

Ecclesiastes 12:8-12 – A Grand Summary – Part 1

Stam, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Geneva, Poole, Delitzsch, Henry, Trapp, JFB, Barnes, Clarke,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: As we conclude our studies in Ecclesiastes, I hope you have the big picture. Let me summarize: Ordinary things in life are ordinary - vain. They may be enjoyed, but they won't bring fulfillment to the true needs of your heart. **Meeting, knowing, and living close to God are what bring fulfillment.**

As Solomon concludes he therefore: 1. Reflects on the fact that life without God is a wasted life which neither leads nor keeps you near God, and 2. That in order to stay close to you God, you are required to listen to wise teachers. You see, Solomon knew that staying close to God was not automatic.

Our headings are: The Reflection: **Living without God is a wasted life**, and The Requirement: **Learn from other people's studies to stay close to God.**

Our goals are: **That you learn to enjoy, but not trust in, the ordinary things of life, and that you live and learn from Godly men and women through their studies to stay close to God.**

The Reflection: Living without God is a Wasted Life

8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity."

1. Ecclesiastes is an excellent sermon. Solomon argued that all (kinds of things) in this life were useless, in the grand scheme of things, to bring peace to the heart. He also argued that only God can bring peace. It is as if Solomon were saying: "Look, I have proved my case. All things are vain – useless in the grand scheme of things. And I have proved the alternative: Trusting God and staying close to him is the only means of true meaning to life."

2. Some of those vain things of life Solomon mentioned were: wives, wine, work, building projects, military strength, music arts and entertainment, knowledge, and power. Those things were proper in their proper place (he was using hyperbole for effect by calling them useless), but not satisfying to the soul, so in that sense they were considered to be vain. If you have these things – even in large amounts- and then you die, you have nothing to take with you. Plus, many of these things can be stolen, wasted, or destroyed. And spouses could die or spouses could divorce you.

3. But you should not be a hermit and think that you need to give up all the pleasure of the world. See also Ecclesiastes 3:13, and 5:18) Most of these pleasures that Solomon tried were God-given blessings.

Ecclesiastes 2:24 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

Don't think you are better if you don't get married...or if you don't drink wine...or if you are poor...or if you have no power... But neither are you to be foolish thinking that if you have good food, if you have a spouse, if you have wine, if you have a lot of money, if you have power...that they will in any way satisfy the soul. If you have these good gifts without God they are meaningless. In fact, if you have these great gifts and don't use them properly – according to God's law, through faith in Christ, and for the glory of Jesus Christ, then those gifts become the foundation for your judgment. These gifts become your condemnation. God will say: I gave you all of these good things...and what did you do with them...did you use them to serve me?

4. What cutting-edge stuff Solomon's preaching would be today! How confrontational对抗. Can you imagine preacher looking at people in the face and saying: "Life apart from God is meaningless life?" You would be laughed to scorn. Or say to a neuro-scientist神经学家: "Without God, all your studies don't credit you anything!" Or say to heart surgeon: "You regularly saves the lives of those with heart troubles, but doing that 'great work' will not give you one iota of credit before God." Heart surgeons are held in higher esteem the heart Creator, but in the grand scheme of things, their work is vain – useless, for they can't mend the troubles of the soul. Sadly, you hear more from preachers about wisdom of spending money...and how to eat healthy food...and what kinds of exercises work...instead of pointing people to the King of kings. That is simply more meaningless drivel. Maybe as ministers we need to look back at some of these passages and preach from them without fear. Maybe our elders should require that we ministers preach from these passages more often and rebuke us when we don't.

The Requirement: Learn from other people's studies to stay close to God

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

1. John Miller wrote: "**Scripture never expresses trivialities**鸡毛蒜皮." Therefore, those people who argue that Ecclesiastes

was an earthly book, and therefore argue that you have to take what Solomon said with a grain of salt, **ignore the purpose of Scripture, which is: to lead men to Christ and keep men in Christ.** Further, they are guilty of carelessly reading this book. Solomon was an extraordinarily wise preacher. And he taught what was good. And he thought through what he said in a purposeful order – he said so.

1Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled 胜过 the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

2. In Proverbs, Solomon spoke of Christ as Wisdom and he spoke about how to live in Christ. In Songs of Solomon he pictures Christ as the Bridegroom who has passionate 热情的 love for the Bride he redeemed. This was a comfort to the hurting bride. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon was not speaking of his own accord, but as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. He confidently spoke of God's wisdom that God had given to him. He did not speak of fables 寓言, made up stories, or simplistic doctrines. Rather he spoke truth – the truth of Christ's work-truth than could never be contradicted. This is quite similar to what John wrote about his own writings – they all write about the work of Jesus Christ.

