

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

The name of this book signifies “The Preacher.” The wisdom of God here preaches to us, speaking by Solomon, who it is evident was the author. At the close of his life, being made sensible of his sin and folly, he recorded here his experience for the benefit of others, as the book of his repentance; and he pronounced all earthly good to be “vanity and vexation of spirit.” It convinces us of the vanity of the world, and that it cannot make us happy; of the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make us miserable. It shows that no created good can satisfy the soul, and that happiness is to be found in God alone; and this doctrine must, under the blessed Spirit’s teaching, lead the heart to Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER 1

Solomon shows that all human things are vain. (1-3) Man’s toil and want of satisfaction. (4-8) There is nothing new. (9-11) The vexation in pursuit of knowledge. (12-18)

 **Ecclesiastes 1:1**

Vs. 1-3: Much is to be learned by comparing one part of Scripture with another. We here behold Solomon returning from the broken and empty cisterns of the world, to the Fountain of living water; recording his own folly and shame, the bitterness of his disappointment, and the lessons he had learned. Those that have taken warning to turn and live, should warn others not to go on and die. He does not merely say all things are vain, but that they are vanity. VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. This is the text of the preacher’s sermon, of which in this book he never loses sight. If this world, in its present state, were all, it would not be worth living for; and the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much, are not enough to make us happy. What profit has a man of all his labor? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires; will not atone for the sins of the soul, nor hinder the loss of it: what profit will

the wealth of the world be to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state?

Ecclesiastes 1:4

Vs. 4-8: All things change, and never rest. Man, after all his labor, is no nearer finding rest than the sun, the wind, or the current of the river. His soul will find no rest, if he has it not from God. The senses are soon tired, yet still craving what is untried.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

Vs. 9-11: Men's hearts and their corruptions are the same now as in former times; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same. This should take us from expecting happiness in the creature, and quicken us to seek eternal blessings. How many things and persons in Solomon's day were thought very great, yet there is no remembrance of them now!

Ecclesiastes 1:12

Vs. 12-18: Solomon tried all things, and found them vanity. He found his searches after knowledge weariness, not only to the flesh, but to the mind. The more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw their vanity; and the sight often vexed his spirit. He could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others, which he expected. Even the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom discovered man's wickedness and misery; so that the more he knew, the more he saw cause to lament and mourn. Let us learn to hate and fear sin, the cause of all this vanity and misery; to value Christ; to seek rest in the knowledge, love, and service of the Savior.

CHAPTER 2

The vanity and vexation of mirth, sensual pleasure, riches, and pomp. (1-11) Human wisdom insufficient. (12-17) This world to be used according to the will of God. (18-26)

Ecclesiastes 2:1

Vs. 1-11: Solomon soon found mirth and pleasure to be vanity. What does noisy, flashy mirth towards making a man happy? The manifold devices of men's hearts, to get satisfaction from the world, and their changing from one thing to another, are like the restlessness of a man in a fever. Perceiving it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the costly amusements of princes. The poor, when they read such a description, are ready to feel discontent. But the remedy against all such feelings is in the estimate of it all by the owner himself. All was vanity and vexation of spirit: and the same things would yield the same result to us, as to Solomon. Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. His wisdom remained with him; a strong understanding, with great human knowledge. But every earthly pleasure, when unconnected with better blessings, leaves the mind as eager and unsatisfied as before. Happiness arises not from the situation in which we are placed. It is only through Jesus Christ that final blessedness can be attained.

Ecclesiastes 2:12

Vs. 12-17: Solomon found that knowledge and prudence were preferable to ignorance and folly, though human wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy. The most learned of men, who dies a stranger to Christ Jesus, will perish equally with the most ignorant; and what good can commendations on earth do to the body in the grave, or the soul in hell? And the spirits of just men made perfect cannot want them. So that if this were all, we might be led to hate our life, as it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.

