

A Practical Study of ECCLESIASTES

“Where Your Heart and Treasure Meet”

STUDY NUMBER SIX – Wisdom from the Pits; Digging Out of Depression; Thinking through Trauma – Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:17

Erma Bombeck said that:

Just as soon as I got my head together, my body went.
(source unknown)

And I’m sure that’s what you feel in the mid-life crisis.

Another guy said:

With a little luck I may survive my mid-life crisis...in time to
face old age.
(Los Angeles Times, 1977)

And I’m sure some of the rest of you feel that way too.

Someone said:

Middle age is the time in life when it takes you longer to rest
than to get tired.
(source unknown)

Somebody else said:

Middle age is the time in life when you try to use everything up Mother Nature gave you before God takes it away from you.

(source unknown)

As we come to today's study, we're finding Solomon in a deep depression.

I have called this study "Wisdom From the Pits" because he is really down.

Reuel Howe wrote a book called *The Creative Years*. It's published by Seabury Press and in the book he says:

Our crowd sure fits the description. We men are an ulcerous, tension-ridden, sex-obsessed, money-mad bunch who are too busy and too tired to enjoy life. And our women match us with their worry about diets and double chins, with the problems of modern women and modern children. Both of us are lonely and scared. We are lonely because we have lost our own youth with the hopes that we had and we're scared because of the oncoming youth that even now is pushing us aside. I guess we are afraid life is over for us and we need more than Geritol.
(source unknown)

The old body isn't as good as it used to be. Doc says that I am at the age when I've got to learn to live right. He means go

easy on the drinks, late nights, and too vigorous of exercise. He's right, sure. But that's not what gets me down. It's the tension, the competition with the other guy like Crowthers, who's crowding from the bottom. I'm in a big squeeze. The other fellows are in it but we don't let each other know that we are and it's sure lonely. If misery loves company, wonder why we don't admit it. It might relax things a bit. If I'm lucky, I'll enjoy the tidy finish of a heart attack. Otherwise, I'll enjoy the more moderate blessing of uselessness and senility until the benefits of social security.

(source unknown)

Boy what a tragic, depressive statement from somebody who realizes he's on a treadmill with no return.

One of the burning problems of the mid-life crisis which develops is the problem of depression. And it's settles in a most strange and unexpected way.

I had a chance to talk to a guy at a funeral here about a year ago. Married to a very beautiful woman and they're very successful and very happy at Hide-a-Way Lake. We talked about Jesus Christ and he did not have a relationship with Christ. And as we were talking, he was a pallbearer at the funeral, we were riding along in the car because it was one of his very good friends. I could tell that the guy really had something hurting inside. Although from the eyes of the world, he had everything. He had a beautiful home, beautiful wife, and all he had to do every day was get up and face the

golf course and enjoy the benefits of everything he had inherited and enjoy it.

It was a shock to me, just as I was getting ready to leave for the Northwest in July, to have his wife call me and say that he just blew his brains out.

She said “he was a little depressed.” And I could never have believed that he would have done this.

You know, sometimes we kind of hide depression and it doesn't come out. David was experiencing depression to the very depth in Psalm 42. Have you ever read that Psalm, recognizing that he is in the pits at that point. Listen to some of the statements he makes.

What has happened is, his son Absalom has rebelled against him and he has taken the kingdom and he's driving his dad off into the wilderness. And his dad is out here with the kingdom going in the hands of his rebellious son and he's by himself. He is a displaced king. And he writes Psalm 42 and this is what he says:

Psalm 42:1-11

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

[In other words, he's out there all by himself.]

My tears have been my food
day and night,
While men say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
These things I remember
as I pour out my souls:
How I used to go with the multitude,
leading the procession to the house of God,
With shouts of joy and thanksgiving
among the festive throng.
Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
My Savior and
my God.
My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
From the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
All your waves and breakers
have swept over me.

[It's just like, “Man one hit me and then another hit me and another hit me!” And says they've “swept over me.”]

By day the Lord directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
I'm praying to the God of my life.
I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
My bones suffer mortal agony
as the foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
Why are you cast down, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

There are two books that I would suggest if I push your button tonight in this study on depression.

The first one is called *Happiness is a Choice* by Paul Meier. That's probably the best work on the subject of depression.

You're all afraid to write it down less you reveal the fact that you're at that [point]. I'm aware. I'm sorry. Just kind of remember it upstairs, alright, so you don't have...It's kind of like raising your hand. It's kind of embarrassing.

The other one is called *Spiritual Depression* by Martin Lloyd Jones. That's a classic.

Both of them are good. I've read them both and they're excellent works to go along with this study.

How does depression manifest itself? Well, one of the key ways you can tell whether or not you're depressed is your deep desire to escape responsibility.

To David it was:

Psalm 139:7-9 (paraphrased)

Where can I go to flee your presence?
If I even go to hell,
 you're there.
If I escape to the furthest ends of the earth,
 you're there.
I can't get away from You God
 but I would really like to.
I'd like to take the wings in the morning,
 and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea.

I asked myself the question while I was preparing for this particular study:

What are the causes for depression?

Here you are going through life and even being successful and somewhat happy with circumstances, yet what causes the depression?

I think there are several things:

1. People who are loners have a tendency to be depressed more than others because friendship has a way of solving the problem of depression. So you could say LONELINESS would probably be one of the biggest.
2. ADVERSITY—remember what David says? “The wave hit me, the wave hit me, the wave hit me.” And it’s just like you get up from one and you get knocked down again. Adversity has a way of doing that to us.
3. CRITICISM has that way of doing it. You’re going to see that in today’s study. He says “don’t pay attention to what people are saying about you.”

