

I. The Futility of the Fall (vv 12-15).**A. Prosaic Testimony****1) Solomon's Work**

a) *I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem* (2 Kgs 3:11; 2 Chr 1:9).

i. Which began well and faithfully (2 Chr 1:1, 3:2; 1 Kgs 3:7, 9a)

ii. Which was filled with great outward blessing
- Military might and peace (1 Kgs 4:24-25)
- Great wealth (1 Kgs 10:14-15)

iii. Yet he fell into great sin (1 Kgs 11:3-8)

iv. But we may gather from the writing of and testimony in Ecclesiastes, that he repented from these sins.

b) *I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom* (Jms 1:22, 25)

c) *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun* (Heb 4:15)

2) Solomon's Findings

a) *This burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised*

i. God has tasked each man with the pursuit of wisdom

ii. It is a miserable business when pursued in isolation from faith and godliness - it neither saves nor satisfies

b) *And indeed all is vanity and grasping for the wind*

i. This vanity is judgment against mankind for both Adam's sin and our actual sins (Hosea 11:12a, 12:1a)

ii. This vapour is nonetheless a blessing, in that wisdom is still provided as a kindness from the all-wise God (Eccl 12:11)

B. Poetic Conclusion

1) *What is crooked cannot be made straight* (Eccl 7:13)

a) Warning: We should be wary of the self-help therapeutic age of our culture.

b) Clarification: This does not mean we throw out any form of standards (Rom 3:31; Psalms 100:3).

2) *And what is lacking cannot be numbered*—

a) *Use, We must have humility.*

b) *Use, We must have faith* (Pr 11:2)

C. Uses from the Text

1) The hope of the Gospel (Lk 18:26-27; Isa 40:3-5)

2) Comfort in the knowledge of the true and living God

a) The attributes of God (Jer 31:37)

b) The decree of election (Gen 15:5)

c) The grace of sanctification (2 Cor 12:9)

II. The Fleetingness of Wisdom (vv 16-18).**A. Prosaic Testimony**

1) The greatness of Solomon (1 Kgs 3:11-13, 4:30-34)

2) The pursuit of Solomon (Heb 5:13-14)

3) Solomon's finding — *I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind*

a) Because my wisdom and knowledge will die with me.

b) Because my wisdom and knowledge is never perfect in that
i. It is lacking in portions of which I cannot number; and
ii. It is inaccurate at places I am unaware.

B. Poetic Conclusion — *For in much wisdom is much grief and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow*

C. Uses from the Text

1) Beware sinful temptations regarding wisdom and knowledge.

a) Beware the sin of idolatry. (Psa 119:99-100)

b) Beware the sin of pride (1 Cor 8:1b)

c) Beware the sin of self-sufficiency.

d) Beware guise of learning wisdom to excuse licentiousness.

e) Beware the sin of despair.

2) Consider the goodness of true wisdom and knowledge.

a) It is pleasing to the LORD our Triune God.

b) It is beneficial to us (Pr 16:16)

c) It is beneficial to our neighbour (Pr 11:11)

d) It is conducive to the internal perpetuation and sanctification of the Church (Pr 14:26)

3) Let us remember that 'Life in God's world is *gift*, not *gain*' (David Gibson, *Living Life Backwards*, p. 37) (Jer 9:23-24)