

**Learning the Hard Way:
Lessons from the Life of Solomon - Part 2**
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Good afternoon everyone. It's nice to see everybody back together this Sabbath. I also want to send a warm greeting to all of you out there in what I like to call DVD Land who will be watching this sermon later or listening to it off the website.

Brethren, last time we began a study particularly on the life of Solomon. As we mentioned, all learning in life is experiential, but one of the keys in life is we can skip a lot of pain and misery in our lives if we don't have to do all the learning through our own experience. In other words, if we are willing to learn from the experiences of others and put to practice those lessons and not have to go through everything personally ourselves.

We particularly looked at the life of Solomon. Solomon was a man who was blessed with an incredible gift of wisdom. The Bible tells us specifically he is the wisest man who ever lived in the history of mankind. But in spite of all of this wisdom there were a number of major mistakes that Solomon made in his life, you might say lessons he had to learn the hard way. The interesting thing in all of this is in the areas where he really made some of his biggest mistakes, these were not like new ground you might say. It wasn't like he was faced with new situations that had never been done before and he wasn't sure what to do, so he made mistakes in how he chose to deal with it. To the contrary, the situations where he made some of his biggest mistakes were areas where Moses and Joshua and others before him had specifically recorded God's instructions as to what to do. Solomon just chose, out of his own human nature and his own carnality, to bypass those instructions and really had to learn some of these lessons the hard way, like choosing to do the wrong thing even though he knew better.

As we saw last time, being king of Israel he definitely had access to the writings of Moses and Joshua and all those others who had come before him. In fact, being king, it was a requirement that he write out his own copy of the law. Again, I can't say that he actually followed through on that, but we know that was available to him and he had been given that instruction. So he certainly had access to know these things but yet he chose to make some very bad decisions. As I mentioned, today we're going to talk about how he made this major transition. Just to recap what we covered last time, this is a man who started off his reign as king and God comes to him kind of in a scene similar to what we oftentimes see in the movies with the cartoons where there's the genie in a bottle. The genie comes to this individual and says, "Tell me what your wishes are and I'll grant you your wishes." Well God does kind of a similar thing with him and comes to Solomon and says, "Tell me what you'd like and I will grant your wish." Solomon asked for wisdom and God is very pleased with the fact that he doesn't ask for something just to benefit himself. He could have easily asked for riches or

something that would just benefit his own life. He doesn't do that. He asked for something for the overall good of everyone in Israel. Not only that, but the approach he is taking is a very Godly one. What I mean by that is he is asking God, "Give me a discerning heart that I can know good and evil, so I can distinguish between them." What he is doing is asking God to define that for him. In other words he is not looking into his human, carnal understanding, he's asking, "Show me through Your wisdom how You define good, how You define evil and show me what I should do." He said, "You've given me this tremendous job to rule over your people," and he's very humble about it. He said, "I'm but a little child; I don't know how to go out, how to come in and I need you to show me." He is leaning to that understanding.

As I mentioned last time, in the Garden of Eden there were two trees. There was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and there was the Tree of Life. God told Adam and Eve specifically, "Don't eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," because what that symbolized was they were taking for themselves the right and responsibility of deciding what is good versus evil through their own carnal understanding rather than looking to God to define that for them.

Solomon gets this right in the early part of his life, but as we're going to see, one of the areas where he went so wrong and why his life turned out so differently later is he winds up reversing this decision. He winds up looking to his own understanding, his own experience to define what is right and wrong and this is where he really goes off the path and makes some really bad decisions. As we saw last time, this is a man who had to at least have access to Moses' writings. It specifically said, "Don't marry wives of other religions; don't marry women from these other pagan nations because they will wind up influencing you." They're going to want to pull you into their religious worship, but he winds up doing it anyway. Moses specifically said, "Kings should not have multiple wives", but not only does he have multiple wives, he does it exponentially more than anyone else had done. He has a thousand by the time he's done. These are some colossally bad decisions especially for a man with all this incredible wisdom.

As we saw last time as well, later in his life, God basically pronounced a sentence upon him. God is very unhappy with the decisions he has made and He said that the punishment you are going to receive as a result of this is after you die, and I'm just letting you live out your life on the throne because of your father, David. But after you die, I am splitting the kingdom and the majority of it is going to go away from your line. I'm giving it to Jeroboam.

Then Solomon makes another very bad decision. He hears this and decides well, "You can't replace me with a dead man." So he tries to chase down Jeroboam and kill him and Jeroboam winds up having to go to Egypt and basically live out the rest of Solomon's reign there basically to defend his own life. This is a guy who grew up the son of King David who had to have heard the stories of what his father went through when this very same thing happened to Saul, his father's predecessor, and who's chasing him around and trying to pin him to the wall with a spear trying to kill him with the same type of logic, "God can't replace me with a dead man."

So here we have the wisest man who ever lived in human history who is given an incredible gift of wisdom by God Himself, who not only amazed the people in Israel and all the leaders in the nations around him, who would travel to Israel to be taught by this guy and to be wowed by his tremendous understanding, making colossally bad decisions, doing things that we can today look at from a common sense standpoint and go, “Okay, you thought having a thousand wives was a good idea? You didn’t see the train wreck coming here?” We look at this and go, “How does this happen? How does a guy start from the place where he was and wind up making such colossally bad decisions?”

As I mentioned last time, we’re going to answer that question today. What we’re going to do is look at the book of Ecclesiastes which gives us more of, what you might say, are the behind-the-scenes story of what was going on in this man’s mind and heart that caused this significant transition in his life.