I mean, if you let criticism get through to you man, it’s going to eat your lunch. You need to hide like a rhinoceros. Just keep on moving and forget the criticism. Prove them wrong.

But depression leads there, especially in women. If women have got to live with constant criticism from their husband, it drives them into the depths of depression.

And many perfectionist husbands do a great deal of that. Although they feel like they’re ministering to the well-being of their wives, they’re driving them deeper and deeper into a pit because a woman cannot live with criticism without becoming bitter and resentful and non-responsive. So criticism does it.

4. Your sense of SELF-WORTH. You just don't feel like you're worth anything to anybody. And you go through these times of feeling "Good grief, what contribution can I make to anybody?"

I remember Doug, this guy that we buried last week, at 43 called me about four or five weeks ago on the phone. He was just crying. He was just overwhelmed. He said "You know, I just wish I could do something right for somebody just once."

You know it was just like life had just gotten him, tore him up. And his sense of self-worth was zip. I mean, his kids were down on him, his wife was down on him and business was not doing well and in those tears I heard a statement that caused me to realize this guy is really down

The fifth is:

5. No FUTURE. There is just no future for me to look forward to.

And when you think in terms of those five causes, any one of them or a combination of them can really drive you into the pits.

Can I say that in the midst of a mid-life crisis, those five things are really the things that culminate to create the problem? And I think those are the five things that lead us to the study for today.

David says in that 42nd Psalm: “God is my Rock.” And that’s a good thought to think about. “Hope thou now in God.”

How am I going to deal with this?

1. Examine your CAUSES. Get them out there. What is it that causes it?
2. Then begin to act POSITIVE. For instance, if you’re suffering pain, pain can lead to depression. Turn your pain to a person.

Hebrews 5:8

Who though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.

You know, I always have this reminder that when I’m hurting real bad physically, I haven’t been nailed to a cross yet. You know.

Christ is able to minister to my needs if I will focus:

OFF OF THE PAIN and

ON THE PERSON.

Maybe you need to TURN:

from the BED to the BIBLE,

from the DIAPERS to the CROWN (that you're going to get when you receive the Lord out there),

from a DIVORCE to a NEW DIRECTION that God's trying to take you.

Get your mind off of:

WHAT IS to WHAT SHALL BE.

The KEY to solving depression is to feast on the POSITIVE—to rebuild your mindset and fill your mind with anticipation and expectation, not on how bad things are right now. Get your focus out there on something positive and begin to move in that direction.

Now you're going to find in today's study that that's exactly what Solomon does.

Martin Lloyd Jones in his book *Spiritual Depression* says:

You know how you're supposed to solve depression? You're supposed to solve depression by talking to yourself rather than allowing yourself to talk to you.

Now that's what David says. He says "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" He's talking to himself.

Now, you think Martin Lloyd Jones is crazy at this point. But you stop and think about it. As soon as you wake up in the morning, somebody's talking to you.

“Oh my God! It's morning.”

“Oh no. I've got to meet so-and-so today.”

Gee, what a neat way to start the day. Self is saying: “Oh, this is going to be a terrible, terrible day.” And you're whipped before you get out of the sack.

And as a result of that, self is talking to you. The key to the solution, according to Martin Lloyd Jones, is talk to self.

“Self, what a fantastic day! When you consider the alternatives I get to live another one. And I'm looking forward to it with great excitement. God, what do You have for me this morning?”

And with that kind of positive mindset, he says, you will begin to solve the problem.
(source unknown)

Now there's one other thing that I would share with you before we actually just see the verses begin to jump off of the page. And that is:

The solution to depression is the same solution to worry.

We have been studying in the Sermon on the Mount this week, wealth and worry. And I have shown my students that the two go together. And I've also shared with the students that what you're worrying about, you haven't turned over to the Lord yet and what you're worrying about is unbelief in the Father's ability to handle your circumstances.

I'm saying the same thing about depression. At the heart of depression is unbelief in God's ability to handle those things so you've got a right to be down.

And if you'll recognize it as the sin of unbelief and you'll deal with it and you realize that nothing's too hard for the Lord. And if you just turn it over to Him and get your grubby hands off of it, you'd begin to find a real blessing.

Charlie Jones is probably the most positive, refreshing salesman that I've ever heard speak. When he gets up to motivate at sales conferences, he shoots a gun first of all to get your attention. And it just blows you away. And he says "Now that I've got your attention, I want to say something to you." And he is totally positive.

This is one of his statements. And I think he knows how to handle the problems of life overwhelming you.

(Life Is Tremendous by Charlie Jones)

Flexible Planning says: plan on your plan going wrong so that you're ready with an alternate plan because "That's my plan!"

Do you know that a lot of people are miserable because they expect everything to go right? They're asking for misery! I expect things to go wrong, and so I'm happy all the time! A smart guy asked me one time: "What if something goes right?" Easy; I can work it in I haven't had much trouble with that! Try this tomorrow morning when you start out, say "Lord, send me some miserable problems today." I've done it, and no sooner did I get started than I said, "You sure answered that prayer in a hurry." You may say you don't have to pray such a prayer—the miserable problems come anyway. But you aren't prepared for them, are you?"

Flexible Planning says to have a plan that enables you to roll with the punches, to adapt and to adjust. Be learning to capitalize on things that go wrong, making them stepping stones of progress. That makes the "wrong" things "right," an exchange that anyone should appreciate.
(source unknown)

Alright, now how does that bring us to where we are?

In study #1 Solomon said:

Ecclesiastes 1:2

Meaningless, meaningless. Everything is meaningless.

Boy, talk about being down. That's the foundation for a mid-life crisis.

