

Ecclesiastes 6-8 • Wisdom and Foolishness Under the Sun

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We're in Ecclesiastes chapter 6, as we are making our way. This is our second to the last study in this book, Ecclesiastes chapter 6. I'll just remind you, Solomon, the wisest man in the world, set out to use his wisdom to look at life. But not just life, a life apart from God. And he called it, life under the sun.

And he set out to find out if there's any meaning, or purpose, or value, lasting value to life, a life lived apart from God. He said, it's one thing to look at life through the eyes of what God has revealed to us, but it's another thing as human beings to look at life and say, does this make sense? Is there anything here that makes sense? Or is there anything that's valuable or anything that is, we ought to pursue and so forth with any kind of meaning.

And in our last study, you might remember that Solomon had just made the point that the only real joy in living life under the sun or really the only benefit of living life under the sun is, simply to enjoy your existence. To, in other words, eke some kind of happiness out of it. And take pleasure from the fruit of what you're given on a day to day basis.

And that's exactly what we see in the world. People do that very thing. And Solomon is bearing that out and saying, well, when it comes down to it, when you're living life apart from God and you don't think about God in terms of a future or an eternity or anything like that, the best you can do is just come up with happiness for this life. And that's exactly the conclusion that he drew.

Now along the lines of that conclusion, if... Now think about that for a minute. If happiness is your only goal and your chief end in life, if that is the, if that is your reason for living to be happy, okay. Then I want you to think about what would be one of the worst scenarios that you could imagine in life under the sun. What's one of the worst scenarios? Well, that's the way he begins this chapter. If you look with me in verse 1, he says,

"There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: ² a man to whom God gives wealth, (gives) possessions, and honor, (and all that sort of stuff) so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not

give him power (or if you will, the ability) to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. (He says,) This is vanity;"

And I want you to, I want to remind you that the word vanity again means, emptiness. And there are times that I wish they would have translated it just emptiness. Because we don't often think of that. We don't often use the word vanity in our lives in terms of applying it to emptiness. I wish sometimes they would have just said that. And that's what he's saying here. He says, this is emptiness. This is total emptiness.

And he says, *"it is a grievous evil."* This is again, the perspective of man apart from God. What is the most grievous evil that, that your unbelieving neighbor could possibly comprehend. Well, it would be having the things of this world and not being able to enjoy them. That's the worst. That's the worst because that's all there is for you. As an unbeliever or as someone living under the sun.

And so Solomon is corroborating this whole idea. That because all you have is the enjoyment of your things for this short period of time that you're here. If you're unable to enjoy your things, that is a grievous evil. And he says it is a very empty sort of a thing.

In fact, he goes on, look at verse 3. This is really powerful. He says, *"If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years so that the days of his years are many, (Look at this next phrase, though) but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, (And he even makes it even a little bit worse by saying,) he has also has no burial,"* And that was not only hugely important in that culture to have a proper burial, but it was a it was a statement, meaning that, that person had found rest. Okay. An unburied person, an unburied dead person in that culture, was believed to have not been given rest from the Lord. All right. That was a huge thing.

He says, even if he fathers, a hundred children and lives many, many years on this earth... And by the way, fathering a hundred kids would be a sign of blessing. Right? You might think of it as quite the opposite, but it was a sign of great blessing from the Lord.

He's received all these things, but his soul is not and cannot be satisfied by all of these things. Look what he goes on to say at the end of that verse, verse 3. He says, *"I say that a stillborn child is better off than he."* That's a crazy statement. Right? But he goes on to describe why. Look at what he says in verse 4. He's speaking now of the stillborn child.

He says, *"For it comes in vanity (or it comes in emptiness) and it goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered."*⁵ Moreover, *it has not seen the sun or known anything, (And that means good or bad) yet it finds rest rather than he."* This individual who didn't receive a proper burial. And while he was alive couldn't enjoy what he did have.

He says, verse 6,

"Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good - do not all go to the one place?" In other words, do they not all die. Do they not all end the same?

He's like, what's the use? What's the use? I mean, what's the benefit of having lived all those years. Even if he lived a thousand years twice over and had all the wonderful blessings that this world can afford, but he couldn't enjoy it. In other words, there's no happiness. What's the good of even having been born? *"...a stillborn child, (he says) is better off..."* in that case.

But you have to understand here, this is the perspective of the natural born man. This is the perspective of the individual who is looking at life apart from God. And apart from a revelation of God. There's, you notice, there's no mention of eternity here.

There's no mention of redemptive suffering. There's no mention of the fact that God works all things together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) That's out of view here. It is a very dark way to live. It's a very hopeless way to live.

And this again is the reminder for you, who are going through this study of Ecclesiastes, to remember how your neighbor, your unsaved neighbors, think about life. And think about this world. And think about their lives.

Now as we begin verse 7, and following of this chapter, before you read ahead, I want to just tell you that this is this section begins what I like to call the, under the sun, Proverbs.

You guys, I'm sure have read through the Book of Proverbs. Many of you went through the study we did of Proverbs last summer. And you know what the Proverbs sound like. And we call Proverbs - the wisdom of God. It's basically given us the wisdom from these various writers. Solomon, one of whom wrote Proverbs. And they're wonderful for us. But these are, you're going to notice, sound just like the Proverbs. But they're different. Because they're the Proverbs

of, life under the sun, okay. Whereas, the other Book of Proverbs is more of the observation, it brings God into it more and the revelation of God into it more.

But these are the perspective of natural man, all right, living under the sun apart from God. He's going to make some observations here as he finishes out the chapter, he says, *"All the toil of man is for his mouth,* (In other words, to get food so he can eat and) *yet his appetite is not satisfied.* It's this ongoing dog chasing his tail, sort of a situation that Solomon sees in life.

Verse 8,

"For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? ⁹ Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is (emptiness or) vanity and a striving after wind.

¹⁰ *Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he."* Notice there's a vague reference to God without actually referring to Him as God. But simply saying, man has learned that it is, he cannot dispute with anyone who is stronger than himself.

Verse 11, another observation.

"The more words, the more vanity, (the more emptiness. In other words, the more people talk the less they say.) and what is the advantage to man? ¹² For who knows what is good for (a) man while he lives the few days of his (vain) life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?" Again, there's the hopeless proverbs of life under the sun. He says, "who can tell him what will be after."

Well, we know that. We know, the Bible tells us what is after. But your neighbor, your unsaved neighbor, he doesn't know what's coming after this life. He has no idea really. He's heard people say what they believe but he chalks it all up to just personal opinion. And he figures his opinion probably has about as much weight on the whole thing as yours. But ultimately, he doesn't know. He has no idea. And so he's asking really the same question that Solomon is asking in verse 12, *"...who knows what is good...?"*

People go around saying, this is good. Well, okay, it's good for you. But who really knows what's good for a man while he lives the very few days of this very

empty life. And notice he says, "*which he passes like a shadow?*" This life passes just like a vapor.

Chapter 7 continues on with more "under the sun Proverbs." He says,

"¹ A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth." Isn't that an interesting statement? *"...the day of death (is better) than the day of birth."* We'll see him develop this a little more as we get into these verses.

He says in fact, in verse 2,

"It is better to go to the house of mourning (In other words, a house where there's somebody who has died. And to go there and be with those people,) than to go to the house of feasting (or celebration. He says, for the, he says,) for this is the end of all mankind, (we're all going to die anyway) and the living will lay it to heart." In other words, while we're alive, at least if we go and hang out with those who are in a time of mourning it'll make us at least think about our lives. And take inventory of our lives.

Parties don't typically do that. You go to somebody's birthday party or a reception for something or other. And you're there, and you're joyful, and there's merriment, and there's laughing and talking. And nobody's thinking about the end of their days. Nobody's considering any kind of wisdom to apply to their lives at all.

But he says, in the place of mourning that actually happens. People... And he's absolutely right. I've done countless funerals over the years since I've become a Pastor. And I have to admit there's probably none of them are enjoyable. But there's one thing that I'm able to do during the funeral. And that's talk to people about their mortality and where they're going to end up.

Because there's no possible way to escape the fact that this is what's going on and this is what we're all here to do. I mean, obviously we're remembering the person who's there. And that's part of the whole service to memorialize the individual. But it's, I mean, the elephant in the room is that they're dead. And they're gone. And we all have to deal with that at some point in time. And so, we're able to do it. And you get people to think about things that they don't want to think about otherwise.

And that's really what Solomon is saying here. That's really all he's saying. When you are around people who are grieving, at least your heart's going to be thinking in the right sort of a way.

And so he says in verse 3,

"Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad." And so he's attaching a therapeutic value to sadness. Solomon believed very much that sadness is better to give people a heart of wisdom than is merriment.

Because in merriment, we tend to fritter away our time. Right? When we're at a party and we're, heyyyyy (Pastor Paul is expressing celebration) we are, the whole period of time goes on. And we get to the end of it and there really hasn't been any benefit from it, as far as thinking about wise living and that sort of thing.

And he says, but when you're in a time of sorrow, and have you not found this to be true? When you're in a time of sorrow, when you're in a time of difficulty, don't you find that you're closer to the Lord, than when you're in a time of merriment? I do.

In the times of my life, when I have faced some very scary situations and I've been forced, if you will, to draw close to the Lord, there's always been a benefit. That I could come away from that situation and say, that was a terrible thing to go through, but it drew me closer to my Lord. At the end of that time, I spent better and more quality time with God than had I gone to a birthday party. Or had I been celebrating some victory or some joyful experience or pleasure in this life. It just stands to reason.

And that's why he says sorrow is better than laughter. He's not saying you should never laugh. He's not saying you should go around and be sour and never smile for the entirety of your life. He's simply saying that if wisdom is your goal... And Solomon is a man who is obsessed with wisdom. He's always thinking along the lines of wisdom, then there's going to be more wisdom that's going to come out of difficulty than there is out of frivolity.

Verse 4, this is his thought along this way. He says,

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." And mirth means, it's just, it's another word for what we've been talking about. In merriment or happiness or something like that, he says, the heart of the wise is more at home in the place of difficulty. We gain a heart

of understanding and even more so through the Lord. And he's not even taking the Lord into consideration here really.

Verse 5, he goes on and he says,

"It (he says, it) is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools." We like to sing songs, happy, joyous songs. But frankly it's more beneficial to hear the rebuke of a wise friend than a song of a foolish friend. And he goes on to say in verse 6,

"For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; (and) this also is (emptiness or) vanity." Isn't that funny?

Can you imagine. They used to take thorns and use them and burn them. And they'd use them for fuel to start a fire. And at some point in Solomon's life, he listened to the crackling of those thorns and he thought, it just sounds like the cackling of laughter. Of foolish laughter when people are making stupid jokes or stupid comments and just being ridiculous. I mean, they're having a good time but there's no wisdom in it. It's just foolish, foolishness.

Verse 7,

"Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart." What's he saying here in verse 7?

Now, this is where Solomon takes a little bit, this is a little bit of different direction. He's taught... He's been talking about the wise and people who seek, search after wisdom. And how wisdom is better found in the house of mourning than in the house of merriment.

But then he goes, says, even though you may search for wisdom and find wisdom, it can still be easily corrupted by turning to such a greedy end that you would actually oppress your neighbor. And the ability to oppress and to gain income, he says, will turn a wise man into a foolish man. And that's what that word, madness really means. It doesn't mean it turned, it'll turn him insane, it just means it'll turn him into a fool because he can be easily corrupted.

And so he's going to be talking a little bit about the human heart here. That's why he even says, *"a bribe corrupts the heart."* Even though you may find some modicum of wisdom, it's easily corrupted.

And so he says in verse 8,

"Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." I think that's a fair statement.

"Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools." There's a great statement, *"...anger lodges in the heart of fools."* In other words, it takes up its residence in the heart of fools.

And so he says in verse 10,

"Say not, 'Why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.'" I like that. You know what he's saying? It's foolish to live in the past and talk about the past like, oh, those were the days, let me tell you. Oh that's when God was moving. That's when things were good back in the old days. They might've been. But it's not wise to live there. It's not wise to put your attention on there because you don't live there. You live now. And you're going to ruin your ability to live now if you're constantly looking at the past.

Verse 11 says,

"Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun."

¹² *For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it."* It's a good thing to have wisdom. It preserves your life. That's, we read that in the regular Book of Psalms.

But then I always love as we move on here to verse 13. I always love it when Solomon makes comments about God. Because again, he's making them from the perspective of a man apart from God. Cut off from God, if you will, and living under the sun.

He says in verse 13,

"Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?" Isn't that an interesting statement?

At some point for the man living under the sun, he realizes that God is in heaven and he is living in, on the earth below. And there's nothing he can do to change what God has done. He comes to that conclusion eventually. And he's like... And that becomes his attitude. It's like, well, God; He's God. I mean, if there's a God, then He's God. He can do what he wants to do. Nothing I can do about it. And so he starts to take on that attitude. Bad things happen in his life,

he says, well, that's God for you. Who can straighten out what He made crooked? If He makes it crooked, then it's crooked. And I can't straighten it out. Nothing I can do about it. What are you looking to me for? Am I God?

Interesting. It's what Jacob said to his wife when she came to him and said, I want to have a baby. (Genesis 30:1-2) Do you remember that? Rachel came to him (Jacob) She saw her sister bearing children.

She says, Rachel came to Jacob, I want a baby.

He said, am I God? Am I in the place of God that I can do anything about this?

It's that attitude of, life under the sun. It's interesting about this Isaac had the same problem. His daddy, Jacob's dad, Isaac, had the same problem with his wife Rebecca. She couldn't have children. Guess what Isaac did? It tells us in Genesis; he interceded on behalf of his wife and she conceived. (Genesis 25:21) That's the man living, above the sun, who's got his head and his heart and his vision toward God. And he prays for his wife. He didn't get angry, "Am I God?"

Verse 14, he goes on. It says,

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, (Nothing wrong with being joyful, right?) and in the day of adversity consider: (this) God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him." That's a hopeless conclusion.

He says,

"¹⁵ In my (empty) (correction-vain) life, I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. (I've seen that kind of stuff so here's the conclusion) ¹⁶ Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?" Isn't that great? I love it.

And don't you hear this sometimes from people in the world? Well, religion is okay, but you don't want to go and get radical on me. Right? Now don't do this, you don't have to go to church every week for heaven's sake. And then, and reading your Bible, if you pick the thing up once a year, that's enough. You don't want to go getting weird on us. And that's the attitude of the man under the sun. Don't be over righteous.

And then verse 17,

"Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time?" (Pastor Paul chuckles) Remember, these are not the proverbs you're going to put up on your refrigerator, okay? These are not the ones. This is not wisdom Proverbs, these are foolish Proverbs. This is life under the sun. This is the man who is cut off from God and is perceiving life apart from God so be careful quoting these to people. I'm going to quote verse 17. It tells me not to be overly wicked, which means I guess I can be a little wicked.

Verse 18,

"It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them. (Wow!)"

19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. (And then he says,)

20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." That's true, but we, even man under the sun knows this. You know what they say? They don't talk about God related to it or they don't talk about it in relation to righteousness. But what they say is, hey, I'm not perfect. I know that I'm not. Nobody's perfect. Right? And that's really all that Solomon is saying here.

He says in verse 21,

"Do not take to heart all the things that people say, (Boy, now there's a good word for today.) lest you hear your servant cursing you. 22 Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others." (Yep)

Verse 23,

"All this (he says,) I have tested by wisdom. (And) I said, "I will be wise," (In other words, I'm going to apply the wisdom God gave me to all these things. But look what he says,) but it was far from me. 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out?" And again, this is the challenge of living life under the sun.

This is the challenge of living life apart from God. Because when you do the world is just filled with mystery. And constant mystery; one mystery after another. It's just, you go from mystery to mystery. And there's only so much that we do know about. And because we have so many unanswered questions people do a lot of guessing. Have you ever noticed that?

Solomon is saying here in these verses, he says, I used the wisdom God gave me to figure out life under the sun, and I couldn't do it. It was far off. It was too deep. And so imagine if Solomon couldn't figure it out what is the typical modern man going to do when he's trying to figuring out his life? He's going to come up empty, isn't he?

Well,... And so what do people today do? What do, what does modern man do with the emptiness of his understanding related to figuring out life on this earth apart from God? What do they do? Well, I think we all know. Because we have so many unanswered questions, we just guess. We just guess.

And... But we don't tell people we're guessing. We started off by saying, well, I believe... And then we tell them what our guess is. But we, again, we don't say, we don't say, well, my guess is... That would diminish my opinion. I, rather I say, well, I just believe...

And you watch these hokey movies where people die. And this, somebody's out there crying, somebody comes to comfort him. And they say, don't worry; your dad's looking down on you. How do they know that? How do they know that your dad is watching you from heaven? How do they know that? They don't. But they don't say, well, my guess is... They just say it like, well, this is what I believe. Right?

And that's the only option they have because they don't know so they have to comfort themselves with at least a sense of knowledge. At least a sense of knowing. Well, I believe that when we die and then dah dah dah dah dah dah. Right? That's what I believe. Well, is that true? Well, it's what I believe. And so for me it is true. And the rest of us go, yikes!

But see, that's... When somebody in the world says that to you, and they say, I believe, and then they go on to say something that is clearly something they could never know in a million years, just know this: that's the best they've got. That's all they've got. And so it's probably not going to be beneficial to you to belittle him about it. And say, well, you're, that's dumb, or what.

What's probably better to do is to say, would you mind if I share you what, share with you what God's Word has to say on that topic? Because there's authority there. It's not just an opinion. It's not just, I believe. This is what God has revealed to man. Here's what happens after death. Here's what happens. This is what God has shown us. Here's what's going to be happening in these last days. Let me explain to you why all the things that are happening in the world today are happening in the world today. The way they're happening in the world

today. Let me show you some passages in the Bible that predict exactly what we're seeing today.

That's wisdom. That's the unraveling of mysteries by the revelation of God. Rather than the exercise of advancing my opinion, as if it were fact when I know and you know, I don't have a clue. Right?

That is what Solomon is saying here in verse 23 and 24. I tested all these things. And I made up my mind I was going to apply my wisdom to all these things that I looked at. And I want you to know, he says in verse 24, that the meaning of all this stuff is far off. It's very deep. And he says, *"who can find it out."*

And so he says in verse 25,

"I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly (and that's foolishness) and the foolishness that is madness. ²⁶ And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters."

But he says, you know what, I've noticed something. I noticed that the man who lives to please God, he ends up escaping her (*the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters*). But I've noticed that the other person who doesn't care about God, who lives his life in a perpetual state of sin, he gets taken by her. He gets caught.

Now this is something that even the man apart from God can recognize. I mean, if he's going to apply his heart to wisdom and he's going to look at the life of the individual who is seeking to please God. And he looks at the life of the individual who doesn't care about pleasing God, he's going to come to the conclusion and he's going to say, I've noticed something about you. You don't seem to deal with some of the issues that this guy over here does. You don't seem to get caught in some of the same traps as this guy over here. Why is that? Right?

Now I'm going to tell you ahead of time here that the last 3 verses of this chapter 27, 28 and 29, they're very challenging to understand so we're going to read them and we're going to take them all together. And we're going to try to make sense of them here. He says,

"²⁷ Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things- ²⁸ which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among

all these things I have not found. ²⁹ See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." And so these verses, when you take them all together, are an expression by Solomon of his disappointment with mankind. And for some reason, women are a little more disappointing to him than are men.

But Solomon recognizes here, and he says in these verses, and I'm paraphrasing here, he's saying, that man's heart has become corrupt, even though he was created good, if you will or by God, his heart became corrupt. And now he is affected by sin. And it is almost impossible to find somebody in this world who isn't affected by the schemes of man.

Ecclesiastes chapter 8. This will be the last chapter we'll look at tonight. He asks the question,

"Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? (He says) A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.

² I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. ³ Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. ⁴ For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?""

We don't live under a monarchy like they did in Solomon's day. But the king was the final say on all matters. And so he's basically just saying, don't be hasty to walk out of his presence. And by the way, don't get involved in something that the king might judge you for. Because if he decides to be harsh that day, who's going to stop him. Who's going to say, oh, that was a little harsh, your majesty. There's nobody that is going to intercede for you because the king is the final word. That's all he's saying.

Verse 5,

"Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. ⁶ For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. ⁷ For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be?" Well, that's what God does, isn't it? God tells us how it will be. We've been given in the Word of God, a revelation of how it will be. In fact, we have a whole book called, Revelation, which tells us how it will be in the end times. We know that. But apart from God, you don't. And so that's why he's saying this from the perspective of life under the sun.

Verse 8,

"No man has power to retain the spirit," And when he means *"retain the spirit,"* he's talking about retaining...When the spirit of man leaves the man he's dead. Okay? And that's what he's saying. *"No man has the power to retain... (his) spirit."*

And that's why he repeats it by saying, *"or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.* (These are things that will hold you and you have no power over them. He says,) ⁹ *All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.*

¹⁰ *Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they'd done such things. This also is* (emptiness, it's) *vanity.* ¹¹ *Because the sentence against (correction- an) evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil."*

Now there's an observation that's very interesting. He simply says, when someone commits a crime and we don't immediately sentence them or punish them for what they've done, he said, the heart of man is going to be quick to, to take advantage of that. And they're not going to learn from any kind of a lesson.

"Though (verse 12) a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him." And so even under the sun, the man under the sun can even tell that those people who are living to please God, it's going to go better for them.

¹³ *But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God."* Because a fear of God and a fear before God keeps a man from doing foolish things.

But he says in verse 14,

"There is a vanity that takes place on earth, (an emptiness) that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, (In other words, they get what the wicked deserve) and (he says,) there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous." Meaning, that they are wicked and yet they seem to get what is deserved by the righteous. And he said, *"I said that this also is (emptiness, it's) vanity."* So he saw that...

Solomon looked with his wisdom and he saw life and he said, it's not fair. It's not fair.

You've ever had your kids look up at you and say, that's not fair? I always use that as a teaching opportunity and just look them back in the eye and say, who said life was fair? Anybody... did I ever tell you that? There's this inborn thing inside of us. Nobody has to train us. Nobody has to tell us what's fair. We want fairness. We don't necessarily dish it out, but we want it ourselves. And when we don't get fairness, well, we're willing to call people on it.

But Solomon is basically saying here in verse 14, he's saying that, "I looked at life and I saw the righteous man getting what the wicked man deserves. And I've seen the wicked man getting what the righteous man deserves. And it's not fair. And it grieves me. It's emptiness.

Verse 15 he says,

"And I commend joy, (and this is the repeat of what he said a few times here now in this book, I commend joy,...) for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun."

He's saying it again. This is what the natural man says, there's nothing better than just to eat and drink and enjoy your life. Cause that's it. Cause that's when it's over, it's over. You might as well enjoy it. Right? Life apart from God.

But he ends the chapter this way. He says,

"¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out."

This is an interesting way to end the chapter, isn't it? Because Solomon is saying God and the works of God are unsearchable. And therefore unknowable by man under the sun. Now that doesn't negate the fact that the Book of Romans tells us that God has revealed Himself in nature. Okay. (Romans 1:20) In Romans chapter 1, Paul talks about the fact that even the very attributes of God are revealed through nature. In fact, the revelation is so clear that it says that man is without excuse for that revelation. But remember that's a revelation. In other words, that's God saying, I'm here. I'm here. Right?

What Solomon is saying here is that however much a man may try to understand God on his own, apart from the revelation of God - in other words, if God chooses to withdraw and withhold Himself, there is nothing man can do to understand God. Does that make sense? If God doesn't reveal Himself, that means there's no revelation. There's nothing. There is zilch.

And he says, even though a wise man claims to know, and believe me, many people have, "let me tell you about God." He says, he doesn't know and he can't find out. Because even if he has all the wisdom in the world, he still can't know God apart from God making Himself knowable. Okay.