If you’d like a title for this sermon, we’re picking up in Part II in this one, so the title of this sermon is:

Learning the Hard Way: Lessons from the Life of Solomon - Part 2

When you think about the title, Learning the Hard Way: Lessons from the Life of Solomon, in a lot of ways this could actually be like a subheading to the title of the Book of Ecclesiastes, because that’s exactly what the Book of Ecclesiastes is about. It’s written by Solomon and it’s a story to tell us some major lessons he had to learn the hard way because he insisted on learning it through his own experience rather than simply taking God’s word for it.

So let’s turn now to the Book of Ecclesiastes. We’re not going to go through the whole book, but we will go through several chapters to get a feel for this behind-the-scenes story. As you’re turning to the Book of Ecclesiastes, I want to summarize, to kind of set the scene for what’s happening in this book. The Book of Ecclesiastes is very often looked at by the professing Christian world as a very cynical book. If you read a lot of the comments that Solomon makes here, he looks kind of cynical and sarcastic in a lot of the approach that it takes. It’s important to understand what is going on in this book. As I mentioned, this is a book written for a man to kind of express, “Here’s a lot of lessons that I learned the hard way.” What you’ll see reading through this book is several things. You’ll hear him talk about this story as he is telling it after the fact, because you can see from where the book ends that this is a man looking back on his life after he’s learned a lot of these lessons and he is recording the story for us. But as he goes through telling this, there are times where he talks about, “I said in my heart” ... thus and such. He’s telling you, “Here’s what I was thinking; as I went down this road, these were the thoughts that were going through my head and this was the logic I was thinking when I made these decisions.” Then he’ll tell you how that turned out and sometimes he’ll turn back around and tell you ultimate lessons that he learned from it,

you know, kind of bouncing between these perspectives. It's important to understand that as you read through this book.

What we're going to see here is that this was, you might say, a failed experiment in some ways where a man set out to find the best way to have the most fulfilling, enjoyable, pleasurable life possible. But he tries to do that through purely physical means, by satisfying all of his physical desires and physical senses. It really backfires on him.

With that in mind, let's start off reading in Ecclesiastes 1:1.

Ecclesiastes 1:1. *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. (NKJV)*

Now we know from this statement this is obviously Solomon writing this book. It never directly uses him by name here, but who was the king of David who became king in Jerusalem and ruled over Israel? That would be Solomon. So we know for a fact that is who this has to be.

2) *"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all [is] vanity."* (NKJV)

Now personally I think the meaning of this verse is a little clearer in some other translations and here is why I say this. If you're like me, when I think of the word "vanity", the picture that tends to come to mind is a person standing in front of a mirror thinking, "Well, I'm good looking, aren't I? Aren't I just so attractive! Doesn't everybody want to be like me?" Because you think that's a person who is vain. That's not really the idea of what this is saying. That's probably how we most often use the word vanity in our modern day culture. But the idea that Solomon is trying to get across here is being empty or meaningless. In fact to reiterate that understanding, let me read to you Ecclesiastes 1:2 in the NIV translation. I think it gets this across a little clearer. The way the NIV translates verse 2 is:

Ecclesiastes 1:2. *"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."* (NIV)

That's more the idea of what he is getting across. He's not talking about conceit; he's talking about it being empty and meaningless, without a real purpose. So pick up in verse 3.

3) *What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?*

4) *[One] generation passes away, and [another] generation comes; but the earth abides forever.*

5) *The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose.*

- 6) *The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit.*
- 7) *All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea [is] not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again.*
- 8) *All things [are] full of labor; man cannot express [it]. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. (NKJV)*

Now notice that comment. As I mentioned, and we're going to see this as we go through the next chapter or two, this story is about Solomon who set out to find what was the most enjoyable, fulfilling, pleasurable way to live life. He tries to do it by just satisfying his physical desires and senses. But one of the lessons he learned from this is physically speaking, our human carnal desires, just satisfying our senses is a bottomless pit. In other words he says, "*The eye is never full of seeing; the ear is never full of hearing.*" Think about that. We may love to listen to beautiful music that we enjoy, but do we ever hear any music that is just so beautiful, do we think, "Well, I'll just never have to listen to any other again. That was just so satisfying I'll never need to hear it again." No. That lasts for a little while and then we want to hear more or we want to hear something different. The same is true with beautiful scenery. One of the things I love to do whenever the opportunity is available is travel to beautiful mountainous picturesque areas and hike around and just enjoy the scenery. But I have to tell you, after I take a trip like that, yes, it's wonderfully satisfying, but does that fill me up for the rest of my life and think I'll never have to do that again? No. After a while I'm thinking, "Where could I go next? What haven't I seen? What haven't I done? We want to do it again and we want to fulfill that some more.

If we think about our normal desires, what happens when we buy a nice new car and it's all shiny. We are thrilled with it and we're all excited. What happens after a few years though? I might want a little newer one, a fancier one or one with newer bells and whistles. Even with our houses, we can be really happy and after a while we think maybe I'd like a bigger one or newer one or put some additions on it. I'm not saying there is anything inherently bad about that, I'm just saying that is how we are as physical human beings. It's never enough.

So when we look at that satisfaction in life, we have to realize if we look at it purely from the means of satisfying our physical senses and desires, we have to inherently realize that they are a bottomless pit. If we are just trying to meet those desires and fulfill those, it will never be enough and we will always want more. That's the very idea that Solomon was getting at, because as we're going to see as we read through this story, he tried to take on everything he ever thought was pleasurable, thinking it was going to satisfy him. He wound up frustrated and unfulfilled and feeling that life was meaningless because he couldn't fill up that bottomless pit. That's what happened.