1. And then he raises **THREE SUPPOSITIONS** in chapter 1. He says:

- There's no gain from what I'm doing,
- There's nothing new under the sun—everybody's tried it already, and
- Nobody's going to remember that I'm here anyway so no big deal.

2. So in chapter 2 he launches in to trying pleasure—wine, women and song.

Then he tries big projects—building homes and getting involved in the silver and gold market and in ranching and the whole bit. And he comes to the end of that and he's frustrated—"all this that I've acquired I've got to leave to somebody's that not going to enjoy it and appreciate it."

Now you talk about being in a frustrating set of circumstances.

3. Then that leads us to study #3 where he says:

Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a time and a season for every activity under the sun."

I'm bumping into God's sovereign purpose every time I turn around. He's doing this and He's doing that and it's the quiet frustration of a guy who doesn't like things the way they are but he knows he's going to be held accountable for it and so it's driving him up the wall.

4. In study #4 he loses his job—caught in the corporate squeeze. The powerful people are oppressing those who are under them.

And he says “On top of all of that, I'm not going to get excited about religion in the midst of all of this. Because to do that is to make some statements and some vows under stress that I really don't want to do.”

5. Study #5 we talked about the misfortunes of having a fortune last week.

When everything seems to fall apart the next thing to do is to settle for materialistic goals. To live with only wealth in mind—“eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”

And we said last week it's not wrong to be wealthy. We said it's wrong to get your priorities so botched up that you love it and that that's what you live for because that makes you increasingly more selfish. And that ministers to the mid-life crisis because you are only looking at material things as little toys to entertain you on your way to your eternal destiny.

6. And that brings us to today's study. We left him down.

He said last week that it's, you know...to be unborn is better than to be born. You talk about really being in the pits. There he is.

Let's get him out of depression today. At least, let's get on the way to some of the solution.

Thinking through the trauma—chapter 7, verse 1.

So if you've got your study guide, well that long introduction and that brief summary of the study, we're going to get out of the pit now. See if we can do that.

Verse 1.

v. 1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

Oftentimes in a mid-life crisis, you lose your good name. And boy that hurts like the dickens!

People lose their confidence in you. If in your mid-life crisis you're becoming selfish, you become erratic in the paying of your bills. People soon want cashier checks before they do business with you. Your credit line goes. And sometimes your character goes. Especially if in the midst of your mid-life crisis you're involved with another woman or another man and you're involved in other circumstances that are tending to make you selfish and make you unethical in lying about what

you're going to do in your business and what you're going to do here for this person and then you don't do it. You lose your good name.

And Solomon says:

“A good name is better than fine perfume.”

But he also says:

“and the day of death is better than the day of birth.”

The only person that can say that is a Christian because I'm looking forward to my “day of death.”

And as a believer, Paul says:

Philippians 1:23

...I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;

Because:

1 Corinthians 2:9

...eye hasn't seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him.

And from a positive point of view, I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said:

I'm joyful because tomorrow I might be in heaven!

That is very biblical. Christians can only say that.

He's not saying that as a Christian. He's saying that from the pits. He's saying:

"the day of death is better than the day of birth."

Boy talk about being down. I just as soon get out of this whole mess just as quick as I can.

He is really suffering.

Robert Browning said:

I walked a mile with Pleasure,
 she chattered all the way
but left me none the wiser
 for all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow,
 and not a word said she
but oh the things I learned from her,
 when Sorrow walked with me.
(source unknown)

Look at verse 2. He just adds to it.

v. 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.

What happens in the mid-life crisis? You realize that you have already lived more than you're going to live. And that now you are living the second half. I mean, we've had the band march and we've had half-time and you're in third quarter babe. And that is flat scary.

Because what you're living now is less than what you've already lived. And he's saying death is an inescapable event. We're all going to face it! And boy when you get to the middle you begin to realize it. You know and your friends start flicking it in and passing off the scene and pretty soon you begin to start reading the obituaries to see how old the people are that died. You know, so you see whether you can praise the Lord for a few extra years for yourself or whether you're getting scared that you're getting close.

“The living should take this to heart.”

That's true. One thing that happens at the house of morning is that your pride is checked. You're realizing that this is an event you can't escape. You can argue about it. You can try to bury it in the subconscious but friend, one of these days a minister's going to be standing up talking about you. And your shell is going to be laying in that box over there. And you're gone.

And to be absent from that body is to stand face-to-face with the God that you better get into relationship with or you're going to be in trouble because there's only one and there's only one way to get rightly related to Him and that's through His Son, Jesus Christ.

And Solomon's scared! He said "I'd better go to the house of mourning and learn some wisdom here."

Verse 3.

v. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.

"Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart."

v. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

Well at least he's got a balanced perspective.

He says "in the house of mourning" I learned some lessons.

You know, when you're going through a crisis another way that pride does this, is to go sing songs with the fools, and to drink the booze at the bar. And escape it for a period of time—put it off, tell jokes, laugh it up, have a good time. But when all the booze is gone and all the buddies have left and there

are no more jokes, you're left there by yourself with a hangover to think about "man, I am one day closer to that time as a result of what I've done."

And so Solomon right now is down there, he's facing it, it's hurting, and he says "I'd rather go to the house of mourning" and...

v. 5 It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools.

"It is better"—verse 5—"to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools."

v. 6 Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.

I'd rather take a rebuke at this time. I'd rather face it head on than to try to escape it by all the laughter and the carrying on.

Verse 7.

v. 7 Extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

Well what you try to do to escape it? Well extortion and bribery are ways to do it. We've seen the government do that and the tragedy of it.

Invariably the pride of a man in the midst of a mid-life crisis

will do ANYTHING to avoid surrender and submission.