Ecclesiastes 2:18

Vs. 18-26: Our hearts are very loath to quit their expectations of great things from the creature; but Solomon came to this at length. The world is a vale of tears, even to those that have much of it. See what fools they are, who make themselves drudges to the world, which affords a man nothing better than subsistence for the body. And the utmost he can attain in this respect is to allow himself a sober, cheerful use thereof, according to his rank and condition. But we must enjoy good in our labor; we must use those things to make us diligent and cheerful in worldly business. And this is the gift of God. Riches are a blessing or a curse to a man, according as he has, or has not, a heart to make a good use of them. To those that are accepted of the Lord, he gives joy and satisfaction in the knowledge and love of him. But to the sinner he allots labor, sorrow, vanity, and vexation, in seeking a worldly portion, which yet afterwards comes into better hands. Let the sinner seriously consider his latter end. To seek a lasting portion in the love of Christ and the blessings it bestows, is the only way to true and satisfying enjoyment even of this present world.

CHAPTER 3

The changes of human affairs. (1-10) The Divine counsels unchangeable. (11-15) The vanity of worldly power. (16-22)

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Vs. 1-10: To expect unchanging happiness in a changing world, must end in disappointment. To bring ourselves to our state in life, is our duty and wisdom in this world. God's whole plan for the government of the world will be found altogether wise, just, and good. Then let us seize the favorable opportunity for every good purpose and work. The time to die is fast approaching. Thus labor and sorrow fill the world. This is given us, that we may always have something to do; none were sent into the world to be idle.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Vs. 11-15: Every thing is as God made it; not as it appears to us. We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, that we have neither time nor spirit to see God's hand in them. The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed thoughts against the beauty of God's works. We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves; no, it is our business to do good in this life, which is short and uncertain; we have but little time to be doing good, therefore we should redeem time. Satisfaction with Divine Providence, is having faith that all things work together for good to them that love him. God doeth all, that men should fear before him. The world, as it has been, is, and will be. There has no change befallen us, nor has any temptation by it taken us, but such as is common to men.

Ecclesiastes 3:16

Vs. 16-22: Without the fear of the Lord, man is but vanity; set that aside, and judges will not use their power well. And there is another Judge that stands before the door. With God there is a time for the redressing of grievances, though as yet we see it not. Solomon seems to express his wish that men might perceive, that by choosing this world as their portion, they

brought themselves to a level with the beasts, without being free, as they are, from present vexations and a future account. Both return to the dust from whence they were taken. What little reason have we to be proud of our bodies, or bodily accomplishments! But as none can fully comprehend, so few consider properly, the difference between the rational soul of man, and the spirit or life of the beast. The spirit of man goes upward, to be judged, and is then fixed in an unchangeable state of happiness or misery. It is as certain that the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth; it perishes at death. Surely their case is lamentable, the height of whose hopes and wishes is, that they may die like beasts. Let our inquiry be, how an eternity of existence may be to us an eternity of enjoyment? To answer this, is the grand design of revelation. Jesus is revealed as the Son of God, and the Hope of sinners.

CHAPTER 4

Miseries from oppression. (1-3) Troubles from envy. (4-6) The folly of covetousness. (7, 8) The advantages of mutual assistance. (9-12) The changes of royalty. (13-16)

Ecclesiastes 4:1

Vs. 1-3: It grieved Solomon to see might prevail against right. Wherever we turn, we see melancholy proofs of the wickedness and misery of mankind, who try to create trouble to themselves and to each other. Being thus hardly used, men are tempted to hate and despise life. But a good man, though badly off while in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord, even in the fires, and will be happy at last, for ever happy. Ungodly men have most cause to wish the continuance of life with all its vexations, as a far more miserable condition awaits them if they die in their sins. If human and worldly things were our chief good, not to exist would be preferable to life, considering the various oppressions here below.

Ecclesiastes 4:4

Vs. 4-6: Solomon notices the sources of trouble peculiar to well-doers, and unequaled all who labor with diligence, and whose efforts are crowned with success. They often become great and prosperous, but this excites envy and opposition. Others, seeing the vexations of an active course, foolishly expect more satisfaction in sloth and idleness. But idleness is a sin that is its own punishment. Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handful, that we may not want necessaries, but not grasp at both hands full, which would only create vexation of spirit. Moderate pains and gains do best.

