdom and knowledge and joy to the one who pleases Him. But to the one who rejects God, the one who rejects God's purpose for his life, He gives the burden of the same work only to then give all of that over to the one who comes after him, who pleases God.

And his final conclusion is at the end of verse 26, *“This also is vanity, (it's emptiness) and a striving after the wind.”* Because even though Solomon, you'll notice, acknowledges God, he's still basing his conclusions apart from God.

Do you know that people who don't accept the Lord, who aren't Christians, aren't believers, many times they will acknowledge God. They'll talk about God even. Yeah, I guess God's not very happy with me today or whatever. Yeah, talk about the big man upstairs or some other dumb reference to God. They'll talk about Him. It doesn't mean that they love Him, doesn't mean that they desire to serve Him, and it doesn't mean that they're still not living their life completely from a human naturalistic perspective.

And that's what Solomon is doing here at the end of chapter 2. He recognizes God, but then when he talks about how God operates in the realm of man, he calls it emptiness. He calls it vanity and he calls it a striving after wind, which again is like the dog chasing its tail. Now, if that doesn't leave you all perked up there at the end of chapter 2, nothing will so, we're going to stop there.

This is a good reminder, guys. I don't know how long you've been walking with the Lord, but we forget sometimes about the way our neighbor thinks. We

forget sometimes what our neighbor lives for, his understanding of life. It's all for now, it's just for this is what I can get out of life right now because when I'm dead, I'm gone. I'm not going to enjoy anything from the grave.

In fact, Solomon's going to say that later on in Ecclesiastes. Hey, when I'm dead, I'm not going to enjoy anything then because that's man's perspective. Right? So here we are reminded.

And when we talk to people about the Lord and we interject our Biblical worldview, many times they don't know what to do with it. They're not really sure. It's like, what did you just say? You know, here you are talking about things that I really – that's not my world. You're sitting here talking about living your life for a purpose that goes beyond the daily pleasures that the rest of the world is all living for, and I don't understand. I don't get it.

And the reason they don't get it is they don't know your God. They don't know Him. And because they don't know Him, they can't live for Him. Because you can't live for someone you don't know. So this is a great reminder, wonderful reminder; what are people living for in the world?

They're living for the day-to-day experiences of pleasure that are somehow some way going to leave them with a little modicum of joy, a little modicum of peace. When they hit the pillow at night, they want to know that today I did something fun, and maybe I had a little happiness. Maybe I even made somebody else happy, because that's all I can really do for them as well.

What a horrible way to live.