I would say that the hardest thing in the world is to give up. The hardest thing in the world is to admit that I'm wrong and I need to turn it over to somebody else.

I would use extortion. I would use bribery. I would use anything I could to avoid facing head-on the situation.

It takes a real man to suck it up and to surrender and to submit.

Solomon isn't there yet. And that's exactly why he's in the pits today.

Verse 8.

v. 8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.

Now that doesn't communicate at all does it?

You look at that verse and it says "The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride." But watch it. There is a load of truth in that verse.

What he's telling you is that the end of the crisis is better than the beginning.

It's always true in any trial you go through in your life. The

end of it is “Shwew! Boy God, I’m glad that’s over!”

The end of it is better than the beginning when you got into it.

When you have learned to relate to it, and you’ve solved it, and you’re on your way you’re saying: “Boy, oh boy! I’ll never get in that mess again!” And you put it behind you.

Now it says next:

“patience is better than pride.”

Boy that is a loaded statement!

What happens when you face trauma in your life?

Why me? Why this? Why now? God, I don’t deserve it!

You resent it.

What’s that? That’s PRIDE saying: “Boy God, is that the way You treat Your sons and daughters? Frankly I don’t like it and I’m not thinking that I want to do that.”

The tendency when it gets rough is to be bitter and resentful toward God and think you’ve got an excuse for not getting rightly related to Him.

That’s pride.

What is the other solution?

PATIENCE.

I was running with a guy on Sunday, he'd run in the 10k on Saturday and he was stiff and I was kind of...

He's 20 years my junior and so I was going to loosen him up by running 3 or 4 miles, just having a good time together. And we're running, he's a new runner and I love to run with new runners because they get so excited about running and he's already talking about a marathon now. He's got his 10k behind him. And so we were visiting while we were running around the track.

And he said: "You know, one thing I've learned about running is in order to go a long distance you've just got to have a lot of patience."

I said: "That's neat you would use that word."

Do you know in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1 it says:

Hebrews 12:1

Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with *hupomeno*...

Do you know what that word is? Remaining under the stress.

The Greek is translated patience.

Hebrews 12:1 (cont'd)

...the race that is set before us.

May I say to you, the key ingredient in solution to depression and solution to the trauma in your life is *hupomeno*. And before you can have patience you've got to surrender and accept it as from God's hand and that's patience.

You've got a choice. You can take pride and say "Why me? Why this?" and get bitter and resentful and just make everybody else pay the price for you being all out of sorts because God's dealing with you. Or you can *hupomeno*. You can put yourself under the stress and learn what God's trying to teach you.

You will never manifest patience until you have submitted to that thorn that's in your flesh. Until you face that problem head on.

Hebrews 10:36

You have need of patience after you've done the will God that you might receive the promise.

What is the key to patience?

1. Surrender—it is turning yourself over to this and to God to work in your life.
2. What can I learn from this?—that's a big step.
3. How can I grow from this experience?—another big step.
4. How can I bear fruit in the lives of others because of what I'm going through?—another big step.
5. God, I'm concerned about how you can get glory out of these circumstances that I'm facing.

Isn't that fantastic? That's patience.

“You have need of it” the writer of the book of Hebrews says.

1. I've got to submit in order to get it—surrender.

But then:

2. What can I learn?
3. How can I grow?
4. How can I bear fruit?
5. How can You get glory from it?

Then you have come to patience.

Now I'm going to give you four words. These four words all start with "P." Here is the solution to trauma so you don't end up in depression, ok:

1. Put down the word PRIDE because invariably your pride is hurt. That's just a normal human response like falling off a log. If we're just being honest today, we're saying "God why this?" or "Why now?" or "Why me?"
2. Then put down the word PATIENCE because I think in the process, if you're a believer, you're going to bounce off of that thing and you're going to begin to accept it.

The level of your maturity will be from PRIDE to PATIENCE—how soon you submit.

3. Then third, put down the word PURPOSE because from pride to patience, you will begin to discover God's purpose in that.

And then finally:

4. Put down the word PEACE because when you get to that point, man you are at rest.

Isaiah 26:3

Thou will keep him in perfect peace his mind is stayed on thee because he trusts me.

No matter how difficult it is, you have passed from pride to patience to purpose to peace and you're at rest in what God is allowing to happen in your heart.

And that's why James 1 says when you're going through trial, James 1:2-3 says:

James 1:2-3

Deep it pure joy and let patience have its perfect work.

Let the process go on so that you can be a better person as a result of it.

Verse 9.

v. 9 Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

You see what he says? When it comes, don't get ticked off. And especially, don't let the sun go down on your wrath (Ephesians 5). Because if you get mad at God and then you sleep on it, you're going to get madder than ever.

You guys know that with your women, don't you? You get ticked off at them for something and then you go to bed and you sleep on it and then you're more ticked off in the morning than you were and so communication is broken down. And then you're really at opposite poles and you've got a mess to

clean up.

The quickest thing to do is to just suck it up and go for it and say “Ok honey, I made a mistake.” That’s the hardest thing in the world to say. “I’m sorry. I made a mistake. I popped off. Forgive me!” Get it dealt with before the sun goes down or man you’re in trouble.

It gets worse. And what he says here is don’t get “quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of the fool.”

I remember reading David Augsburger’s book.

(The Freedom of Forgiveness by David Augsburger)

He told about a guy who wandered into a car on the train and sat down and in the reserved seat of somebody else. He didn’t even know it. Then the conductor came in to take the tickets and he just bawled this guy out. Just chewed him out and told him to get out of that car. One of the other guys was standing by and said “Why didn’t you bust that guy in the mouth?” He says “Oh no. If that man can stand himself all of his life, sure I can take it for a couple of minutes.”