Ecclesiastes 4:7

Vs. 7, 8: Frequently, the more men have, the more they would have; and on this they are so intent, that they get no enjoyment from what they have. Selfishness is the cause of this evil. A selfish man cares for nobody; there is none to take care of but himself, yet he will scarcely allow necessary rest to himself, and the people he employs. He never thinks he

has enough. He has enough for his calling, for his family, but he has not enough for his eyes. Many are so set upon the world, that in pursuit of it they bereave themselves, not only of the favor of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this life. The distant relations or strangers who inherit such a man's wealth, never thank him. Covetousness gathers strength by time and habit; men tottering on the brink of the grave, grow more grasping and griping. Alas, and how often do we see men professing to be followers of Him, who, "though he was rich, for our sakes became poor," anxiously scraping money together and holding it fast, excusing themselves by common-place talking about the necessity of care, and the danger of extravagance!

Ecclesiastes 4:9

Vs. 9-12: Surely he has more satisfaction in life, who labors hard to maintain those he loves, than the miser has in his toil. In all things union tends to success and safety, but above all, the union of Christians. They assist each other by encouragement, or friendly reproof. They warm each other's hearts while they converse together of the love of Christ, or join in singing his praises. Then let us improve our opportunities of Christian fellowship. In these things all is not vanity, though there will be some alloy as long as we are under the sun. Where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will by his Spirit come to them; then there is a threefold cord.

Ecclesiastes 4:13

Vs. 13-16: People are never long easy and satisfied; they are fond of changes. This is no new thing. Princes see themselves slighted by those they have studied to oblige; this is vanity and vexation of spirit. But the willing servants of the Lord Jesus, our King, rejoice in him alone, and they will love Him more and more to all eternity.

CHAPTER 5

*What renders devotion vain. (1-3) Of vows, and oppression. (4-8)
The vanity of riches shown. (9-7) The right use of riches. (18-20)*

Ecclesiastes 5:1

Vs. 1-3: Address thyself to the worship of God, and take time to compose thyself for it. Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering: keep thy affection from running out toward wrong objects. We should avoid vain repetitions; copious prayers are not here condemned, but those that are unmeaning. How often our wandering thoughts render attendance on Divine ordinances little better than the sacrifice of fools! Many words and hasty ones, used in prayer, show folly in the heart, low thoughts of God, and careless thoughts of our own souls.

Ecclesiastes 5:4

Vs. 4-8: When a person made engagements rashly, he suffered his mouth to cause his flesh to sin. The case supposes a man coming to the priest, and pretending that his vow was made rashly, and that it would be wrong to fulfill it. Such mockery of God would bring the Divine displeasure, which might blast what was thus unduly kept. We are to keep down the fear of man. Set God before thee; then, if thou seest the oppression of the poor, thou wilt not find fault with Divine Providence; nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted; nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from suffering wrong. But though oppressors may be secure, God will reckon for all.

Ecclesiastes 5:9

Vs. 9-17: The goodness of Providence is more equally distributed than appears to a careless observer. The king needs the common things of life, and the poor share them; they relish their morsel better than he does his luxuries. There are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy, much less will worldly abundance satisfy spiritual desires. The more men have, the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the

more guests they must entertain, and the more they will have hanging on them. The sleep of the laborer is sweet, not only because he is tired, but because he has little care to break his sleep. The sleep of the diligent Christian, and his long sleep, are sweet; having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully repose in God as his Rest. But those who have every thing else, often fail to secure a good night's sleep; their abundance breaks their rest. Riches do hurt, and draw away the heart from God and duty. Men do hurt with their riches, not only gratifying their own lusts, but oppressing others, and dealing hardly with them. They will see that they have labored for the wind, when, at death, they find the profit of their labor is all gone like the wind, they know not whither. How ill the covetous worldliness bears the calamities of human life! He does not sorrow to repentance, but is angry at the providence of God, angry at all about him; which doubles his affliction.

