

**Eccl. 2:1-2 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?**

Solomon decided at one point to direct his energies toward participating in the things that gave him pleasure and made him laugh. He concluded that laughter and pleasure gave one no lasting satisfaction. I found a quote by Robert Burns that expresses it well: "Pleasures are like poppies spread; You seize the stem, the bloom is shed!"

This is not to say that pleasure and laughter are bad things or that it is wrong to enjoy such. It's just that the benefits are fleeting and add nothing to the search for purpose and meaning in life.

**Eccl. 2:3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.**

Next, he tried to find happiness through the intoxication of wine and the foolish actions that inevitably accompany that choice, yet still claiming to maintain control of his senses. He was claiming justification for his "folly" as necessary to his search to determine how best man should invest his time and energy during this lifetime.

Again, this is nothing new under the sun. Aren't we always trying to justify foolish or sinful actions? I've come to the conclusion that every time the Christian engages in such justification, it usually reflects a lack of faith in God. It's a declaration that we know better than God how to determine what is best in a given set of circumstances.

**Eccl. 2:4-8 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts.**

Solomon boldly declares that he also embarked on a mission to amass every type of material possession. He built houses and palaces; planted vineyards, gardens, orchards of fruit trees; he built retaining pools to water the trees; he bought slaves that increased his investment by having children; he attained great herds of different kinds of cattle. He states that his possessions exceeded all that had preceded him in Israel (as represented by its capital city, Jerusalem). He also amassed great treasuries of silver and gold in the form of tribute from neighboring kingdoms to assure their standing of peace with Israel. Solomon

evidently loved music because he seems to take special delight in being entertained by skilled musicians. Most of the translators equate “the delights of the sons of men” with a harem, and I have no reason to dispute this considering the record of scripture.

*1Kings 11:1&3 “But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites....And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.”*

Solomon’s approach to life in this section certainly reflects the attitude of today’s world.

- “Eat, drink, and be merry. For tomorrow we die.”
- “If it feels good, do it.”
- “You only live once, so take every single opportunity that comes by.”
- “Anything that feels good couldn’t possibly be bad.”

**Eccl. 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.**

The whole chapter to this point has focused on feeding the desires of the flesh, and in this verse we see a bit of boasting in the flesh. Solomon’s fame spread throughout the ancient world. The visit of the Queen of Sheba gave evidence to this truth.

*1Kings 10:1, 6-7 “And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.... And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.”*

It seems that Solomon has totally lost sight of the fact that his wisdom, wealth and fame were a gift from God. At this point his focus is entirely on self. The pitfall of pride is a sin that every Christian needs to guard against. Scripture is clear in telling us that every thing we have worth having is ours only as a gift of God.

*Psalms 84:11 “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”*

*James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

**Eccl. 2:10-11 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.**

These are the words of a man who could honestly say that he could get anything he desired. He possessed the authority and wealth to overcome any obstacle that might stand in the way.

In the end, he had to admit that the joy of attaining so much was short-lived; he had served only to feed the lust of his flesh. Once you've got it all, so to speak, what's left to look forward to? In honest reflection, feeding the desires of the flesh provide no meaning to life. I think the very public lives of so many of those in the category of the "rich and famous" today give very vivid evidence of this truth.

**Eccl. 2:12** *And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.*

As Solomon assessed all his attempts at finding satisfaction through worldly pleasure, wine, material wealth and fleshly indulgence, he didn't see how any one who followed him could experience more than he had. At best they could only hope to duplicate his experiences.

**Eccl. 2:13-16** *Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.*

These verses give indication that Solomon did have a bit of spiritual insight. Based on personal experience, he recognized that wisdom and folly are as different as day and night. To act with wisdom and walk according to the light is far better than to act foolishly and try to walk in the darkness. The eyes in your head give obvious testimony to that truth.

Solomon then observes that both the wise man, including himself, and the foolish man are going to die. So in that regard, what is the benefit of exercising wisdom? As he saw it, both the wise man and fool would soon be forgotten after death. Very few from the pages of history are remembered by future generations.

I think it is important to remind ourselves all the way through this study that the Holy Spirit is preserving the record of Solomon's thoughts to help us understand that apart from God there is no meaning to life.

**Eccl. 2:17-19** *Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man*

**or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.**

Solomon finally came to the point that he “hated” life; he saw no meaning or purpose in life. The possessions that he had amassed would eventually go to another, and who knew if this man would be wise or foolish? There was certainly no satisfaction in the thought that what he left might be squandered in foolishness.

This is a very interesting statement in light of the fact that surely he expected his son to inherit his throne. He had to realize that his example had not been one to encourage his son to follow wisdom. The book of Proverbs gives testimony that Solomon gave his son wise instruction, but the truth is that actions speak much louder than words—especially as pertains to father and son.

**Eccl. 2:20-23 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.**

Again, this is interesting wording coming from King Solomon. The more he thought about his life, the more depressed he became. Most of us would not classify his life experience as one of labor. He was the wealthiest of the kings of Israel; scripture states that silver was accounted for nothing in his day.

*1Kings 10:21 “And all king Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.”*

Solomon had servants and the wherewithal to hire out any work that needed to be done. In my mind that fact probably contributed to his lack of satisfaction in the things “he” had accomplished. Experience has shown me that the things you truly work for are the things you appreciate. This, of course, excludes things that money can’t buy and man can’t achieve on his own.

Without peace, one cannot truly rest. Without God as the center of one’s life, one cannot have peace.

*Isaiah 26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”*

*Psalms 4:8 “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.”*

*Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

**Eccl. 2:24-26** *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Finally, Solomon concludes that God meant for man to enjoy satisfaction from honest labor and the fruit it produces. It is God who chooses to reward good men with wisdom, knowledge and joy. The sinner experiences just the opposite because his expectations are rooted in this life only; and if that's the case, what's the point?

Solomon had no excuse for not understanding what gave evidence of true wisdom. His own words testify to that truth.

*Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

*Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."*

*Proverbs 15:33 "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility."*