(source unknown)

Somebody has said:

When you are in the right, you can afford to keep your temper.
When you are in the wrong, you can’t afford to lose it.

(source unknown)

You know? Be open to God about it.

I'm telling you, temper is usually a cover for a rebellious heart in a crisis. And invariably, temper will come out in verbiage that is not very much fun to listen to. And your only covering a rebellious heart when you get ticked off and you lash out at God in that situation.

Now, look at verse 10. I love this! Did you know this was in the Bible? Huh? I didn't before I read it.

v.10 Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?” For it is not wise to ask such questions.

As soon as you ask that question, “Where are the good old days?” you drive yourself into depression.

I mean you're saying “Gosh! Those days were better than these! I'm on the skids hitting for the fence! It's worse today than it was yesterday.”

Can I tell you something? There's one thing you've got to learn in your life and that is never to look back. I mean hind sight is 20/20 all the time.

And why look back?

Paul's got it—Philippians 3:12.

Philippians 3:13

Forgetting those things which are behind, press on to those things which are in front.

Don't look back! Get excited about the future.

I think it was Winston Churchill who said:

When the past quarrels with the present, there can be no future.

(source unknown)

And when you're always crying over spilt milk and saying "Oh man, if I'd have just done it this way." And you're indulging all this self-pity about "Oh I had just done that" or "If I'd just married him" or "If I'd just done this" or "If I had just taken that job." You've got all these IF's.

No wonder you're in the pits. Why don't you get up tomorrow and say "This is the first day of the rest of my life. And man am I excited about it!"

Postmortems are always going to lead you to depression and they won't change a single thing as far as the outcome is concerned.

I put Philippians 3:13 there and Hebrews 12:2 alongside of that tenth verse.

Don't say "Where were the old days?" or "Why were the old days better than these?"

Hebrews 12:2

Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Verse 11.

v.11 Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun.

"Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and it benefits those who see the sun."

Behind every cloud there is a silver lining. The sun's still shining, it's just dark for you right now!

Wisdom is your inheritance! When you come to God, according to James chapter 1, you're supposed to ask Him for wisdom to relate to your trial. James 1:5 says:

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom [that's in the context of trial] let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and

upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

You cannot come and ask for wisdom until you turn it over and you submit and surrender to Him. And when you do that, then you're on the road to being able—in the context of the trial—to relate to it.

That's why Solomon prayed for a discerning heart. He's the guy that wrote this. And that's why I believe that he finally actually came out of the whole thing.

Verse 12.

v.12 Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.

And money can't ever do that.

You just surrender and accept before you can ever ask, and the wisdom will be yours.

v.13 Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?

One of the things that's been pulsating through these first 7 or 8 chapters is been that little statement:

“this is his lot” or

“there’s a time and a season for every activity”

“what God’s done,”

“you can’t make it crooked if its straight” and

“you can’t make it straight if its crooked.”

You’ve got to accept it because God did it that way.

I put Psalm 37:23, 24:

Psalm 37:23, 24

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,
and He directs his way;
even if he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down,
for the Lord upholds him with His hand.

Your steps are ordered my friend. Your life is also known to Him. He’s got the days of your life in His little red appointment book on His desk. And when the time comes for the Executive Director of the Universe to say “turn out the lights the party’s over,” friend you are going to go. And you aren’t going to have anything to say about it.

You can’t extend it. You can’t shorten it. God knows exactly when it’s going to happen. And you can’t straighten it or change it.

OK, what is wisdom then? In that kind of situation?

If you want to be a happy, fulfilled person, get out of the pits of your depression, get out of the midst of your crisis, then wisdom involves cooperation.

How many times have you told your kids “If you would just do what I said, that would solve all the problems!”

I’ve told my kids a hundred times in their growing up “I have only one purpose in life and that’s to bless you and make you happy and hope that you will be a successful adult. Now if you can argue with my purpose then you can be disobedient.”

And I hear God saying “Anderson, I’ve got the same plans for you. Now let me have the reigns of your life, let me drive it like I want to, let me put you where I want you to be, and let me do in you and through you what I want to do. Just turn it over to me babe and let me have it because I know what’s best for you.”

And I’ve got to realize that the words I’ve just said to my kids are coming right back to eat my lunch.

Verse 14.

v.14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

“When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.”

Some people will never accept that. They will not accept the fact that God can bring trauma into your life to teach you something.

Alright, how am I supposed to relate? Here I am sitting here tonight, man the market's up a jillion points yesterday and I'm all excited. I'm happy! I'm fulfilled! Really thrilled. Times are good, go ahead and be happy.

Alright, the market drops out of sight. Clear to the bottom. Lost everything I had in the crazy thing. Pet dog died, kids have got the flu, all the people are coming to Bible study, I'm sitting here in the pits. What am I supposed to do now?

“Consider.”

“...consider: God made one as well as the other.”

When it gets rough, start to consider what God's trying to teach you. That's all he's saying.

I would always pray Psalm 139:23, 24:

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

try me and know my thoughts....
then lead me in the way everlasting.

“Consider”—God works all things together for God—even the bad and the good.

So why is He allowing this trauma and this trial to come into my life? That’s the way to really get on with it and learn what He’s trying to teach you and to get out of the pits and quit feeling sorry for yourself.

Verse 15.

v.15 In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

“In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.”

You know, that must really hassle him.

Have you ever wondered why a righteous man dies early? The Lord just can’t stand to be separated from him any longer.

Enoch walked with God and the Lord took him. Man, one night the Lord just says “Enoch, come on. This is too rich. I just can’t leave you down there any longer. I want to be with

you.”