Ecclesiastes 5:18

Vs. 18-20: Life is God's gift. We must not view our calling as a drudgery, but take pleasure in the calling where God puts us. A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes employments easy, and afflictions light. Having made a proper use of riches, a man will remember the days of his past life with pleasure. The manner in which Solomon refers to God as the Giver, both of life and its enjoyments, shows they ought to be received and to be used, consistently with his will, and to his glory. Let this passage recommend to all the kind words of the merciful Redeemer, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Christ is the Bread of life, the only food of the soul. All are invited to partake of this heavenly provision.

CHAPTER 6

*The vanity of riches. Also of long life and flourishing families. (1-6)
The little advantage any one has in outward things. (7-12)*

Ecclesiastes 6:1

Vs. 1-6: A man often has all he needs for outward enjoyment; yet the Lord leaves him so to covetousness or evil dispositions, that he makes no good or comfortable use of what he has. By one means or other his possessions come to strangers; this is vanity, and an evil disease. A numerous family was a matter of fond desire and of high honor among the Hebrews; and long life is the desire of mankind in general. Even with these additions a man may not be able to enjoy his riches, family, and life. Such a man, in his passage through life, seems to have been born for no end or use. And he who has entered on life only for one moment, to quit it the next, has a preferable lot to him who has lived long, but only to suffer.

Ecclesiastes 6:7

Vs. 7-12: A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give satisfaction. The poor man has comfort as well as the richest, and is under no real disadvantage. We cannot say, Better is the sight of the eyes than the resting of the soul in God; for it is better to live by faith in things to come, than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things. Our lot is appointed. We have what pleases God, and let that please us. The greatest possessions and honors cannot set us above the common events of human life. Seeing that the things men pursue on earth increase vanities, what is man the better for his worldly devices? Our life upon earth is to be reckoned by days. It is fleeting and uncertain, and with little in it to be fond of, or to be depended on. Let us return to God, trust in his mercy through Jesus Christ, and submit to his will. Then soon shall we glide through this vexatious world, and find ourselves in that happy place, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

CHAPTER 7

The benefit of a good name; of death above life; of sorrow above vain mirth. (1-6) Concerning oppression, anger, and discontent. (7-10) Advantages of wisdom. (11-22) Experience of the evil of sin. (23-29)

Ecclesiastes 7:1

Vs. 1-6: Reputation for piety and honesty is more desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world. It will do more good to go to a funeral than to a feast. We may lawfully go to both, as there is occasion; our Savior both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana, and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany. But, considering how apt we are to be vain and indulge the flesh, it is best to go to the house of mourning, to learn the end of man as to this world. Seriousness is better than mirth and jollity. That is best for us which is best for our souls, though it be unpleasing to sense. It is better to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wise, than to have them gratified by the song of fools. The laughter of a fool is soon gone, the end of his mirth is heaviness.

Ecclesiastes 7:7

Vs. 7-10: The event of our trials and difficulties is often better than at first we thought. Surely it is better to be patient in spirit, than to be proud and hasty. Be not soon angry, nor quick in resenting an affront. Be not long angry; though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, it passes through it as a way-faring man; it dwells only in the bosom of fools. It is folly to cry out upon the badness of our times, when we have more reason to cry out for the badness of our own hearts; and even in these times we enjoy many mercies. It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times; as if former ages had not the like things to complain of that we have: this arises from discontent, and aptness to quarrel with God himself.

Ecclesiastes 7:11

Vs. 11-22: Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, yea better. It shelters from the storms and scorching heat of trouble. Wealth will not lengthen out the

natural life; but true wisdom will give spiritual life, and strengthen men for services under their sufferings. Let us look upon the disposal of our condition as the work of God, and at last all will appear to have been for the best. In acts of righteousness, be not carried into heats or passions, nor by a zeal for God. Be not conceited of thine own abilities; nor find fault with every thing, nor busy thyself in other men's matters. Many who will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and the dread of hell, will avoid sins which ruin their health and estate, and expose to public justice. But those that truly fear God, have but one end to serve, therefore act steadily. If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves. Every true believer is ready to say, God be merciful to me a sinner. Forget not at the same time, that personal righteousness, walking in newness of life, is the only real evidence of an interest by faith in the righteousness of the Redeemer. Wisdom teaches us not to be quick in resenting affronts. Be not desirous to know what people say; if they speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride, if ill, it will stir up thy passion. See that thou approve thyself to God and thine own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee; it is easier to pass by twenty affronts than to avenge one. When any harm is done to us, examine whether we have not done as bad to others.