John 21:24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

3. Solomon learned wisdom from his father. Solomon learned wisdom from his foolish mistakes. Solomon learned wisdom from books he read. Solomon learned wisdom from faithful men. Solomon gained wisdom directly from God. Then he taught! This is similar what David did when he gained wisdom from his sin. He taught others. Psalms 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

This is what Jesus' disciples did: they learned wisdom from him and they were commanded to teach it to others.

Luke 22:32 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

You have already seen how a restored Solomon taught about faithful service and worship of God. He taught about the coming judgment. He taught about dealing with death. He taught about raising children. He taught about vows to God. He taught about using pleasures carefully. He taught about the dangers of living apart from God. Peter described how men of old (like Solomon) searched out truth to teach.

1Peter 1:11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth.

4. He even studied more so he could teach with better words. Note the word “pondered 沉思” in Verse 9, and “sought” in Verse 10. This is always a good Christian habit – a habit commended by the Apostle Paul.

1Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Proverbs 2:4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.

Ecclesiastes 9:1 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God...

(Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs and knew and probably wrote 1005 songs.) He worked at making his words memorable. For example: There is a time for... And he worked at learning true doctrine. He was keen on style and substance... Remember his description of talking about the signs of old age on the body: When the grinding ceases - when one can't carry a grasshopper 蝗虫... But Solomon was acknowledging that he is not the source of wisdom. His knowledge came from God. (Proverbs 2:4) Won't it be wise then to learn from those who know more than you?

1Corinthians 2:13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Romans 2:21 You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

11 The words of the wise are like goads 鞭策, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

5. Let the words that the wise speak to you move you. They have the experience and the knowledge. Their words must be like goads to move you, and like well-driven nails, to reach the mark.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Ephesians 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your

salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, This goading is even pictured for us again in the New Testament numerous times.

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 9:5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting;迫害. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing刺穿even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow骨髓, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Goading sticks the skin and wakes up the sleeping. What a beautiful picture of how the Word wakes up the sinner! Nails go farther. Nails that simply go through one piece of wood are useless. They (the words preached) penetrate the heart and find a resting place there. Nails move the heart to promote and practice righteousness – and stops wandering around. And they are well-driven nails – meaning that they are effective knowledgeable words. As a shepherd under Christ, let this happen to you. And do this to others. But what do people want? Most people want to be rocked to sleep with lullabies 搖籃曲...they want nothing to upset the peace.

Isaiah 30:10 Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

But what should they get? Only what is good for their souls.

6. These wise words came from the Shepherd of Israel - God. Solomon was not claiming originality. He was speaking God's Words that bring life to the hearers once it bears fruit. He was a mere under shepherd.

Jeremiah 3:15 "And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

John 21:17...And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

Apostle Paul reiterated how God provides these nails ("arrows") and goads...apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers! The rod of Christ is a comfort...as it was sometimes used to break the leg of a wandering lamb. By the time its broken leg was healed, the lamb learned to stay home. Like the Apostle Peter said, you are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To grow you need to be fed well – with God's truth.

12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

7. And even as Solomon called on you to study and learn from others, he cautioned against spending too much time studying and too little time obeying. No doubt this was a warning to his son Rehoboam, but it must apply to all Christians.

Furthermore, there are those who simply have books filled with lies, errors, and corrupted doctrines. (Watch out!)

So be warned. Wisdom is a gift of God. Wisdom, we would say, is application of the knowledge – true knowledge.

Conclusion:

Life is no good without God. Life without God is a wasted life – a vain life. Without God you can have no confidence in this life. You can have no confidence in the future. Now to live life with God you need to hear regularly from God's wise shepherds – God's messengers. So do not listen in a cursory way, but in a meditative way. Let your teeth sink into God's Word – God's truth – it is meat for your soul – when it is preached by those who fully understand it. Listen carefully to wise men. Know good doctrine. Believe that doctrine. Live that doctrine that they teach. Remember Ps 19:10: God's words are: "More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." That's what really matters in life. Everything else will pass away.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: How close are you to the one true and living God who redeemed you to himself through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross? If you feel a struggle in your life, it may be that you are estranged from God and you have lost that first love and recognition of what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross. **Maybe you are not listening to him as you should**. So pray as the Psalmist: "Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your word." This is what the Apostle Paul prayed and I pray for you: *1 Th 2:13 "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."* And then, brethren, hold on to God's Word. God's gifts through Jesus Christ are irrevocable to his children. He saves you and stays with you. Staying close to God will make sure your life is not wasted.

Finally: If you are not a Christian you have no real comfort in life and in death. You don't have God as your comfort and you don't have his Word your guide. But you can restore your relationship to God and enjoy his comfort if you ask him to take away your sins through Christ's suffering for you. Do it today!