Why does He let a wicked man live so long? It’s because the Lord doesn’t want him to die without Jesus Christ. He’s going to give him all the years that He can possibly give him to give him a chance to respond. And many guys live to be old reprobates, 70-80-90 years old, and who never respond. But it’s the Lord’s mercies that he’s not consumed.

2 Peter 3:9

...the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

So some of these old reprobates live long, long lives—not because they were living according to God’s plan but because God graciously gave them many, many opportunities to respond but they just flicked it in. They continued to live that way. I think that’s the solution.

Verse 16.

v.16 Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise—why destroy yourself?

“Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise—why destroy yourself?”

Well that kind of shook you up. “Don’t be overrighteous.”

Well you know these guys that are overrighteous. I mean, they're the self-righteous turkeys that don't drink and don't dance and don't smoke and don't go to the movies and don't go with the girls that do. You know and they're proud to tell you about it. They'll tell you how much of their income they give to the church and they tell you how they sacrifice here and there.

He says don't be overrighteous like that where you're always talking about self-righteousness.

“...neither be overwise”

Don't start to try to anticipate how God's going to do it. You get out there in front and try to anticipate it and put on automatic pilot and I'll tell you, you're going to have a crash on the freeway.

Some days are going to be gravel and some days are going to be stone. As [John] Denver said: “Life ain't no easy freeway, there's some gravel on the ground.” You're going to find it!

“...why destroy yourself?”

v.17 Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool—why die before your time?

“Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool—why die before your time?”

v.18 It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all [extremes].

“It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all [extremes].”

And don't turn the page.

Some of you are new tonight and you've got ready to turn the page because you read the Bible too fast.

And that's the unpardonable sin.

I wanted you just to underline that last phrase because that is the KEY THOUGHT.

He's saying:

“The man who fears God will avoid all [extremes].”

Don't go way over here in this direction and then come way back over here in this direction.

Realize that you're WELL-doing in EVIL-doing may be OVER-doing and it'll end up being your UNDOING.

In essence, that's what he's saying.

Turn the page for the rest of the story.

Boy there's some great verses here to finish so if you checked it in on me and fell asleep, come back now. Just let me wrap it up. OK?

Verse 19.

v.19 Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.

“Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.”

v.20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

Boy isn't that great comfort?

Because Solomon says that:

“There is not a righteous man on the earth who does what is right and never sins.”

It means that we have a need for a righteousness which is ours in Jesus Christ. And I want to talk about that for just a minute.

In Romans chapter 3 it says:

Romans 3:10, 23

As it is written, there is none righteous, no not even one.
There is none who understands...all have sinned and
come short of the glory of God.

The only hope for us is a perfect righteousness provided for us
in the person of Jesus Christ.

Our righteousness's are like filthy rags in God's sight. That
which is highly esteemed among men is abomination unto the
sight of God. It's got rejection stamped on it and friend you're
not going to make it if you think that you're going to be
righteous enough to be accepted by God.

There is no way you're going to make it. You know what God's
righteous standard is? Let me put it in baseball language.

In God's standard it's batting a 1,000.

Now you know some of those guys, we just got through the
World Series—some of those guys, pretty good hitters, hit 200
250. They're standing up there once in a while striking out,
aren't they? They get 1 in 4 times at the plate. And there's
some of those guys—pretty good hitters—hit up in the 300s,
you know. They're getting 1 in 3.

Oh, there might be that unique hitter who hits somewhere in

the 400s. That would be incredible. George Brett nearly did it for a season. But can you realize that he was, you know, striking out once every two times at least and a little bit more

God's saying, "Friend, when you get to the plate, if you're going to fulfill My righteousness, you've got to hit every time."

And you and I know we haven't.

Romans 3:23

all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

How are you going to solve your dilemma? You're going to have to reach out and take One who has perfectly fulfilled the law and batted a 1,000 and died for your broken law, that's all. And will provide, in fact, His righteousness.

This verse is so neat because here it is in the midst of all of this trauma, he's beginning to say there's not one person in the world who is righteous and who never sins.

Now don't you love verse 21?

v.21 Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—

"Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—"

When you're in the crisis, you face all kinds of criticism. People are picking at you. And I'll tell you some of the most self-righteous people are the Christians who when they find you're in trouble, have got 17 warnings, 6 sermons, 2 songs, a poem and a long index finger buried in your chest saying "My, my. What you must have done to deserve what you're going through!" And boy it brings comfort.

And then they put their little band-aid: "God works all things together for good to them that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose!" And we go away and man we are in the pits. You feel isolated.

You've got to say "Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words will never hurt me!"

Don't be vulnerable to what people are saying about you.

Women especially get this. They've got this innate sense of insecurity when somebody says something.

For instance, here's a man and a wife sitting at the table. Man, we've just had a fabulous steak dinner. And I'm saying to them as they're sitting there "Where did you get that meat?" And the guy says "At the Safeway." And she says "Why, what's wrong with it?"

I mean, it's just the way the woman is.

It was Paxton Hood who says:

When we advance in life, we find that the tongue of man creates nearly all the mischief in the world.

(source unknown)

Someone has said:

If you ever knew what one said about the other, there wouldn't be two friends left in the world.

(source unknown)

Probably true.

“You might even hear your servant cursing you.”

Verse 22.

v.22 for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

“for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.”

v.23 All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise”—but this was beyond me.

“All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise”—but this was beyond me.”

He's just saying “I cannot understand life.”

Boy, when you come to that point you're on the way.

v.24 Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound—who can discover it?

“Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound—who can discover it?”

v.25 So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

“So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.”

v.26 I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare.

“I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape from her, but the sinner she will ensnare.”

You look at that and say “How in the world did Solomon get a

fast woman in here?” I mean, that’s what it looks like, isn’t it?

