



ST. PAUL'S BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes
7:11-18

Pastor's Notes

In Ecclesiastes, we are introduced to two kinds of wisdom. The first kind of wisdom is a wisdom that is under the sun. The kind of wisdom that understands how to live the 'good life' under the sun. This is the kind of wisdom that we can get from Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. This is the kind of wisdom that we are hearing from philosophers, such as the Canadian Philosopher, Jordan Peterson. However, we must understand that this kind of wisdom is secondary. It isn't bad, but it is limited to life under the sun. It does not speak about things 'outside' this life under the sun—or after. So, how are we to understand this secondary wisdom (i.e., civil wisdom) vs. primary wisdom (i.e., eternal wisdom)? The answer is that the Bible contains both primary and secondary wisdom. Both are valuable and needed. However, secondary wisdom—without primary wisdom—is in the end futile. And secondary wisdom without primary wisdom can make a person 'so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.'

A good way to understand this is to see that primary wisdom shapes and keeps secondary wisdom in its proper perspective. And when we operate within the realm of secondary wisdom, we are always keeping primary wisdom in the back of our mind.

V. 11 Life is tough, but it is better with wisdom. Wisdom gives a person an edge in this life.

V. 12 There is no doubt about it that having a nest-egg of money (backup) gives a person protection from those rainy days. The same is with wisdom. Being wise in this world protects a person from all the curve balls of life. Consider the following: wisdom protects our body (10:8); wisdom makes us resourceful (4:5); wisdom helps us get along with people and especially people in high places (7:9); wisdom helps us in tackling new projects (7:8); etc. To pay to have wisdom; whereas, it hurts to be a fool.

V. 13-14 Both of these verses speak to the limitations of wisdom. It is like this; wisdom helps us to under-

stand life under the sun. It helps us understand eternal life. However, understanding something does not always make things right or fixed. That is to say; there is much in life that we can't fix. Being wise helps us to understand broken systems, false ideologies, corrupted leadership, and the problems of death; however, once we understand things we are often left with not being able to do anything about them. Such is the blessing and curse of wisdom!

V. 14 This is a verse that describes the ongoing life of one who has true wisdom—living under the sun.

V. 15 Solomon has been around the block. He has seen it all. And sometimes being wise means that you will have more problems than good. Why? Wisdom collides with perverted and crooked systems. And so, in the midst of crooked systems, sometimes the wicked will have it better than the wise and upright. Life is not fair.

V. 16-18 These verses need to be held together in tension. What do they mean, though? Be wise but do not be an arrogant jerk. Arrogant know-it-alls paint a target on themselves, and then when they get persecuted by the world, they cry out, "Woe is me, I am a victim!" No, they are not a victim! Their pompous know-it-all-attitude got what was coming! When you act like an arrogant jerk, you are begging the world to ridicule you! This is stupid! Don't flaunt your wisdom!

On the other hand, do not react against pompous Christians by trying to be and do the opposite. Don't be overly wicked. For example, we have seen these types of Christians, and they are those edgy Christians! They seem always to be pushing ethical limits. Though they will not necessarily say it, they often sin so that grace may abound. They also seem to find their identity in their rebellion against the status quo. They are not like those goody-two-shoes in the pew. They have a history and a dark past and make sure to talk about it to show that they have experienced life! Ugh, our identity is never found in our stories but in Christ's story for us!

So, avoid being overly righteous and overly wicked!