Let's pick up now in verse 9.

Ecclesiastes 1:9. *That which has been [is] what will be, that which [is] done is what will be done, and [there is] nothing new under the sun.*

10) *Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.*

11) *[There is] no remembrance of former [things], nor will there be any remembrance of [things] that are to come by [those] who will come after.*

12) *I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.*

13) *And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. (NKJV)*

We are starting to get to the point here of what this whole experience was about. He is setting his heart to figure these things out. But let's follow not only what he is trying to figure out, but how he goes about trying to do it. That's going to tell us a great deal about how this man made this incredible transition in his life.

14) *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all [is] vanity (or meaningless) and grasping for the wind.*

15) *[What is] crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered.*

16) *I communed with my heart, saying, ... (NKJV)*

In other words, "this is the logic of what was going on in my heart, what I was saying to myself when I came to this decision."

16 continued) ... *"Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."*

17) *And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. ... (NKJV)*

We're going to come back here in a minute and dissect this sentence because there is a lot we can glean from what this is about from this very sentence. Continuing on ...

17 continued) ... *I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.*

18) *For in much wisdom [is] much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. (NKJV)*

Notice he said, "I set my heart to know madness and to know folly." What is he really saying here? What exactly is the meaning that he is getting at here? Well, to understand that let's dissect this from the standpoint of the Hebrew words that were used to make this English translation and see what Solomon was really saying by this.

First of all he set to know madness. What does it mean by madness? Now the Hebrew word that is translated as madness in English; and I'll warn you ahead of time here that I'm probably going to butcher the pronunciations, but what is more important is the meaning of these words. This word is transliterated into English as "holelot"; it's Strong's number 1947. According to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old

Testament by Warren and Baker, it's defined as *a feminine plural noun referring to madness, delusion*. It is found only in the Book of Ecclesiastes and means *madness; the tendency to try anything to know its outcome*. We have a modern day expression, I think, that states the idea that this is getting at. We refer to throwing caution to the wind. In other words, "Whatever whim strikes me I'll just do it, try it and see how it turns out and throw caution aside." Don't look at any warning signs, just do whatever feels good. That's kind of what he's saying here, the desire to try anything to see how it turns out.

Notice he wanted to know madness and he wanted to know folly. What does folly mean? What does the Hebrew word mean? Okay so the Hebrew word that is translated as "folly" in English is transliterated as "siklut", Strong's number 5531. According to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren and Baker it's defined as *a feminine noun meaning folly, foolishness. It is a way of life devoid of wisdom, God, self understanding and an understanding of others*. That is interesting. Notice what he is saying here. "I want to understand madness", essentially throwing caution to the wind, just impulsively trying anything to see how it turns out, "and I also want to understand a way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom." How does he want to know them? What does he mean by knowing them? Let's look at that Hebrew word. The Hebrew word used here for "know" is transliterated into English as "yada"; it's Strong's number 3045 and again according to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren and Baker here is how it's defined: *a verb meaning to know, to learn, to perceive, to experience*. One of the primary uses means *to know relationally or experientially*.

So understand what he is saying here. He's not saying, "I want to know the difference between wisdom and folly and madness from God's perspective and I'm going to study the writings of Moses and Joshua and all the other people that God has inspired. I'm going to pray and ask God and watch and observe others and I'll learn it from this observation." That's not what he is saying here. He is saying, "I want to know this relationally and experientially." In other words, "I want to learn it from a hands-on experience." He's saying, "I want to learn the way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom." He's saying, "I going to go out and play with fire." He's not saying, "I want to learn this from observation; no, I want to do it hands-on." That's what he is saying.

With that in mind, let's continue on in chapter 2:1.

Ecclesiastes 2:1. *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also [was] vanity (or meaningless).*
2) *I said of laughter – "Madness!" and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"*
3) *I searched in my heart [how] to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. (NKJV)*

Here in verse 3 we really get to the core of what this story is about. As we go through this we're going to jump to the end of the story where he talks about the conclusion of

the whole matter. Well, what was the whole matter he was looking at in this book? He was setting out to find the best way for a person to live, what led to the most fulfilling, enjoyable, positive life. Like he said, "All the days that we're here on this earth, what's the best way to live that?" That's the question he is asking. But notice what he talked about doing here. "I want to lay hold of folly." It's that same idea. "I want to first-hand experience this, a way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom." Notice what he also says here, because it's really a crazy statement when you think about it. "But I'm going to guide myself with Godly wisdom while I do it." Think about that. "I'm going to experience the way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom, but I'll guide myself with wisdom while I do it." Isn't that a duplicitous statement? It is. It's what we today would call living a double life, or having one foot in the world and one foot in the Church. Because we think we can kind of play both sides of it and enjoy both worlds and get the benefits of both and somehow we can play with this fire and not get burned. That's what he is telling himself. "I can stick my hand in that fire and I won't get burned." This is one of the ways his wisdom bit him, because this is a man with incredible understanding, but he had human nature as well, that deceptive side of us that wants to justify things and pull us into sin.

What do we tend to do as sinful human beings? As I mentioned last time, if you've ever been involved in the sales industry or seen any professional sales training, one of the things they train those in the sales industry to know, and this is just on how to appeal to people and convince them to buy products, is that people have the tendency to make decisions with emotion and then turn around and reverse engineer a logic to back up that decision. They train salesmen with this because you want to appeal to a person's emotions; "You deserve this product. You really need this product." They get that emotion locked on it because they will reverse engineer logic to make it make sense to do it.

