



## ST. PAUL'S BIBLE STUDY

*Ecclesiastes*  
12:9-14

### **Pastor's Notes**

V. 9 This verse is summarizing the wisdom of Solomon. Solomon penned some 3,000 proverbs, studied all kinds of plants and animals, and many people of all nations came to hear his wisdom (1 King 4:32-34).

V. 10 This verse shows that Solomon sought to use pleasing words – soothing words to the ear. Words that were both comprehensible and memorable to the hearer. It should be noted that Solomon wrote words of “truth.” What this means is this. If a person has a tough time hearing from Solomon in Ecclesiastes about life under the sun, they are not in tension with Solomon but tension with truth. Frankly stated, the truth often hurts. There is also good news to truth. Solomon also spoke truth about the Lord’s favor for mankind in Ecclesiastes.

V. 11 Like nails, the truth hurts, but the truth can hold humanity together firmly. Who is this Shepherd, though? Who gives words of truth? The only one person who can fulfill the role ascribed to this term “shepherd” is the Lord.

V. 12 We are called to be aware of any writings that are not in the Scriptures, since they are not directly inspired by God. That is the difference between the Bible and other writing. The Bible is ‘God-breathed.’ What this means is that secondary literature is helpful, but we must be careful to hold secondary literature captive to the Word of God. This verse is especially important to understand because many authors are looking to make a quick buck with writing something new and unique. And publishers are always looking for that unique new book that offers something new to the reader. Finally, keep in mind that much study leads to tiredness. However, we need to keep something in mind here. Most philosophers, writers, researchers, etc. write with the inborn inclination to law, not Gospel. Law thinking comes naturally to us human beings, not Gospel thinking. The Gospel is not natural to us human beings but must come from the outside-in. Therefore, when philosophers, writers, researchers, etc. write, they will typically write about the law, which in the end, the law condemns and shows sin. The law always seems to burden the conscience because it never offers an adequate solution to sin, except do more, try harder. What this means is this, many books in the Christian marketplace belong on the self-help shelf. They are worthless because they point the reader to himself and not the Gos-

pel. Yes, many Christian bookstores have shelves full of worthless books – saying different things, but leading the reader to the same conclusion – self. Only the Gospel leads us to the savior – and that Gospel is only found in the Word of God – and those books that hug closely to the scriptures.

V. 13 We are at the end. The end – or bottom line – of what Ecclesiastes is about is this: fear God. This message is nothing new to those who know God. You see, the natural inclination of mankind is to justify himself. Mankind wants to be his own god. Mankind wants to be in charge. Mankind wants to be the center of attention. Mankind wants what he wants and wants it right now. This is the exact opposite of the fear of God. Human endeavors take mankind nowhere, except deeper into the darkness in this life under the sun. The key to Ecclesiastes is quite simple: life as a Christian is not fancy or complex. That is to say; those who promise you sexy and extravagant ways of living the Christian life are frankly, stupid and naive at best. Life as a Christian is not hard to understand: fear and love God! Trust God to justify you freely in Christ. Love God for who He is and the gifts He gives. Serve your neighbor as the Ten Commandments call you to. Rest in the promises of the Word. So, don’t waste your time on fancy 10-step books or complex Christian programs that promise supernatural greatness, for they are garbage and a waste of money – they neither understand the difficulties of life under the sun nor the gifts that the Lord has already given you. You have everything you need to know about this Christian life in the blessing of the Small Catechism, which summarizes this life of fearing and loving God: Ten Commandments, Apostles Creed, Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, Confession, and Communion. The only other theme of Ecclesiastes that might be worth mentioning is this: enjoy the life that God has given you. Eat, drink, and be merry for the Lord already approves of you in the Gospel. Yes, have joy in Christ for your sins are forgiven; what else do you need?

V. 14 Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, the reader has been exposed to the tragedy of life under the sun. The sorrows have been severe. The truth has hurt. Therefore, a person may wonder if God even cares. He is the Creator of the universe, and He knows everything under the sun. All things in this life under the sun will be taken into account. What this means is that the Lord will return someday to make all things right, for the Lord Jesus Christ lived His life under the sun and died. But take comfort dear flock for Christ rose from the darkness of the grave. Life under the sun became His life; however, His resurrection has become our triumph – forever.