Well in the book of Proverbs, when Solomon is talking about wisdom of this world he always talks about the prostitute or the woman. He epitomizes earthly wisdom as the fast, loose woman.

I’ve got to say that gals because of what he’s going to say here in just a minute. I mean, it’s got to be wisdom because if it’s the females, we’re really going to put you down. So you gals better be pretty excited for the interpretation of the passage.

Where is he? He says: “I’m trying to find the scheme of things I’m trying to see this overriding principal that’s going to get me out of this and help me understand things.”

And then he says: “You know, the world has got all kinds of wisdom to offer. I mean humanism, evolution, philosophies, speculations, all kinds of natural explanations for why we’re here and how life is. And you can almost take your pick! I mean, there are cults all over the place that you can go to try to find your truth.”

He says that’s like seductive women. To try to draw you away from the truth that is yours in God.

I put James 3:15-18 here. It says:

James 3:15-18

This wisdom is not which comes down from above but its earthly, natural, and demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exists, there is disorder in every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is pure, then peaceable, and gentle, and reasonable, full of mercy, and good fruits...

Verse 27.

v.27 “Look,” says the Teacher, “this is what I have discovered: Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things—

“Look,’ says the Teacher, ‘this is what I have discovered: Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things—”

See, he’s still with the subject.

v.28 while I was still searching but not finding—I found one [upright] man among a thousand, but not one [upright] woman among them all.

See! You’ve got to get that straight! I mean, you’d be in trouble!

Solomon said:

“I found one [upright] man”—I found Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. I found some great patriarchs who had the truth but I

didn't find one woman.

Do you realize there is not one female who's responsible for writing any one book of the Bible?

Well, yes, he did. But that came after Solomon.

So in his mind, when he's thinking of it—and it's not women/female. He's speaking of wisdom.

He's saying "in all these explanations, I'm beginning to find truth in the men of scripture but I'm not finding truth in the philosophies and the explanations of the natural man."

He said that does not bring the solution to the problem.

Verse 29—this is so neat.

v.29 This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes."

Evolution—Humanism—Fatalism—you name it.

8:v. 1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.

"Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard

appearance.”

v. 2 Obey the king’s command, I say, because you took an oath before God.

The key is learning to be submissive to authority here, then you’ll get your wisdom.

v. 3 Do not be in a hurry to leave the king’s presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.

That’s the Lord!

“he will do whatever he pleases.”

Don’t fight Him! There are times and seasons.

v. 4 Since a king’s word is supreme, who can say to him, “What are you doing?”

v. 5 Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

v. 6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man’s misery weighs heavily upon him.

Why is a man in misery?

I'm saying a man's misery is in measure to his resistance to God's sovereign purpose. And that's what leads to the crisis. And that's what he's saying here.

You know, just submit!

One little kid was told to go stand in the corner because of something he'd done and he wouldn't do it. He just wouldn't do it.

Finally the teacher just took him right over there and he says "Sit in the corner for a while."

And he says "Well, I may be sitting on the outside but I'm standing up on the inside."

You know, I mean he's just totally rebellious to the situation.

I can remember here a couple of three years ago I started losing my eyesight. I had worn contacts forever and didn't realize that salty sweat and racquetball and everything else and running was distorting my corneas with these hard contact lenses. And finally the doctor says "Anderson, we can no longer leave you beautiful. You're going to have to wear bifocals."

I said "Over my dead body will I wear those dumb things." I said "Old people wear those."

He says “You are maturing Anderson.”

You know I went home with these crazy things and I put them in the drawer. I wasn't going to wear them. I was just going to stand up on the outside and sit down on the inside. Read my books when I got close, in the study by myself. Put those crazy things on.

But I realized, here's a guy who's trained to know. My vision—he wants to help me. He wants to solve the problem and I was really having a problem.

Now I got a choice. Am I going to submit to what he says? Or am I just going to do it myself? And finally I realized that I needed to do what he told me to do.

You know someone of the writers in *Happiness Is a Choice* gives you the solution to depression.

Today you're sitting here and you're saying “I can't do this” and “I can't do that.” Some of you are saying “I just can't receive Christ.” Some of you are saying “I just can't give up the situation. I just can't turn it over.” And the key to the solution of your depression is to change all of your CAN'Ts to WON'Ts.

I won't surrender to Jesus Christ.

I won't give up that relationship.

I won't do that.

Then you've got a true picture of where you're really coming from.

Basically it's your pride deep inside that's been hurt. And until you turn it over, friend, you're going to continue to be in trouble.

And verse 7 says:

v. 7 Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?

v. 8 No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

v. 9 All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt.

v. 10 Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

v. 11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.

Boy we know that now. You can plead insanity and get away with it.

v. 12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

Boy that is coming to the point of submission to authority.

And I put Psalm 1 there:

Psalm 1:1, 2 & 4

Blessed is the man
that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...
His delight is in the law of the Law,
and in his law he meditates day and night. ...
The wicked are not so.
They are like the chaff,
the wind drives away.

They're here for a little time. There's going to be accountability for those who are reverent before God.

v. 13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

Boy what statements!

v. 14 There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

You know the guy who spoke at the funeral for little George the IV—3 ½. [He] stood up and made the following statement.

“God is not fair.”

And I thought, I don’t like that. And then he explained it.

God is not fair, but God is always kind. God never has to be fair in our sight.

And he used the parable of the guy who came to get somebody to work for him early in the morning. And they went out into the field. Then he came back at the third hour and found some more people to go work for him. They went to work for him the third hour and then some more guys came to work for him—it’s in Matthew chapter 20—in the sixth hour and then somebody else came to work for him in the ninth hour. And somebody came to work for him in the eleventh hour, just before the day was over. And when he paid them, he gave

them all the same thing. And they accused him of not being fair.