Isn't that interesting? Everything, think about this, everything you and I know about God, I mean every single morsel of information, every understanding we have of God, comes from God Himself.

It is not by our own searching. It is not through our own seeking or understanding or discovery. It is by God, Himself and that is the point that Solomon is making.

Now, I believe this is to be a true statement. But what we do with this statement is what's important. Because if Solomon is right, and I believe he is, when he says man can't know anything that God hasn't revealed. He can't. Then that ought to change the way you and I look at humanistic philosophy that tries to figure out life. And that's what philosophy basically does, tries to figure out life.

Tries to come up with ideas and concepts of life that are going to help you and I figure out why man's ability to understand life, to know the business that is done on earth.

And that's what Solomon says in verse 16. I applied my heart to know the business of what is done on earth, and I realized I can't. And so humanistic philosophy, which is to know the business of man on earth, is bankrupt. And that's what Solomon is saying. And so you and I ought to look at humanistic philosophies, and we got to say, what do they know, right? What do they know?

And it also applies though, to man-made religious sort of institutions, and religious discoveries, and man-made religious traditions, and all these other things that... Because we have zero insight into God, apart from Him revealing Himself. Anything that we come up with, that isn't in the Bible, where did it come from? Well, if it's not here, (Pastor Paul indicates the Bible) it came from here (Pastor Paul points to the heart,) It came from here. (Pastor Paul points to the head) Right? Man's intellect or his own heart.

And that's not to say that every tradition man ever came up with is bad, necessarily. Or every institution, or thought, or process that he came up with is bad, necessarily. But it could be potentially dangerous. Because we have the tendency as human beings, to elevate what we've come up with, and put it on the par of Scripture. Right? And we start doing things the way we think they ought to be done. It doesn't matter if it's in the Bible or not. We just, and we've always been doing it that way. And so we decide that this is what we do. This is what we do.

It is our religious traditions that have grown out of years and years of activity and this and that. And it's just, it's the way we do things. But it has absolutely no reference necessarily to God's Word. It's something we've added to God's Word. Okay? We have to be very careful of those things. We have to be very careful. And we have to be very careful about defending them.

Every Christmas, I get nasty grams from literally around the world. People telling me that any kind of a celebration that we do of Christmas or the birth of Christ is pagan in nature, pagan in origin and that we are wrong to do it. The thing that I have to be careful about doing is defending, necessarily, our celebration of the birth of Christ through the Christmas holiday. Because there's nothing Biblical about that. It is true that Jesus was born and there's absolutely nothing wrong with celebrating that. Absolutely nothing wrong with it.

But there's nothing right about celebrating it on December 25th. Right? We ought to be celebrating it every day. Not to say that you have to go out and buy a present for your family every day. I mean, you'd be broke. But the point is there's nothing that's unique or holy about December 25th. Nothing whatsoever.

But people get hung up on that. You, if you celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th, you're a pagan. And you're... It's sinful. And all these things. I always ask them, if I do it on the 24th, I'm okay. How about if I pick October 15th? How about June 2nd, am I okay on that day? Well, let me think. I've got to find out if there was ever a pagan celebration on that day. Because if there was, then you're a pagan by association. And it doesn't make any sense. It's a ridiculous argument. But I've got to be careful not to join into a ridiculous argument. Okay?

Somebody who has engaged me on this, when in fact, biblically speaking, I really can't defend the celebration of Jesus Christ on December 25th. I can however, defend the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ on 365 days of the year. And if I choose to do it on December 25th, what's that to you? Right? What's that to you? Why do you care? Right?

Anyway, it's just, it's interesting, isn't it? But we do have to be careful. "Why do you do this? Why do you do that " Well, if it's not in the word, it's like, you know what, I'm not saying you have to do it. I do it because I love Jesus. That's all. That's all. I'm not telling you, you have to do it. If you don't do it that way, then you're wrong. I'm not going to say that. Because you see, that's not biblical. I'm not going to defend something that isn't biblical. Because that means I'm defending something made by man.

I'm not going to do that. That's an exercise in futility.