We tend to do that same thing with our own carnal human nature with our physical carnal desires. If something appeals to our lust or our greed or our selfishness or whatever, we tend to say that's what we want to do, but then we have to rationalize it in our mind. We have to find a way to tell ourselves why it's a good idea and why it makes sense to do that. We'll tend to turn around and kind of reverse engineer that.

You can just imagine what Solomon would have thought of. How does a guy justify in his mind, "I want to go pursue a way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom but I'll guide myself with wisdom while I do it." In some way or fashion he decided, "I'm the exception. It will be okay for me to do it, because I'm so smart I'll do it so skillfully. I'll stick my hand in that fire and I won't get burned." Isn't that what we all tell ourselves when we compromise with sin? Isn't some version of that what we always convince ourselves with? "Yes, I know that going down this road is wrong, but I really want to do it anyway." So we then come up with a way to tell ourselves it's okay and we justify what we often call today living a double life. We have one foot in the world and one foot in the Church and we convince ourselves that "I can do this and it won't turn out disastrously for me." If it didn't work for the wisest man in the history of mankind, why would it make sense that it's going to work for us? It won't. It doesn't work for anybody.

Just to illustrate this point, let me share with you a couple of severe examples of this very behavior. This type of logic here that Solomon is using is something we all can be guilty of in our carnal lives, but let me just show you some of the extremes this can go to. These are accounts where I am personally aware of both of these situations.

With this first one I may have a few of the details wrong because it's been probably close to thirty years since I heard this story. I can assure you I heard it firsthand from the person involved. Probably in the early to mid eighties a headquarters evangelist came out and visited the church area where I was attending at the time. In giving the sermon he related this story; I heard it from him firsthand. He's telling this story that he was working in his office in Pasadena. I forget exactly why but he wanted a meeting with a particular gentleman that wanted to talk to him. In the course of the conversation, he realizes that the person he is talking to is possessed by a demon, because there is a point in the conversation where he realizes, "I'm not really just talking to the physical human being that walked in here. I'm talking to the demon that has possessed this individual." But instead of making the decision to throw this guy out of his office, cast out the demon, if appropriate, or something of that nature, he decides he would like to learn some things from this. He had a strong interest in history. What he decided was, "Hey, I'm now face to face with a being that has lived throughout all human history and has probably been a witness to all the things that I'm curious about." So he decides to start interviewing the demon and trying to glean information about history as a result of that. What he is deciding now is, "I can toy with the way of life devoid of God and devoid of Godly wisdom, but because I'm so spiritually strong I can handle it." Because literally when he told the story in the sermon, that's how he presented the logic. He basically said, "I'm so spiritually strong I can handle this situation." I was a teenager when I'm hearing this story. Of course, my reaction then was not as it would be as an adult today, but even back then as a teenager I'm listening to this story going, "Isn't there something terribly wrong with this logic? Isn't this wrong?" There was something in the back of my mind saying that this just doesn't add up.

Let me just jump ahead and tell you how the story ended with this gentleman. Move ahead ten years in history where the Church is basically being attacked through an apostasy of a lot of Catholic and Protestant teachings and being led off into heresy. This gentleman totally buys into it. He totally teaches it and supports that whole movement. He wasn't as spiritually strong as he thought he was because you can't play that game and have it not get to you.

Let me jump to more recent story. The end of this has played out in the last few months. There's an individual that today in Church of God circles has become fairly famous, you might say, for a website that he maintains. He tends to publish a lot of articles on news and prophetic things and oftentimes Church doctrinal related types of subjects. But he has taken a propensity over the last few years, I want to say, at least that I've been aware, of really looking into what he himself would describe as Catholic prophecies. In other words, supposedly prophetic writings that were written by people associated with the Catholic Church throughout history. Now if you ask this individual,

is the Catholic Church the Church of God or is that who God is working through? He would readily tell you, no. That is not the case. He would readily tell you that the Catholic Church has been one of the major forces that has been involved in paganizing what is now referred to as Christianity in our world today. But at the same time he is also looking to these sources thinking maybe there's some gleanings of wisdom and prophetic understanding he can get from these guys. I even saw this in his own words. The rationale that he used to justify that conclusion was, maybe when God was making the revelations that He did to Daniel or to the Apostle John in revealing Revelation, Satan and his demons probably witnessed some of these exchanges and maybe were aware of inside information involved in these types of things. That's his logic for going down this road. Well, fairly recently this individual not only decided that these Catholic prophecies were accurate, he decided a number of them were prophesying about himself. They were prophesying about his role in what he was going to bring on the scene and things he was going to do. In fact, he has recently declared himself a prophet. He has started his own Church of God organization to get his own following. Now this is an individual who was never ordained to any office in the Church of God ever to my knowledge, but that's what he has convinced himself of. This is what playing that game did to him.

You can't play with the fire, you can't look at this and say, "Well, I'm so strong that I can go play with fire and the fire won't burn me, because I will outsmart it." It does not work that way.

Just to reinforce this point, turn over to Job, chapter 41. Let's look at a warning that was given here in the Book of Job about dealing with Satan. You notice in both of these cases the first individual as I mentioned was directly dealing with a demon and knew he was directly dealing with a demon. In the second case, this was an individual that didn't directly deal with demons but dealt with sources that he knew were inspired by demons and he himself would even state that.

Job 41:1. *Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, ... (NKJV)*

Now Leviathan here is a picture of Satan.

- 1 continued) ... Or [snare] his tongue with a line [which] you lower?
- 2) Can you put a reed through his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?
- 3) Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to you?
- 4) Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him as a servant forever?
- 5) Will you play with him as [with] a bird, or will you leash him for your maidens?
- 6) Will [your] companions make a banquet of him? Will they apportion him among the merchants?
- 7) Can you fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears? (NKJV)

Basically God is saying, "Can you handle all this? Could you take him on by yourself?" The obvious answer is no as we are about to read here. The lesson God is trying to show Job is that "this Leviathan is so much more powerful than you, but I am much

more powerful than him.” This is what God is trying to demonstrate here, because “I have taken this guy as a servant, but he’s not somebody you should dare take on by yourself.”

8) *Lay your hand on him; remember the battle – never do it again!*

9) *Indeed, [any] hope of [overcoming] him is false (vain); shall [one not] be overwhelmed at the sight of him?*

10) *No one [is so] fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who then is able to stand against Me? (NKJV)*

The point He was making here to Job is, “Leviathan (Satan) is dramatically more powerful than you. You don’t stand a chance against him. Well, Leviathan doesn’t stand a chance against Me,” is what God is saying. “I’m far more powerful than him. I can make him do what I want.”

But notice here what He is saying to Job. You wouldn’t dare want to take him on by yourself. When we try to embrace the way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom, that is Satan’s way of life. If you try to take that on and say, “Oh I’m so spiritually strong that I can handle it.” No, you can’t. Nobody can. Nobody is that strong. The wisest man in human history didn’t successfully do that. None of us would have a shot at it either.

Let’s turn back to Ecclesiastes and pick up where we were. Let’s notice here when Solomon got into this mindset the actions that he took. He’s got it in his head now, “I can just take on whatever I want and because I’m so wise I can get away with it. I can play with fire and I won’t get burned.”

Ecclesiastes 2:4. *I made my works great; I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.*

5) *I made myself gardens and orchards and I planted all [kinds] of fruit trees in them.*

6) *I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.*

7) *I acquired male and female servants and had servants born in my house.*

Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

8) *I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, [and] musical instruments of all kinds.*

9) *So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. (NKJV)*

Now we’re going to come back to that statement in a moment, but just remember that.

10) *Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor.*

11) *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all [was] vanity and grasping for the wind. [There was] no profit under the sun. (NKJV)*

Notice what he did. He talks here about all the things he built and he got servants and he acquired gold and he got entertainers and he did all these physical things. Now none of these, in and of themselves, are inherently bad. It's not bad to enjoy life. It's not bad to build things, but the important thing is to realize that this became an all consuming focus for him. Notice also he said, "*Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.*" Oh, you know this is going to lead to trouble in a hurry! Because think about that, he is basically abandoning the concept of self control. "If it felt good to me, I pursued it." That's what he is saying. "I didn't withhold anything from myself." If you just think about that; with a normal carnal human being if they just let their carnal nature run wild, how much selfishness, lust and greed and other motivations he would have. If it felt good he did it. That's going to wind up in the ditch in a hurry. It becomes an all consuming thing. All his efforts are constantly trying to fulfill every physical desire that he had.

Notice he says here while he's doing all this, "*Also my wisdom remained with me.*" That's a puzzling statement for us to look at. Okay, he is this incredibly wise man. We know that, but these are not the actions of a wise person. A wise person doesn't abandon the concept of self restraint. They realize that pursuing a way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom is not a good idea. Godly wisdom looks at that and goes the way that is devoid of God and devoid of wisdom; I don't want to go down that path. I want to stay away from that and veer in the other direction. That's not what he does.

It's important to realize that there is a big difference between having the understanding to know what is right and having the character and the self control to do it. That's one of the biggest things that happened here. He has the wisdom to understand what the right thing is, but he has given up self control, so whatever his physical carnal desire is he pursues. Wisdom can become corrupted.

Turn with me to Ezekiel. Let's look at another example of Satan. We're going to see interesting parallels between Satan's life and the life of Solomon. Turn to Ezekiel 28:11.

Ezekiel 28:11. *Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,
12) "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him,
'Thus says the Lord God: ... (NKJV)*

Now we won't take the time to go through all of this, but if you read through this it is obvious that the king of Tyre is a picture of Satan. Pick up in verse 12.

12 continued) ... "you [were] the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. (NKJV)

Notice when God originally made him as an archangel, he was full of wisdom. He had a lot of wisdom, far wiser than a human being would be. Let's notice what happened due to the choices that he made. Jump down to verse 17.

17) "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;" (NKJV)

Notice his wisdom got corrupted because God had given him a good bit of understanding obviously. But what did he do? He eventually got full of himself and decided he could take on God. He decided he could replace God, he could outwit God and have his own will. That kind of sounds similar to Solomon, doesn't it? Because Solomon was given this tremendous gift of wisdom, tremendous riches that God blessed him with, but what does Solomon eventually do? When God eventually comes to him and says, "I'm taking the majority of the kingdom away from you", Solomon decides, "I'll just outwit God. He can't replace me with a dead man. I'll just chase down Jeroboam and kill him and I'll win." It's the same type of thinking. He has this incredible understanding, but wisdom can become corrupted.

Let's go back to the Book of Ecclesiastes and pick up where we left off.

Ecclesiastes 2:12. *Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what [can] the man [do] who succeeds the king? -- [Only] what he has already done.*

13) Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness,

14) The wise man's eyes [are] in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all.

15) So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also [is] vanity (meaningless)."

16) For [there is] no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now [is] will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise [man] die? As the fool! (NKJV)

In other words they both live out their lives, they both die, they both are buried and life goes on.

17) Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun [was] distressing to me, for all [is] vanity (meaningless) and grasping for the wind.

18) Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

19) And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also [is] vanity.

20) Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. NKJV)

He is very depressed, despondent and feels that life is empty and meaningless through all of this. This was a guy who set out to make life a big party, to fulfill one carnal desire after another and just thought he was going to have a life of bliss. It turned out the exact opposite.

Let me share with you the meaning of “despair” so you get the feel for where he was at. It is the Hebrew word transliterated as “yaash”, Strong’s number 2976 and according to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker, it is defined as *a verb meaning to despair*. The word refers to the word despair in the sense that one concludes that something desirable is out of reach and usually stops working toward it. The word may refer to loss of hope in God or a false god. It may also refer similarly to a loss of meaning in life.

Throughout this book Solomon keeps saying, “And this too was meaningless.” Everything was utterly meaningless, because it lost its value to him. He is completely despairing from this, trying to constantly seek his carnal physical desires.

But notice what also happened to him. He went from being a guy, when he started off this whole venture, asking for a gift that would not just benefit himself, but everyone. Even when he came back from that dream and he throws a feast, he doesn’t just do it for his own benefit; he does it for all of his servants. He is looking out for the overall good of others.

Now here he is talking about, “You mean when I die I can’t take it all with me? This is all meaningless.” This is a guy with a thousand wives. This is a guy who had to have a lot of children as a result of this. Certainly I’m sure a lot of these marriages came about as political alliances. He didn’t necessarily have a relationship with them, but realize also that this was a guy who said, “Anything that was pleasing to my eyes I didn’t withhold it from myself.” You know one of the things that happened there. He got into a number of these marriages because, “She’s gorgeous and she’s gorgeous and she’s gorgeous! I think I’ll have them all!” So you know his sex drive was probably one of the things that he let run rampant in getting him into this situation and there would be a number of children from this.

With all this wealth, there’s no thought of, “Hey, I can benefit my children and my grandchildren and generations to come and see that they are all taken care of for years.” No. His thought is, “You mean when I die I can’t take it all with me? This isn’t going to satisfy just me forever?” That total selfishness is what ruined him. Oftentimes when we think like that, in our minds we say, “I’m looking out for number one.” We think of ourselves as number one. “I’m just looking out for what is good for me.” In all reality, if that becomes our total focus, what do we wind up doing? Well, I’m making number one miserable and it ends up not being for our benefit. That’s an important lesson to look at in life.

Let’s continue on and pick up in verse 22.

Ecclesiastes 2:22. *For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?*

23) *For all his days [are] sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. (Or this, too, is meaningless.)*

24) *Nothing [is] better for a man [than] that he should eat and drink, and [that] his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.*

25) *For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment more than I? (NKJV)*

In other words, “Who is a bigger lottery winner than me?” We often think in our world today, “Oh, if I just won the lottery!” You hear people talking about that. “All my problems would be solved. I could quit this job and I could just vacation and life would be a party.” That was Solomon’s life! He had unlimited resources. That’s how he got a thousand wives. He didn’t have to stop. He didn’t run out of resources. He could just keep adding more and more and more, and it didn’t turn out the way he was hoping.

26) *For [God] gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who [is] good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to [him who is] good before God. This also [is] vanity and grasping for the wind. (NKJV)*

In other words, this too is meaningless is what he is saying.

Well, we can see from this a lot of the mistakes that Solomon made. He started off not taking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because his whole approach was, “God, I want You to give me a discerning heart. You define for me what is good and what is evil by your Godly understanding, and I’ll follow that because I’m a little kid and I don’t know how to go.” He winds up in the end doing the exact opposite. “I’m going to decide for myself. I want to know the way of life devoid of God and devoid of wisdom and I want to know it relationally and experientially. I want to do it hands-on.” That’s what he did and surprise, surprise: it bit him. Things didn’t turn out and he didn’t wind up happy. It wound up having a disastrous end and that’s part of the lesson he learned from this.

Now if we look at how the Book of Ecclesiastes is written and especially how it ends, it very much suggests for us that this is a man who learned these lessons the hard way and came to understand this and to repent before he died.

While we are wrapping up here, turn over to Ecclesiastes, chapter 12 and we will wrap up this particular thought. As I mentioned before, if we went through just the account in Kings and when it ends there in 1 Kings 11, you had a picture of Solomon chasing Jeroboam. Jeroboam has to run to Egypt to flee because Solomon is trying to kill him because he is trying to outwit God. Then it kind of wraps up his life and says Solomon died. That would lead us to the assumption that Solomon died in rebellion to God, but I think when we look at the Book of Ecclesiastes it gives us a different picture. If you look at this book, as I mentioned, it’s very much written from the perspective of someone

who is looking back at their past mistakes, who has learned the hard way from them and is sharing that lesson for us in the hopes that we wouldn't have to learn the hard way.

As I mentioned, he is going to refer to the conclusion of the whole matter here. That matter was, how does a person have the most enjoyable, fulfilling, pleasurable life that they can have all the days that they are on the earth? That was the question he was wrestling with as he writes this. He tells us the answer in chapter 12:13.

Ecclesiastes 12:13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.*

14) For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. (NKJV)

So he is saying, "Don't do what I did. Look to God to define good and evil. Follow His instructions. It just turns out a whole lot better that way." That is what he is saying to us in the hopes that we can learn from his experience and not have to repeat these experiments in our own lives.

But again, and I'll certainly put this as my opinion, this leads me to the conclusion that Solomon repented before he died, because I have a very difficult time picturing someone writing this and giving this advice and he's still trying to chase Jeroboam and kill him thinking that he is going to outwit God. That seems very inconsistent. To me this has to be a guy that repented and came to realize the error of his ways and is trying to pass on the lessons he learned from this so we don't have to repeat these mistakes.

Now in looking at this series, we've looked at a lot of the bad decisions that Solomon made, in spite of the incredible gift of wisdom that he was given. As I mentioned, we can sit back from our perspective with some of the decisions he made, especially look at the logistics and the number of wives he had and the obvious problems that would lead to, it leaves us going, "Okay, how did the wisest man in the world make some of these bone-headed decisions? Isn't some of this obvious?"

I think to get a balanced picture here it's also important for us to realize the situation that Solomon got put into in terms of the pressure that was put upon his human nature. I think it's important to have an accurate picture so we understand where he was at and how he would fall into these traps. As I mentioned, we talked about this last time, there were two great gifts given to Solomon. God tells us outright in 1 Kings 3 that Solomon would be the wisest man who ever lived in the history of mankind, that there would be no one wiser before or after him. We are also told that he would be the richest man of his time. Not that there hasn't been anyone richer since then, because it doesn't word it like that, but it says in his time he would be the wealthiest man. He would be the Bill Gates, the Warren Buffet or the Donald Trump of his age.

Now when we think about the situation that put him in with both of those things, there's a lot of pull on human nature. Being a carnal, selfish, human nature person like all the

rest of us, what that could do to a guy and what that could do to him over a period of decades. I think it's important that we realize that. There are a couple of warnings in the New Testament that speak to this.

Turn with me to Matthew 19. What we're going to see here is that both of these things, although God certainly intended them as blessings for him, they could turn into curses based on the choices one makes.

Matthew 19:23. *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."*

24) *"And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

25) *When His disciples heard [it], they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"*

26) *But Jesus looked at [them] and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (NKJV)*

Christ here directly warns us that it can be very difficult for a person with a lot of physical riches of this life to make it into God's kingdom. Why is that? It's because we as physical people tend to trust in them. It tends to be better for us if God keeps us humble and looking to Him, or if we have a lot of the means of this world we tend to be comfortable with that. Or we tend to do what Solomon did.

Notice this was a guy who built his mansion and then he built gardens and fountains and he just took on all these other projects. He got servants for himself and he brought in wife after wife after wife. How was he able to do all of that? It's because he had more money than he knew what to do with. That's what enabled him to pursue all of this. He said, "I want singers and I want servants," so anything he could put in his mind to pursue, lack of resources wouldn't stop him from doing it. He had more resources than he knew what to do with. That was also a curse. As much as that was a blessing for him, his choices turned it into a curse. I'm not blaming God for that, I'm just saying it was the way he chose to deal with it.

Think about the position that put him in as a carnal human being. All of a sudden you could have anything you ever wanted. What can happen? Life can quickly become the pursuit of this pleasure and that pleasure and that pleasure and then what happens to your relationship with God? It kind of becomes an afterthought because there's so much fun to be had! There are so many things to pursue. There is so much I want to do. That's what winds up consuming Solomon's life, it's all these things he can do with these riches. That ends up really playing to his human nature. Because remember he is also king. He is the highest governing authority in the nation. There is nobody to tell him no. He doesn't run out of resources and that's why he keeps doing this.

If you think of even polygamist societies, those still exist today, but you don't see anyone with a thousand wives. If for nothing else they run out of resources so they stop bringing more wives because they can't support them. If you have unlimited resources

like Solomon did, you can just keep adding to the problem and that's what he wound up doing. I think it's important for us to realize that (and put ourselves in his shoes) so we don't look at him and think, "How could this guy be so foolish?" Well, he had the carnal human nature that all of us have, but there just were no built-in restraints so it allowed him to take it as far as he wanted to go.

Also notice he was given an incredible gift of wisdom. Let's look at some biblical warnings of what great knowledge and understanding can do to us. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians, chapter 8 and we'll see where the Apostle Paul gives us some warnings on this.

1 Corinthians 8:1. *Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.*

2) *And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.*

3) *But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. (NKJV)*

If you think about that, what Paul is saying here is knowledge can go to our heads. We can get impressed with ourselves and think that, as the slang expression is today, "that we are all that and a bag of chips." We've got it all figured out; we're the man. If you think about the situation that Solomon got put in, he wasn't just the wisest man in Israel, he didn't just impress everyone there, the kings and queens of other nations around him (we're given the example of the Queen of Sheba) came to visit him to be wowed by how much wisdom he had and his understanding and to challenge him with difficult questions. Even the story of the Queen of Sheba that we read last time, she throws every difficult situation she can throw at him and Solomon handles it all fine. Her assessment is, "Wow, even the stories I was told didn't half way address how incredible your wisdom is." Even the rumor mill couldn't embellish it too much. Imagine being in a situation where for decades people come up to you and go, "Wow, you're just so incredible! Your understanding is so vast. You just knock my socks off!" And you hear that every day of your life for decades. What could that do to a person's ego? What kind of inflation of arrogance could this produce over time as we start liking to hear that, even though you know that God specifically gave you this gift. After a while you kind of think, "Yah, I am the man. I really do have it all figured out. I really am that impressive." That's what can happen.

