

**I. Knowing Folly As Your Enemy (v 25).**

- A. Introduction similar to Eccl. 1:17-18.
- B. We are not disposed to seek after wisdom.
- C. Wisdom is sought before and above all else.
- D. But the Preacher would also know, to a lesser degree, madness and folly
  - 1) Thrice He would know wisdom, but only once wickedness.
  - 2) Folly and madness are to be known as enemies.
  - 3) Maturing in the Lord is to discern good from evil.
    - a) Three imprudent motivations:
      - i. Knowing folly out of idle curiosity
      - ii. Knowing folly out of equal respect with wisdom
      - iii. Knowing folly as if it were necessary for true faith
    - b) Three kinds of people for whom knowing folly would be a harm:
      - i. Children
      - ii. The weak in faith (Heb 5:12-14)
      - iii. Generally, this kind of burdensome engagement is not fit for every station and vocation
  - 4) What are the benefits of this knowing of madness and folly?
    - a) That you may not be ignorant of the enemies devices (2 Sam 15:37).
    - b) That you may turn the folly of many enemies on each other (Acts 23:6).
    - c) That you may shrewdly imitate their folly and so make a way of escape if needed (1 Sam 21:13).

**II. The Bitterness of Life (vv 26-28).**

- A. There is a great bitterness (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:7, 9; Ex 23:19; Pr 12:4, 21:1, 21:19, 27:14; Amos 4:1; 1 Kgs 11:4; Hosea 4:11-13)
  - 1) The righteous shall not drink this cup of bitterness
  - 2) But the wicked shall suffer by her (Pr 5:3-6).

- B. Another sting: the lack of godly men and women
  - 1) The need to examine ourselves and see if we are godly.
  - 2) The need for discernment in choosing your close companions.
  - 3) The need for discernment in finding a spouse, for we are only to marry in the Lord (Gen 24:3-4).
- C. Further Uses from the Text
  - 1) The bitterness and vanity of life is that we do not often find what we seek (Pr 11:23)
  - 2) How can this bitterness be made sweet? (Ex 15:22-25)

**III. The Summary of Our Bitterness (v 29).**

- A. Total Depravity is a doctrine confirmed in Scripture, as well as universal experience
- B. *God made man upright (Larger Catechism 17; Gen 1:31)*
- C. *But they have sought out many schemes (Lam 4:1; 2 Chr 26:15)*
  - 1) This doctrine witnessed in history —
    - a) In the Fall
    - b) In our fallen natures (Jms 1:14-15)
    - c) In our actual sins
  - 3) An Illustration (Gen 4:19-22; Jer 2:13)
  - 4) The catastrophic irony
- D. Uses from the Text
  - 1) The great mystery and grace of the incarnation and atonement
    - a) For Christ has not turned aside to many schemes
    - b) By His passive obedience we receive pardon for our sins (Isa 53:6)
  - 2) Pray for the ongoing renewal of your mind and contentment in the Lord
  - 3) Pursue the answer to that prayer by faith
  - 4) Take comfort in the promise of God (Heb 11:6)
  - 5) The contentment of glory (Psa 84:9-10)