



ST. PAUL'S BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes
2:12-23

Pastor's Notes

Overview: In this next section, Solomon looks at the advantages of living wisely. And what is Solomon's overall conclusion? His conclusion is that there seems to be an advantage in this life under the sun to living wisely. However, in the end the wise and foolish all die.

V. 12 When the fool dies, he is put in the grave. When the wise person dies, he is put in the grave. And they are both put 6-feet under. They both take nothing with them. No matter how much wisdom a person gains in this life, once he is dead, it all vanishes. There are no wise corpses.

What a troubling conclusion to reach! To make things worse, Solomon shows in verse 12 that the next generation will not be better off than the first. Why? Because they die too.

V. 13-14 Considering this, though, what about life under the sun? Solomon shows us that (generally speaking) the shrewd and wise will have advantage over the gullible. The resourceful will have it better than the lazy. Those who are more moral, will have it better than the spiritually lazy and those who promote anarchy. However, as already shown, wisdom and shrewdness will eventually fail, since shrewdness cannot solve the problem with death.

V. 15 Wisdom indeed helps a lot in this life under the sun. Wisdom helps maneuver through the landmines of life. However, wisdom has its limits. Death is the great equalizer in life. The rich and poor; the wise and the fool; the popular and the loser—all end up in the grave.

V. 17 And what do we learn in verse 17? Well, simply stated, Solomon hated life itself. Life is not fair. Just when you think you are getting ahead by being wise, you die. Ugh, when one fully examines life under the sun, the only conclusion is

that life under the sun—sucks. It is ugly. It isn't fair. It ends in death. Nothing can change that fact, which means that everything under the sun is pointless. Vanity! Futile!

V. 18 Verse 18 starts a new section. This section can be titled, "You can't take it with you!" Indeed, death is like a brick wall that we all hit. We hit it and then drop all of our toil and work to others. And what do others do? They take it!

V. 19 So when we die, who will get a hold of the fruits of our toil (work)? Who knows! A fool might get a hold of it and squander it, or a wise person will get it and continue our work.

V. 20 Verse 20 is like a confession. And what is Solomon's confession? Here it is, "I GIVE UP!" Yes, after a very thorough examination of life under the sun, Solomon acknowledges that he is boxed up in a corner. No way forward. No hope. Wine—nope. Women—nope. Property—nope. Song—nope. Wisdom—nope. All of it leads to death. Nothing escapes death. Life under the sun knocks us flat on our face. (How an honest look at life under the sun prepares us for the Gospel!)

V. 21 Want to pour some salt on an open wound? Ugh, life under the sun has a way of handing over great works to deadbeats. What unfairness!

V. 23 Solomon offers up a conclusion. Life is pain! Even when we rest and sleep, we still have worry about life under the sun. We should sleep and rest—be free from the burdens of life. However, even when we sleep at night we are bothered. Bothered why? In the end it doesn't matter!

To Consider:

- How does an 'honest' look at life under the sun prepare us for the Gospel?
- Do people honestly look at life under the sun? Why or why not?
- What happens when a person denies how things are under the sun? What happens when we acknowledge how things are under the sun?