But God is God and He can do what He wants to do. And who are we to say how He spends His fund and how He orders our lives and how He works out the details. From our perspective it looks like God isn't fair. But God is kind and He'll always fulfill His promises and bless those who will submit to His way of doing things.

Verse 15

v. 15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.

“...the life that God has given him.”

v. 16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth—his eyes not seeing sleep day or night—

v. 17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

Boy he is there! He's saying God is the author of happiness and joy. As I submit myself and turn loose of these things which I'm resisting in my life, I come out of the pit of depression and I begin to know real joy.

I got 10 lessons out of this study. Let me just mention them to you. You're not going to be able to copy them all. If you want get them after the study. Alright, here we go.

Lesson #1: At the bottom of all depression is unbelief.

At the bottom of all depression is unbelief.

Lesson #2: It's better to talk to self than to have self talk to you.

Lesson #3: Patience is better than pride.

And I just put "Pride—Patience—Purpose—Peace" there.

Lesson #4: Don't get quickly provoked in your spirit.

Lesson #5: Never say "Where are the good old days?"

Lesson #6: The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.

Lesson #7: Don't pay attention to every word that people say.

Lesson #8: God made man upright but man's gone in search of

many schemes.

God made you to have a heart for Him but we go looking for answers “in broken cisterns that will hold no water,” Jeremiah says.

Next one:

Lesson #9: Wisdom brightens a man’s face and changes its hard appearance.

Lesson #10: A man’s misery weighs heavily upon him.

And the last one:

Lesson #11: No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun.

You’ve just got to trust God that He knows what’s best.

If you’re here today without a relationship to Jesus Christ, I sure would love to talk to you but that’s between you and Him. I would never embarrass you.

There’s a little booklet on the table called “How to Have a Happy and Meaningful Life.” It tells you how to invite Christ into your life. And I’d like for you to take that.

I want to just tell you, whether you’re here without Christ or you’re here knowing Christ, there’s one solution to your

problems. And that's to submit to His authority in the midst of the trial and allow Him to be God. To do that prepares you for all of life.

I was sharing with our crew in the Sermon on the Mount today about Virginia dying of cancer. Virginia came to the day where she knew she was not going to get better and she says: "Today I've let you go"—referring to her husband and her two children. She says "That's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life but I have turned you over to God and I know you're safe."

And on the last day that she lived on earth, she said this:

"I want you now to turn loose of me and surrender me."

And perhaps God is just saying "Hey, come on. There's no better time than right now."

He's knocking at your door. "Just turn it over to Me and watch Me what I can do if you'll just give it to Me."

Whether it's a marriage, whether it's business, whether it's your heart—because you've never come to know Christ—you'd allow Him to become your Savior.

Don't go out of here today just passing all of this off.

Do something about it. You're held accountable for the fact that you've been here and you've studied in the Word in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. Father, we pray that the presence of the Holy Spirit could take the thoughts that we've looked at, convict a heart and keep us from escaping the piercing nature of Your Word. Lord we have such a tendency to resist, to put it off, to forget it. With King Agrippa we can say "Almost you persuaded me but not now." Lord, I just pray that You'd help it to be now. That we would do something about it in light of Your truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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STUDY NUMBER SIX – Wisdom from the Pits; Digging Out of Depression; Thinking through Trauma – Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:17

NOTES

v. 1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

v. 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.

v. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.

v. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

v. 5 It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools.

v. 6 Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.

v. 7 Extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

v. 8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.

v. 9 Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

v.10 Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions.

v.11 Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun.

v.12 Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.

v.13 Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?

v.14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

v.15 In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

v.16 Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise—why destroy yourself?

v.17 Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool—why die before your time?

NOTES

v.18 It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all [extremes].

v.19 Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.

v.20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

v.21 Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—

v.22 for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

v.23 All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise”—but this was beyond me.

v.24 Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound—who can discover it?

v.25 So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

v.26 I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare.

v.27 “Look,” says the Teacher, “this is what I have discovered: Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things—

v.28 while I was still searching but not finding—I found one [upright] man among a thousand, but not one [upright] woman among them all.

v.29 This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes.”

8:v. 1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man’s face and changes its hard appearance.

v. 2 Obey the king’s command, I say, because you took an oath before God.

v. 3 Do not be in a hurry to leave the king’s presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.

v. 4 Since a king’s word is supreme, who can say to him, “What are you doing?”

v. 5 Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

v. 6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man’s misery weighs heavily upon him.

NOTES

v. 7 Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?

v. 8 No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

v. 9 All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt.

v.10 Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

v.11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.

v.12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

v.13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

v.14 There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

v.15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.

v.16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth—his eyes not seeing sleep day or night—

v.17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:17 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Why is it better to go to the “house of mourning” than to the “house of feasting, “according to verses 2-4?

3. What are we asked not to do in verse 10?

4. What are we asked to do in verses 13 & 14?

5. What will “the man who fears God” do, according to verse 18?

6. What did Solomon turn his mind to do in verse 25?

7. What did he find, according to verse 29?

8. What does Solomon commend as a result of all of his research, according to chapter 8:15?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: At the bottom of all depression is unbelief. It is better to talk to self than have self talk to you.

LESSON #2: Patience is better than pride.

LESSON #3: Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit.

LESSON #4: Never say, “Where are the good old days?”

LESSON #5: The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.

LESSON #6: Do not pay attention to every word that people say.

LESSON #7: God has made man upright but men have gone in search of many schemes.

LESSON #8: Wisdom brightens a man’s face and changes its hard appearance.

LESSON #9: A man’s misery weighs heavily upon him.

LESSON #10: No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun.