

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

ECCLESIASTES

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ECCLESIASTES 9:1-18

NEXT 11:1-10

INTRTODUCTION:

The Book of Ecclesiastes is in the Bible's Old Testament. We do not know who wrote Ecclesiastes. Many people think that the author of Ecclesiastes was King Solomon. However, in the book, the author simply calls himself 'The Teacher' (*In the KJV, he is known as 'the Preacher'*). The Preacher identifies himself as the son of David, king in Jerusalem (1:1), but the name of the author never appears in the book.

Solomon was very wise. But he did not know the purpose of his own life. He discovered that pleasure achieved nothing. He realized that even a wise man would die like a fool. And he did not know the purpose of work (Ecclesiastes 2). He even saw that money has no real value (Ecclesiastes 5).

Solomon did know that rulers should be fair (Ecclesiastes 8). And everybody must respect God ((Ecclesiastes 5). And he believed that wisdom is good (Ecclesiastes 9:13-18). His life prepared him to see and come to understand the superiority of God's wisdom.

DEATH IS UNAVOIDABLE

9:1 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this...— All that he pondered in the above chapter, Solomon explains that death is the "*Great Equalizer*." Death plays no favorites and overlooks no one. Regardless of your strength and wealth, he has considered this to be the will of God; it's good to be wise but a man will not be able to seek out all the wisdom God has, he won't know everything; it's greater to rely on God.

9:1b The righteous and the wise; their works are in the hand of God. God even knows our future, whether it will bring blessing (*love*) or sorrow (*hatred*). There are no guarantees as to what life will bring, but the certainty of life is that God is involved in the lives of those who trust Him. Everything that man is, God created him to be. Solomon is only wise, because God gave him wisdom.

9:2 It's the same for all; one event for the righteous, the wicked, the good, the clean, the unclean, the sacrifice, the one that didn't sacrifice, the sinner, the swearer, and the one that fear an oath. The word says, "*It rains on the just and on the unjust*" *Matt.5:45*. Certain things happen to all of us. There are general blessings, and general natural evils, that equally affect the just and the unjust. We share a common destiny in earth—death and the grave; but we do not share a common destiny in eternity. How people deal with the reality of death reveals itself in the way they deal with the realities of life. There are three possible responses people make to the ever-present fear of death. (1)They try to ESCAPE. The fact of death and the fear of death will bring out the best in people or the worst in people. Death is however, inescapable!

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-outline/ecclesiastes-summary.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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9:3 This one fate, death itself, is an “evil” (*a tragedy*) among all things that are done under the sun (on earth) that awaits everyone. **The heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness while they live.** The Hebrew word translated “madness” implies a “blindness to the true issues.” They lack the ability to see things rightly. Somehow we sense this even though we will not talk about it. Hence, from their darkness and evil they go to their death. The hope is that they might repent before they die. As long as they are **joined to all the living there is hope.** That’s why this second response to the ever-present fear of death is **(2) ENDURANCE.** “**Where there is life, there is hope!**” ²Enduring (*lasting, continuing*) the certainty of death occurs by:

- 1) Remembering that death happens to all
- 2) Enjoying family and work
- 3) Expecting the unexpected
- 4) Utilizing wisdom that is available to us

We endure through life no matter what is dealt.

9:4 The description of **a living dog and a dead lion** shows that life is to be preferred to death. The dog was thought of as a useless animal, and the lion was thought of as being the bravest. For a dead lion, there is no such possibility; no existence for a second chance. On the other hand, God gives chance after chance to the living and in so doing they embrace the joy that life has to offer.

9:5 The living, know they shall die. As long as one considers this while alive, it may move them to consider his ways and thereby prepare him to meet the Lord. **The dead knows nothing** means once you die, you can’t change what you’ve done or even suddenly plan to become a better person. The dead does not know what is happening on earth, but the living does and can respond to it. The dead cannot add anything to their reward or their reputation, but the living can. Those that die, **the memory of them are soon forgotten.** Oh yes we mourn for a while, however, the death of the flesh is forgotten but the spirit of a man lives on in our hearts. The point to all of this is:

POINT:

Necromancy was the contacting of the dead on behalf of the living. It is found in ancient literature from the Sumerian period (late 3rd Millennium B.C.), such as the Mesopotamian story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the netherworld. Heroes would make their way to the edge of the land of the dead to speak with those who had passed into the land of Death. Or they consulted a medium who connected them to the spirit to whom they wished to speak.

The Law of Moses forbade such practices (Deut.18:11).However, Saul was one that sought to gain information from the spirits of the dead, asking the medium of En Dor to call up the ghost of Samuel. Saul thought he could learn the will of God from the dead. Not only did this act violate God’s law, but also Saul’s own proclamation against necromancy (1Sam.28:3, 9).

9:6 The dead cannot relate come back to people on earth by **loving, hating, or envying,** for **it is now perished,** but the living can. There is a show that airs now on TV called “*A Gifted Man.*” A doctor’s ex-wife is killed unexpectedly and comes back as a ghost to try to finish what she did not have an opportunity to

² http://executableoutlines.com/ec/ec_08.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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finish through her ex-husband who is a renowned surgeon. This is only in the movies. After death there is no feeling of hate or envy. All of their feelings that manifested themselves in their lives under the sun (on earth) perished. Their love is for God. Whatever they would have loved to do, or whatever envy was in the heart, or hatred in the heart perished when the person died.

PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING

9:7 Coming from verse 6 now it says, **Go thy way...** because the third response to the fear of death is (3) ENJOYMENT. It says **go eat bread and drink wine with a merry heart for God accepted your works.** This is a daily meal. This is what David did after his son died. Don't sit and brood! Get up and live! Life is allotted back to you. He has approved your life of labor; it's already pleasing to God. In eastern times, life was difficult in the average home, but every family knew how to enjoy special occasions such as weddings and reunions of those coming back home.

9:8 That's why **white garments** were worn and the **ointment** of special perfume upon their heads was used, which expressed a sign of joy. Upon these joyful occasions, they anointed themselves with expensive perfume instead of the usual olive oil.

9:9 In enjoying life, man is to live joyfully with the wife he loves. His days are empty and fleeting which God gave him under the sun. Solomon knew nothing about live-in couples or trial marriages. He saw a wife as a gift from God (Prov.18:22' 19; 14). It's too bad Solomon didn't live up to his own ideals. Here in this verse, the emphasis is on monogamy and the intensity of relationship which the man and woman are to share which would not be possible in a polygamous structure. This is his portion and labor in life. This is all the outward happiness of a man in this life.

9:10 **Whatever you find your hand to do, do it with might—** (*strength*) because the things that make up employment in this life will not be present in the grave, so make the most of your opportunities now. It is wonderful to be loved and wanted, but it is much more wonderful to be needed. There is a feeling of accomplishment that comes from a job well done. **For in the grave where we're going, there is no pursuit, or plans, or knowledge nor wisdom.** What we do, we must do it well. Jesus expresses the same thought when He says, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" Jh.9:4.

9:11 I returned and saw... means, **I again saw; I have seen something else; I resumed my investigation under the sun,**

- **the race is not given to the swift,**
- **nor the battle to the strong,**
- **neither is bread to the wise,**
- **nor riches to men of understanding,**
- **nor favor to men of skill;**

Evil times and unfavorable circumstances fall on each of these, and they come with alarming suddenness. **Time** (*moment*) **and chance** (*opportunity*) **happens to them all;** for there is a certain "*time*" fixed by the Lord for every event. The word "*chance*" also means "*occurrence or event.*" God has a time for everything (3:1-

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8), a purpose to be fulfilled in that time, and something beautiful to come out of it in the end. You may be in the right place at the right time to get a job, and ability had very little to do with it. Time and chance are in God's hands. ³But in this time and chance (*opportunity*) there is incident, what may fall in; and occurrence, what may meet and frustrate an attempt. These things should be wisely weighed, and seriously balanced. While you have time, seek an opportunity to do what is right; but calculate on hindrances and oppositions, because time and opportunity have their incident and occurrence.

9:12 Rest assured that trouble comes on the scene and wreck plans and **man knows not his time**. The statement of this verse is that man is suddenly ensnared by death, as birds and fish are by a net. Though it is fixed and settled by the Lord, yet times and seasons are kept in His own power, and not known by men. Just when you think you have something under control it can all fall apart. This fact reveals man's ignorance and his helplessness. How uncertain life is without God.

What these three responses to the fear of death says is: you needn't fear death because you can't escape it; you needn't fear death because your endurance, your staying power, your continued existence gives you time to prepare and respond in a better way while you live; and thirdly, you needn't fear death because your life can be an enjoyment to God and not be an empty life that does not please Him while you live. Under the cloud of death savor the joys of life. Do not allow yourself to get mired down in its vexatious problems. If we fear God and walk by faith, we will not try to escape or merely endure life. We will enjoy life and receive it happily as a gift from the Lord, knowing His best is always our best, even on the other side.

9:13 **This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:**— The first half of this chapter talked about death. Therefore, after knowing that man does not know his time of departure and all are in the hand of God, here is another case of wisdom I have seen on earth; I have observed this wisdom and it left a great impression on me. When wisdom is given, it is supposed to leave you with understanding and it is to leave you knowing that there is something else you didn't know. So take heed because true wisdom from God will turn awesome things around. He only gives it to those under the sun, while you live. It is not given to the dead. The next verse will show how wisdom of a poor wise man seemed great. People can say many things, but it doesn't leave an impression of greatness.

9:14 **There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.** The name or the city was not given and numbers don't mean anything to God (of few men). The little history mentioned here may have either been a fact, or intended as an instructive fable or parable. When I look at this city with few men, know the enemy, the devil is bound to attack. He comes in to take hold of and overwhelm you by building great strongholds; by erecting great walls. When strongholds have taken hold of a city, a home, or an individual, what do you do? What action do you take? Do you use your strength or God's wisdom? It says, "*there came a great king.*" A king is mighty, coming in to take over. I don't know if there was disobedience in the city but we can look at Adam and his disobedience to God (Gen.3); Achan sinned and brought defeat on the army of Israel (Josh.7); David's sin brought trouble to Israel (2Sam.24), and the revolt of Absalom led the nation into a civil war (2Sam.15). Why would a great king want such a little city with few men? Well, the word would probably be greed because he surely wasn't afraid of them. And he surely didn't count on

³ <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/17487/eVerseID/17487/RTD/Clarke>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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one poor wise man.

9:15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. The name of the man was not given. God's hero, His hidden treasure was this poor wise man who is ready to do his part, even though men will despise him, refuse to hear his words, and ultimately forget him. Such a man is, however, a man compelled by a sense of duty. He continues to speak the words of wisdom, regardless of the response of others. He is the Preacher of wisdom who delivered the city. In the Book of Esther, there were those that plotted to kill the king. Mordecai, a poor Jew saved the king but was never rewarded for his faithful duty, until God revealed it to the king in a dream. Can you remember when Jesus delivered you? It was not by your might or power, but by God's Spirit. Our abilities are no guarantee of success. It is only through God's Son that we are saved and set free. You can't forget God's grace, yet, many do. Jesus suffered; delivered us from the Law and its condemnation; He died because of love. Just as here, no man remembered this poor man. ⁴It never once entered into their thoughts that he could ever be their deliverer; they never imagined he had a capacity to advise, direct, or assist, in such service, or bring about such an affair: so Christ, when He appeared in the world, the Jews saw nothing that was promising in Him; they could not believe that He was sent to be the Saviour and Deliverer of them, and therefore rejected Him.

9:16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. From the scenario in verse 14, we saw the contrast of a small city with few men against a great king; in verse 15, a poor wise man delivering a city against a great king but was never remembered; and this verse is the contrast of wisdom and strength. The Teacher/Preacher's summation is that wisdom is better than strength; he understood from viewing this situation, a man may by his wisdom affect that which he could never compass by his strength, and may overcome those by out-witting them who are able to overpower him. Now that's something to think about. Nevertheless (*on the other hand*), this poor man is regarded with contempt even after delivering them from the snare of the enemy. His words were regarded at one time but now they are not even heeded. Most people would listen to the wise man, if he was wealthy. But we see they have no respect for the poor man.

9:17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Now we see the contrast is between the words spoken quietly by wise men against the cry of a ruler of fools. A quiet voice will tend to quieten things down against those who wanted to be loud. You've seen the commercial where the woman is speaking to her dog? She says "*use your quiet voice*" (*smile*). Well, a dog only knows how to use his yapping voice. That's all! (*smile*). Think about it, which message do you want to get over and what message will they get? A wise man who speaks the truth through wisdom from God will be heard; they may not always be received. But God will somehow bring back those words spoken to the hearer's remembrance. Even though people are drawn to loud voices, they will not hold your attention if they're not saying anything constructive. A fool shouting will be ignored. You would shut off your hearing from the fool. He has nothing of profit to say, even if the fool is a king, and those who hear him, will not receive his message. However, wise men hear from God and know when to speak at the right time, for His plan is more profound than the one who is trying to exercise authority among fools.

9:18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good. Now we have the

⁴ <http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/9-15.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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contrast of that wisdom is better against weapons of war. Through one error, using weapons of war too hastily would destroy all the good that had been accomplished and still could be accomplished through the wisdom of men. A grave error would be for individuals to not sit down to communicate first. One sinner speaking adversely (*harmfully, unfavorably*); being subversive (*rebellious, insubordinate*) in his actions or so called wisdom, can destroy themselves forever and others who believe him, thereby dragging all to hell with him. Don't you know that one sinner destroys much good? It shows that one's disobedience destroys much! When we look at our government and those placed in office to help us, we see that they are really starting wars with their antics. The way of wisdom is still the better; and who has that wisdom? Well, it comes from God! You can hear God's wisdom by reading the bible and asking Him for understanding. Thereby, you can hear the superiority of God's wisdom over subversive wisdom of those in government.

SUMMARY:

Wisdom is pre-eminent though often unappreciated. Life's decisions sometimes come from common sources which we didn't think to rely on. Wisdom was important enough against a great king. It is important enough against the strength of the mightiest. It is important against the cry of the ruler of fools. And it is important against weapons of war. By it being unappreciated, sometimes means that it will be overlooked at, not received by many, but their ears heard it even though they didn't want to. The superiority of wisdom is still vulnerable to neglect, and it can easily be overshadowed by loud voices or one sinner. It proves that subversive wisdom will lead you straight to hell along with others that want to be rebellious, thereby leaving the claim that people hear what they want to hear. On the other hand, God's wisdom does not turn you away from truth. God's wisdom allows you to learn something you didn't know at first. God's wisdom will be spoken quietly in your inner spirit and your actions will always turn out right for you and those around you.

APPLICATION:

In these days and times, it pays to listen from the heart instead of from the head.

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ECCLESIASTES 11:1-10NEXT 12:1-14**INTRODUCTION:**

If you have indecision about the meaning of life with God your attention will turn to the value of risk (11:1-6) — **Your Life Is Uncertain: Embrace It** (11:1-6); the value of life (11:7-8)— **Your Life Is Brief: Enjoy It** (11:7-12:8), and the enjoyment of youth (11:9-10).

11:1 Cast your bread on the waters: for you shall find it after many days. ⁵"Bread" refers to grain and wheat from which bread is produced. One of the main trade commodities was grain. The merchants of Solomon's day would load their grain ships and send them off. The Israelites were "casting [their] bread upon the water." But notice that with the word waters is plural: "cast your bread on the waters." In other words, don't put all your grain in one ship. Put your wheat in several ships, and send it out in a diversified way so that if one of the ships should sink, you'll not be ruined. In others words, "*Don't put all your eggs in one basket.*" Therefore if we are giving out substance freely and liberally, bestow it upon the waters by faith; upon those who are utterly in need; as the seed which a man casts into the sea or river, it shall certainly be restored to thee, either by God or men. The return may be slow, but it is sure, and will be so much the more plentiful. It is admonishing us to avoid selfishness, self-centeredness, and pessimism. You have to send it to receive a return.

11:2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. Give to many, so that in your day of need you may encounter at least one who in gratitude will assist you. The words "**to seven, and also to eight**" serves the purpose of indicating that this is expounding on verse 1. It is saying, do not stop by giving one person bread, but give to everyone in need. The number marks the limit of the extent of our benevolence. The evils of our day would be if the real estate market collapses; if the energy market collapses; if the governmental systems collapse; if the financial markets collapse. We don't know what evil will come or when it will come on the earth. Then guess what--we are not ruined because our portions are trusted in the hand of God!

11:3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. I have two interpretations that can preach on this verse. First: Many things like rain and wind storms are inevitable. We cannot stop the clouds full of rain from falling. Trees will lie wherever they fall. If we spend our time just watching and not doing, we will give. ⁶If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth. They do not retain it; they let it down softly and gently, in plentiful showers upon each of the parts of the earth without distinction, by which it is refreshed, and made fruitful. Men, who are full of the good things in this world, should not keep them to themselves, and for their own use only; but should consider they are stewards under God, and should be like the full clouds that empty themselves and give to those who want of what God has given freely, cheerfully, bountifully, and plentifully to those without respect of persons, imitating their God and Creator, who sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust. There is no excuse to stop working just because you think the weather may turn bad.

Second: ⁷Some things are inevitable. The clouds being full and pouring rain is natural, the tree falling is not under our control either. This is just saying that life is uncertain. We do not know when troubles will

⁵ <http://bible.org/seriespage/no-risks-no-rewards-ecclesiastes-111-6>

⁶ <http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/11-3.htm>

⁷ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/ecclesiastes/13.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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come. We must be thoughtful of others in trouble, and then, God will take care of us in our trouble. Trouble is inevitable. It comes to everyone sometime. So we don't know the works of God who makes all. If a tree is about to fall whether it leans to the south or toward the north, we can't do anything about it, only God. Both interpretations in the end, are saying these things are inevitable.

11:4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. This verse criticizes those who are overly cautious. The farmer who waits for the most opportune moment to plant, when there is no wind to blow away the seed, and to reap, when there is no rain to ruin a ripe harvest, will never do anything but sit around waiting for the right moment. Waiting for perfect conditions will mean inactivity. However, don't stand around observing rain clouds. Don't stand gazing idly at the clouds wondering when and where the rain is going to fall. Don't allow your actions to be governed by the capricious conditions of life under the sun. Don't wait for conditions to be perfect, because that will never happen. The "perfect opportunity" begins now—while we still can sow and reap. Sow, because it is the honorable thing to do.

11:5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. There are things we cannot comprehend. These are the many mysteries of God; like the way of the wind (or spirit). *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, but you cannot tell from whence it is coming, or where it is going. So is he that is born of the Spirit"* (John 3:8). Like the development of a child in the womb, this is far beyond our comprehension. We cannot comprehend God's working; therefore do not restrict your efforts to the God who makes all possible.

11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. Be ready at all times to show mercy; begin in the morning (*early*), and continue till the evening (*late*). This is to represent God in all that we do, with all that we have, and not withholding anything. Do not try to figure out if it would prosper or not, so act by faith. We must put out whatever effort is needed to succeed. *Verse 5 says "God who maketh all"* meaning we do the work, and it is God who prospers the effort. If both morning and evening efforts prosper, how great that prosperity will be. Both are good and have success. We can bless many and invest widely not knowing what seeds will find fertile soil and spring forth in life. True, the value of what you are doing is shrouded in mystery, as in the formation of the child in the womb. Man does not know what God is doing, but that lack of knowledge is never to serve as a cause for inactivity.

11:7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: Light, in this sense, could be speaking of life. Every day we wake up, it is good to see the sun with our eyes. The point is that life is "sweet" and should be savored like honey. It's just good to be alive. Have you ever awoken and you feel so good because nothing on your body hurts? Now, that's good! And indeed it is "good to see the sun"

11:8 But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. It is a good thing if a man can live to old age (many years) and rejoice in them. There are many days of darkness that the aged will see and remember.⁸ It is not the amount of trouble we have that makes us what we are. It is our attitude toward that darkness. The time of darkness makes us remember how wonderful the Light is and therefore, appreciate it. There is physical darkness, and there is spiritual darkness. Man has little control over the times of darkness and light. He does have control of his own

⁸ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/ecclesiastes/13.html>
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attitude about that darkness. It is better to add life to your years than to add years to your life. The Bible declares that we will all die, yet many of us miss out on the abundant life that God offers us. Don't let that happen to you. Live while you are dying. All things which befall any man belonging only to this life are but vain, because they are short and transitory. If God is excluded in your eternity, all that followeth in the evil and dark days is vain, as far as work for God is concerned (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; Youth is devoid of cares; and, consequently, of many perplexities and distresses. There is a command and a warning for young people to rejoice in his days of innocence;

11:9b...and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, have a cheerful heart in those youthful days; do all you want and desire to do, but know that youth, who follow the call of his flesh, will bring himself into the judgment of God, because of the sins he commits.

11:9c...and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: Young people are not to act like old people, but many old people are trying to make youth act out of their age. They are youth! This is not saying they should run wild while they are young but make good choices.

11:9d...but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. God wanted the youth to know that they will answer for all they did; to all they haven't asked forgiveness of. It is best to let the Spirit of God teach and direct your life from an early age, to avoid much sin.

11:10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: The word translated "sorrow" means "vexation, inner pain, anxiety." There are two things the youth are to remove and put away:

1. remove sorrow from their heart
2. and put away evil from their flesh

As far as possible the problems that beset the heart and mind are to be resisted. Quit being a worrywart. Guard yourself from being stressed out by school, sports, and relationships. Worry is a sin, so avoid it at all times. It's just not worth it. Why? - Because fretfulness over existing circumstances will rob a man of that joy. The time of childhood and youth is vanishing and passing, and old age and death will speedily come.

11:10b...for childhood and youth are vanity. All actions done in the childhood and youth are for the most part vain and foolish; and all the delights, joys, and pleasures thereof, are vanishing and fleeting. They pass away and come to nothing. Eternity alone is permanent; live for eternity.

SUMMARY:

⁹In this chapter the Preacher begins with encouraging benevolence and diligence as ways to guard against the uncertain future. By casting our bread upon the waters, willing to offer servings to many, and not withholding our hands in the evening, our benevolence may serve us well in the future should evil befall us. Likewise, things may happen beyond our ability to control or comprehend, but diligence in sowing seed and being mindful of the dark days to come can help to prepare us for their coming (**11:1-8**).

This chapter also introduces counsel from the Preacher designed especially for the young. The young man is encouraged to rejoice, letting his heart cheer him. He is told to walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes, yet with the knowledge that God will hold him accountable for all that he does. So remove sorrow (i.e., rejoice!). But also put away evil during the fleeting years of childhood and youth (**11:9-10**).

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⁹ http://executableoutlines.com/ecc/ecc_11.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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INTRODUCTION:

This is the Preacher's final appeal before the conclusion in chapter 12. It gives a description of old age (12:1-7); and the vanity or emptiness of most things; the value of proverbs (12:11); the vanity of excessive study (12:12); and the importance of obeying God in everything (12:13-14)— Your Life Is Obedience To God: Express It (12:13-14).

12:1¹⁰ "**Remember**" means to live your life with what you know about God clearly in view, not just to remember that there is a God. "**Now**" means at this moment. "**Thy Creator in the days of thy youth**" connotes God as the One to whom we "**while you are young**" are responsible because we are His creatures. The "**evil days**" are the days of old age and death. These days **haven't come yet** to those that are still young. Being young is exciting. Remember you are God's property, so serve him from the start of your years, not the end of your years, when service is very limited. Some people are old before they realize their need for a Saviour. Make your strength available to God when it is still yours—during your youthful years. Don't waste it on evil or meaningless activities that become bad habits and make you callous. The opportunity for remembrance will soon be over and **the years draw near and they say, I see no purpose in my years or I don't enjoy them** meaning, they have wasted their existence.

12:2 Remember your Creator "**while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened**"—the time of dawning light; you are still in your prime and you are not impaired but there will be darkness growing and diminishing vision. "**...nor the clouds return after the rain:**"—the time of twilight's gloom; the infirmities of old age of which winter showers life; chiefly set-backs. You are expecting the sky to clear eventually. All means remember thy Creator.

12:3 Each phrase of the allegory is designed to describe the declining of strength in a specific organ of the body. "**In the day when The keepers of the house**" — the **hands and arms**. It is their specific duty to guard the house from intrusion. In old age they "**tremble**" so severely that they can no longer move swiftly to the defense of the body. "**The strong men shall bow themselves**" refer to the **legs**. They are thus designated because they are supported by the largest muscles of the body. In old age the legs fail and the knees grow weak. They are not naturally bent over nor do they choose to be, but rather forces working contrary to their will impose conditions to which they finally succumb to the body. "**The grinding cease because they are few**" — the **teeth**. The mouth is the mill (crusher). It is difficult for the mill to function effectively when the teeth become few in number. "**They that look out of the windows be darkened**" are no doubt the **eyes** whose ability to perceive images lessens with the passing of the years.

All of this is describing the later years of a person's natural life. The strongest man will be bowed, if he lives long enough. The tremble could be for weakness, or for fear of his last days. Sometimes we stand at the window looking out contemplating our past life. It is not as bright as it was in the youth. Life is fading away. The vision becomes weaker as he nears the end of life on this earth.

¹⁰ <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ecclesiastes.pdf>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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12:4 *The door* is a symbol of interchange with the outside world. *"The doors that are shut in the streets"* probably represent the deafness that cuts the elderly person off from the sounds of the city. The ears become hard of hearing and the lips do not have much to say. *"...when the sound of grinding of grain is low"*, refers to little noise being now made in eating, because the teeth are either lost, or become so pressed close together; whereby both his speech is low, and the noise which he makes in eating is but small. The teeth are distinguished into classes:—

1. The incisors, or cutting teeth, in the front of the jaw.
2. The canine, or dog teeth, those in the sides of the jaws, for gnawing, or tearing and separating hard or tough substances. And,
3. The molars, or grinding teeth, the posterior or double teeth, in both jaws, generally termed the grinders; because their office is to grind down the substances that have been cut by the fore teeth... and thus prepare it for digestion in the stomach.

12:4 b *"...and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird"* suggest the light sleeping habits developed in old age; he goes to bed early which cause him to awakening early, to coincide with the rising of the birds. *"...and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low"* are all those senses which are employed in music; the voice, the throat no longer able to sing the sound of music. It also speaks, of a time when the person, who is aged, does not desire the music and parties that went with youth and their songs grow faint because of impaired hearing.

12:5 In this verse *"Also,"* is a continuation to let us know with increasing old age *"they shall be afraid of that which is high."* They are not as sure of themselves, as they were in their youth because of the feebleness and weakness of their limbs now, their difficulty of breathing, and the dizziness of their heads, lest they stumble and fall and come about with broken bones. All this brings a "fear of high places", even traveling roads of increased traffic or walking along sidewalks can bring terror. We do not mend as quickly as we did in our youth. *"The almond tree shall flourish"* shows us that the almond tree blossoms and turn from pink to white when the season is about over. It is a reference to the white or gray hair that appears upon our heads as an external sign of internal physical decay. Like the almond tree, it looks very beautiful, and is admired, especially if found in the way of righteousness. *"The grasshopper shall be a burden"* is associated with pestilence (plagued with disease) and then compared to the walk of an old man. Like the grasshopper the old man's bones shall stick out and his body will be exhausted. And some might be deemed burdensome because their strength is so exceedingly diminished. Some in the hospitals or nursing homes are in this image of death because their body is now nothing but skin and bones protruding out as a grasshopper. *"...and desire shall fail:"* The lust of their youthfulness has failed in the older person; they abandon their appetite for food; physical and mental desires fail (no hope causes you to perish) as life begins to ebb out like the retreating tide *"because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."* The mourners are there, because he has died. In ancient times there were professional wailers that draw near to the man's home, waiting with expectation to be hired for his funeral. They go about in the streets mourning, and accompany his body to the grave.

12:6 ¹¹Then shall *"the silver cord"*, by which soul and body were wonderfully fastened together, *"be loosed"*, that sacred knot untied, and those old friends be forced to part; then shall *"the golden bowl"*, which held the waters of life for us, *"be broken"*; then shall *"the pitcher"* with which we used to fetch up water, for the constant support of life and the repair of its decays, *"be broken"*, even "at the fountain", so that it can fetch up no more; and *"the wheel"* (all those organs that serve for the collecting and distributing of nourishment) shall

¹¹ http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/mhc-com/view.cgi?book=ec&chapter=12&verse=2#Ec12_2
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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"be broken", and disabled to do their office any more. The body shall become like a watch when the spring is broken, the motion of all the wheels is stopped and they all stand still; the machine is taken to pieces; the heart beats no more, nor does the blood circulate. Some apply this to the ornaments and utensils of life; rich people must, at death, leave behind their clothing and furniture of silver and gold; and poor people their earthen pitchers, and the drawers of water will have their wheel broken. The silver cord, golden bowl, pitcher, and wheel symbolize the beauty and fragility of the human frame of life; how easily death comes to us. *"The cistern"* is the well with all its treasures is then beyond the reach of man. It is irreversible!

12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: refers to the flesh of man returning to the dust (Gen.3:19) from which it was originally made (Gen.2:7a). **12:7b...and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.** The life within the flesh is the spirit of man. It lives on. ¹²Here is a most evident distinction between the body and the soul: they are not the same. The body, which is matter, *dissolves and* returns to dust, its original place; but the spirit *or the breath of life*, which is immaterial (having no physical substance), returns to God. It completely shows that the two natures can be more different, or more without a doubt distinguished.

12:8 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity. Here, as in the beginning of the book Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, Solomon repeats himself. His exploration of human experience led him to maintain his opinion: *"Everything is meaningless!"* no life experiences gave the human being sufficient control of events. Man under the sun is compelled to confess the vanity of all secular striving as he views the final destiny of the groaning human frame.

12:9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many Proverbs. In spite of the vanity that is cemented to the existence of man, Solomon held to wisdom and admonishes all men to do the same. He is a wise teacher who collected proverbial wisdom from past generations and taught the people how to lead a better life upon the earth. His goal was to help his people.

12:10 The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. Solomon was committed to the truth. The words he brought were not his own, they were placed into his mind by God, when he received the gift of wisdom. Once he arrived at the true meaning of things, he skillfully set down many proverbs. He wrote down his teachings in a book; he summarizes His mission.

12:11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. The purpose of *"the words of the wise"* was to prod people into thought and action so they would reverence and serve God. The purpose of the goad is to stir the slumbering to action. The goad was a sharp stick that was used to convince sluggish animals to move with greater haste into a desired path. These proverbs were designed to goad men and women out of their spiritual indifference and into a firm resolve to embrace the wisdom of God. Ecclesiastes has been filled with goads. The fixed nail or stake is to provide a secure place to which a man may anchor himself during the stormy days of his life under the sun. These stakes furnish man with mental and spiritual anchorage. Whether it be goad or fixed nail, all are given by the one Shepherd of Israel, who through His Words is both anchor and goad to the people whom He loves.

¹² <http://www.theparkwaychurchofchrist.com/SermonsE-L/life11.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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12:12 And further, by these, my son, he admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. "By the words of wise men", however numerous, lead nowhere. This is the advisement Solomon gives; there is no end. These collected proverbs from the Lord's minister life to the hearer, and they alone point the way to true profit for man under the sun. Much study only produces weariness of the flesh.

12:13 Well we are coming to the end; winding up things with these final words: **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: (11:9-10)**. Youth or old age or death, in spite of the focused attention that had been given in Ecclesiastes was not the greatest equalizer. Life is totally profitless or pointless without God. The sum of human life is comprised in this short sentence: **Fear God, and keep His commandments:** for this is the whole duty of man.

1. Know that **HE IS**, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
2. Reverence Him; pay Him adoration.
3. Love Him, that you may be happy.

Keep his commandments— They are contained in:

1. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;"*
2. *"And thy neighbor as thyself."*

This is our duty!

12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And one last thing—Judgment/retribution is the real equalizer for God will bring every person's act to judgment whether good or evil! Every secret thing shall be brought into judgment. There will be a day of judgment. It is a day when God will judge the secrets of men (Rom.2:16), bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of every heart (1 Corth.4:5), a day when the absolute profit of every deed and thought will be assigned by that One who judges in righteousness and truth.

SUMMARY:

¹³The final chapter begins with a continuation of advice directed to the young. They are told to remember God in their youth, before difficult days come in which there will be found little pleasure. Such days are described through a series of illustrations that depict the feebleness of old age and eventual death. When the inevitable happens, the body will decay back to dust, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. Finally, we are told the *"grand conclusion"* of the whole matter. The Preacher ends his search for meaning by concluding that the whole purpose for man's existence is to fear God and keep His commandments. all our works will be brought into judgment, whether good or evil (**12:1-14**).

APPLICATION:

Value your youth while it is day by remembering God, redeeming the time, and revering God because life is worth living.

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¹³ http://www.executableoutlines.com/ecc/ecc_12.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>