Ecclesiastes 7:23

Vs. 23-29: Solomon, in his search into the nature and reason of things, had been miserably deluded. But he here speaks with godly sorrow. He alone who constantly aims to please God, can expect to escape; the careless sinner probably will fall to rise no more. He now discovered more than ever the evil of the great sin of which he had been guilty, the loving many strange women, vs. ^{<1000>}1 Kings 11:1. A woman thoroughly upright and godly, he had not found. How was he likely to find such a one among those he had collected? If any of them had been well disposed, their situation would tend to render them all nearly of the same character. He here warns others against the sins into which he had been betrayed. Many a godly man can with thankfulness acknowledge that he has found a prudent, virtuous woman in the wife of his bosom; but those men who have gone in Solomon's track, cannot expect to find one. He traces up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain. It is clear that man is corrupted and revolted, and not as he was made. It is lamentable that man, whom God made upright, has found out so many ways to render himself

wicked and miserable. Let us bless Him for Jesus Christ, and seek his grace, that we may be numbered with his chosen people.

CHAPTER 8

Commendations of wisdom. (1-5) To prepare for sudden evils and death. (6-8) It shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. (9-13) Mysteries of Providence. (14-17)

Ecclesiastes 8:1

Vs. 1-5: None of the rich, the powerful, the honorable, or the accomplished of the sons of men, are so excellencies, useful, or happy, as the wise man. Who else can interpret the words of God, or teach aright from his truths and dispensations? What madness must it be for weak and dependent creatures to rebel against the Almighty! What numbers form wrong judgments, and bring misery on themselves, in this life and that to come!

Ecclesiastes 8:6

Vs. 6-8: God has, in wisdom, kept away from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes. We must all die, no flight or hiding-place can save us, nor are there any weapons of effectual resistance. Ninety thousand die every day, upwards of sixty every minute, and one every moment. How solemn the thought! Oh that men were wise, that they understood these things, that they would consider their latter end! The believer alone is prepared to meet the solemn summons. Wickedness, by which men often escape human justice, cannot secure from death.

Ecclesiastes 8:9

Vs. 9-13: Solomon observed, that many a time one man rules over another to his hurt, and that prosperity hardens them in their wickedness. Sinners herein deceive themselves. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely. A good man's days have some substance; he lives to a good purpose: a wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. Let us pray that we may view eternal things as near, real, and all-important.

Ecclesiastes 8:14

Vs. 14-17: Faith alone can establish the heart in this mixed scene, where the righteous often suffer, and the wicked prosper. Solomon commended joy, and holy security of mind, arising from confidence in God, because a man has no better thing under the sun, though a good man has much better things above the sun, than soberly and thankfully to use the things of this life according to his rank. He would not have us try to give a reason for what God does. But, leaving the Lord to clear up all difficulties in his own time, we may cheerfully enjoy the comforts, and bear up under the trials of life; while peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost will abide in us through all outward changes, and when flesh and heart shall fail.

CHAPTER 9

Good and bad men fare alike as to this world. (1-3) All men must die, Their portion as to this life. (4-10) Disappointments common. (11,12) Benefits of wisdom. (13-18)

Ecclesiastes 9:1

Vs. 1-3: We are not to think our searching into the word or works of God useless, because we cannot explain all difficulties. We may learn many things good for ourselves and useful to others. But man cannot always decide who are objects of God's special love, or under his wrath; and God will certainly put a difference between the precious and the vile, in the other world. The difference as to present happiness, arises from the inward supports and consolations the righteous enjoy, and the benefit they derive from varied trials and mercies. As far as the sons of men are left to themselves, their hearts are full of evil; and prosperity in sin, causes them even to set God at defiance by daring wickedness. Though, on this side death, the righteous and the wicked may often seem to fare alike, on the other side there will be a vast difference between them.

Ecclesiastes 9:4

Vs. 4-10: The most despicable living man's state, is preferable to that of the most noble who have died impenitent. Solomon exhorts the wise and pious to cheerful confidence in God, whatever their condition in life. The meanest morsel, coming from their Father's love, in answer to prayer, will have a peculiar relish. Not that we may set our hearts upon the delights of sense, but what God has given us we may use with wisdom. The joy here described, is the gladness of heart that springs from a sense of the Divine favor. This is the world of service, that to come is the world of recompense. All in their stations, may find some work to do. And above all, sinners have the salvation of their souls to seek after, believers have to prove their faith, adorn the gospel, glorify God, and serve their generation.

Ecclesiastes 9:11

Vs. 11, 12: Men's success seldom equals their expectations. We must use means, but not trust to them: if we succeed, we must give God the praise; if crossed, we must submit to his will. Those who put off the great concerns of their souls, are caught in Satan's net, which he baits with some worldly object, for which they reject or neglect the gospel, and go on in sin till they suddenly fall into destruction.

Ecclesiastes 9:13

Vs. 13-18: A man may, by his wisdom, bring to pass that which he could never do by his strength. If God be for us, who can be against us, or stand before us? Solomon observes the power of wisdom, though it may labor under outward disadvantages. How forcible are right words! But wise and good men must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or, at least, endeavored to do it, when they cannot do the good they would, nor have the praise they should. How many of the good gifts, both of nature and Providence, does one sinner destroy and make waste! He who destroys his own soul destroys much good. One sinner may draw many into his destroying ways. See who are the friends and enemies of a kingdom or a family, if one saint does much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

CHAPTER 10

To preserve a character for wisdom. (1-3) Respecting subjects and rulers. (4-10) Of foolish talk. (11-15) Duties of rulers and subjects. (16-20)

Ecclesiastes 10:1

Vs. 1-3: Those especially who make a profession of religion, should keep from all appearances of evil. A wise man has great advantage over a fool, who is always at a loss when he has anything to do. Sin is the reproach of sinners, wherever they go, and shows their folly.

Ecclesiastes 10:4

Vs. 4-10: Solomon appears to caution men not to seek redress in a hasty manner, nor to yield to pride and revenge. Do not, in a passion, quit thy post of duty; wait awhile, and thou wilt find that yielding pacifies great offenses. Men are not preferred according to their merit. And those are often most forward to offer help, who are least aware of the difficulties, or the consequences. The same remark is applied to the church, or the body of Christ, that all the members should have the same care one for another.

Ecclesiastes 10:11

Vs. 11-15: There is a practice in the East, of charming serpents by music. The babbler's tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison; and contradiction only makes it the more violent. We must find the way to keep him gentle. But by rash, unprincipled, or slanderous talk, he brings open or secret vengeance upon himself. Would we duly consider our own ignorance as to future events, it would cut off many idle words which we foolishly multiply. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose. They do not understand the plainest things, such as the entrance into a great city. But it is the excellencies of the way to the heavenly city, that it is a high-way, in which the simplest wayfaring men shall not err, <sup>Isaiah 35:8. But sinful folly makes men miss that only way to happiness.

Ecclesiastes 10:16

Vs. 16-20: The happiness of a land depends on the character of its rulers. The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish, and lovers of pleasure. Slothfulness is of ill consequence both to private and public affairs. Money, of itself, will neither feed nor clothe, though it answers the occasions of this present life, as what is to be had, may generally be had for money. But the soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained with corruptible things, as silver and gold. God sees what men do, and hears what they say in secret; and, when he pleases, brings it to light by strange and unsuspected ways. If there be hazard in secret thoughts and whispers against earthly rulers, what must be the peril from every deed, word, or thought of rebellion against the King of kings, and Lord of lords! He seeth in secret. His ear is ever open. Sinner! curse not THIS KING in thy inmost thought. Your curses cannot affect Him; but his curse, coming down upon you, will sink you to the lowest hell.

CHAPTER 11

Exhortation to liberality. (1-6) An admonition to prepare for death, and to young persons to be religious. (7-10)

Ecclesiastes 11:1

Vs. 1-6: Solomon presses the rich to do good to others. Give freely, though it may seem thrown away and lost. Give to many. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast further to do. It is not lost, but well laid out. We have reason to expect evil, for we are born to trouble; it is wisdom to do good in the day of prosperity. Riches cannot profit us, if we do not benefit others. Every man must labor to be a blessing to that place where the providence of God casts him. Wherever we are, we may find good work to do, if we have but hearts to do it. If we magnify every little difficulty, start objections, and fancy hardships, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work. Winds and clouds of tribulation are, in God's hands, designed to try us. God's work shall agree with his word, whether we see it or not. And we may well trust God to provide for us, without our anxious, disquieting cares. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season, in God's time, you shall reap, ⁴⁰⁰Galatians 6:9.

Ecclesiastes 11:7

Vs. 7-10: Life is sweet to bad men, because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men, because it is the time of preparation for a better; it is sweet to all. Here is a caution to think of death, even when life is most sweet. Solomon makes an effecting address to young persons. They would desire opportunity to pursue every pleasure. Then follow your desires, but be assured that God will call you into judgment. How many give loose to every appetite, and rush into every vicious pleasure! But God registers every one of their sinful thoughts and desires, their idle words and wicked words. If they would avoid remorse and terror, if they would have hope and comfort on a dying bed, if they would escape misery here and hereafter, let them remember the vanity of youthful pleasures. That Solomon means to condemn the pleasures of sin is evident. His object is to draw the young to purer and more lasting joys. This is not the

language of one grudging youthful pleasures, because he can no longer partake of them; but of one who has, by a miracle of mercy, been brought back in safety. He would persuade the young from trying a course whence so few return. If the young would live a life of true happiness, if they would secure happiness hereafter, let them remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

CHAPTER 12

A description of the infirmities of age. (1-7) All is vanity: also a warning of the judgment to come. (8-14)

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Vs. 1-7: We should remember our sins against our Creator, repent, and seek forgiveness. We should remember our duties, and set about them, looking to him for grace and strength. This should be done early, while the body is strong, and the spirits active. When a man has the pain of reviewing a misspent life, his not having given up sin and worldly vanities till he is forced to say, I have no pleasure in them, renders his sincerity very questionable. Then follows a figurative description of old age and its infirmities, which has some difficulties; but the meaning is plain, to show how uncomfortable, generally, the days of old age are. As the four verses, vs. 2-5, are a figurative description of the infirmities that usually accompany old age, so ver. vs. 6 notices the circumstances which take place in the hour of death. If sin had not entered into the world, these infirmities would not have been known. Surely then the aged should reflect on the evil of sin.

Ecclesiastes 12:8

Vs. 8-14: Solomon repeats his text, VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. These are the words of one that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, which can do nothing to ease men of the burden of sin. As he considered the worth of souls, he gave good heed to what he spake and wrote; words of truth will always be acceptable words. The truths of God are as goads to such as are dull and draw back, and nails to such as are wandering and draw aside; means to establish the heart, that we may never sit loose to our duty, nor be taken from it. The Shepherd of Israel is the Giver of inspired wisdom. Teachers and guides all receive their communications from him. The title is applied in Scripture to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The prophets sought diligently, what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. To write many books was not suited to the shortness of human

life, and would be weariness to the writer, and to the reader; and then was much more so to both than it is now. All things would be vanity and vexation, except they led to this conclusion, That to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole of man. The fear of God unequaled in it all the affection of the soul towards him, which are produced by the Holy Spirit. There may be terror where there is no love, nay, where there is hatred. But this is different from the gracious fear of God, as the feelings of an affection child. The fear of God, is often put for the whole of true religion in the heart, and unequaled its practical results in the life. Let us attend to the one thing needful, and now come to him as a merciful Savior, who will soon come as an almighty Judge, when he will bring to light the things of darkness, and manifest the counsels of all hearts. Why does God record in his word, that ALL IS VANITY, but to keep us from deceiving ourselves to our ruin? He makes our duty to be our interest. May it be graven in all our hearts. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all that concerns man.