The Apostle Paul tells us that God gave him a trial specifically to try to avoid this very problem with him. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 12:7.

2 Corinthians 12:7. *And lest I should be exalted above measure (Why?) by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.*

8) *Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*

9) *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

10) *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (NKJV)*

There was this thorn in the flesh that Paul received here. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly what this is. We have speculated about it for years, but we don't know for sure because the Bible simply doesn't say. Probably the most common speculation that is made about this is that it was a health problem and maybe specifically an eye problem, but again we don't know. What we do know from this account is whatever it was this was a trial that Paul did not enjoy receiving. This was something that one way or another, whether it was physically painful or emotionally painful, whatever level of pain that was, this was not a pleasurable experience for Paul. He pleaded three times to God, "Please take this away from me. I'm not enjoying this experience." God specifically comes back and says, "No, I'm giving it to you for your own good so I'm not going to take it away from you."

Let's notice why he gave that to him. He said, "*Lest I be exalted because of the abundance of the revelations.*" What does he mean by exalted? The Greek word here that is translated into English as "exalted" is transliterated as "huperairo". It's Strong's number 5229 and according to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiro Zodhiades, it's defined as: *to lift above, elevate, exalt, be conceited, arrogant, insolent*. In other words what Paul is saying here is, because so much was revealed to him, because remember this is the Apostle Paul. He wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else did. If we want to look at the New Testament, who was kind of the poster child superstar? It was the Apostle Paul. We have more books from him than anyone.

So God obviously used him very powerfully and revealed a lot of knowledge to him. But Paul was saying, "You know what? I am a carnal human being and that could go to my head and that could cause me to be arrogant and think, 'I'm the man! I've got it all figured out. I'm all big and bad,' when in reality I'm just the instrument that God struck down on the road to Damascus and God said, 'I'm going to reveal this to you and use you as My servant.'" But it was really God that did all of this. What Paul is telling us here is, "God did me a favor even though I didn't enjoy the experience. God didn't want me to fall into the ditch of becoming full of myself and becoming arrogant and thinking that I figured it out on my own. So God gave me this thorn in the flesh that was really an unpleasant experience that I did not enjoy and I wanted it to go away, but God was trying to help me out and do me this favor to protect me from myself."

Well, the point I want to get at is if you look at Solomon's life, none of that is recorded for him. We look at his life and he's kind of like, what we would consider today, a lottery winner. Everything went good. If you look at his situation, he is given this tremendous understanding and wisdom, he's given great riches, he's king of the nation and has all

power. There are no significant wars or conflicts during his reign. He has everything. He's the top governing authority in the nation, so nobody can really tell him "no". So any woman he wants he brings into his harem and any project he wants to take on he does it. There is no record of any health problems he had, and again, we don't have everything about his life in the Bible, but there are no thorns in the flesh given to him that we have recorded. What can that do to a guy's human nature? I think it's important for us to realize in looking back on his life that he got kind of set up here in a very difficult situation where his carnal human nature could go rampant. That's what happened. Even though he had all this incredible understanding, there's a huge difference between understanding right and wrong and having the self discipline to make yourself do what you need to do.

There's also a great lesson in, you might say, satisfaction in life and mental health that came about as a result of looking at these stories. What I mean by that is that we previously covered what happened in Solomon's life and the whole Book of Ecclesiastes is a man setting out to try to find the most enjoyable, pleasurable, positive and fun way to live life. But he tries to do it through physical means and God gives him every physical thing he would want to do until he just runs that one in the ditch. But his life in terms of what we would physically carnally think of is just having a wonderful life; he's the lottery winner that everyone dreams about being. He has everything, yet he winds up miserable.

Let's contrast his life with the life of the Apostle Paul, because there is quite an interesting contrast between these two and it will teach us some lessons about satisfaction in life. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 11:22. We've seen what Solomon's life was like. For the most part it was a big party. Picking up in verse 22, we're going to see what Paul's life was like.

2 Corinthians 11:22. *Are they Hebrews? So [am] I. Are they Israelites? So [am] I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So [am] I.*

23) Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool – I [am] more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

24) From the Jews five times I received forty [stripes] minus one.

25) Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26) [in] journeys often, [in] perils of waters, [[in] perils of robbers, [in] perils of [my own] countrymen, [in] perils of the Gentiles, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren;

27) in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness –

28) besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the Churches. (NKJV)

Now think about the life we just read here. If we were to compare these two and if God, as He did with Solomon, were to come to one of us and say, "I've got two choices for you. You can be king; you can be the number one ruler in the nation; you can have

tremendous understanding and intellect and wisdom and impress all those around you. You can have riches more than you know what to do with. You will never run out of stuff to do and life can be a big party. Would you like that or would you like to be the guy with health problems you are begging to go away from; you're going to be shipwrecked; you're going to be stoned; you're going to be thrown into prison; you're going to be beaten; you're going to be persecuted; you're going to have trial after trial after trial after trial. Which one of those two would you want?" That's a no brainer, isn't it? Just carnally physically speaking, I'll take the Solomon ride. That's sounds a whole lot more fun. Isn't that the way we would want to go? Because physically speaking it sounds a whole lot better. But if you look at how it turned out, we saw what happened with a lot of Solomon's life. He's miserable. He's saying it's meaningless, "I hate it, I despair; I may as well just die because I can't take it all with me when I'm dead."

Let's notice what Paul's view of life was. Turn with me to Philippians 4:11.

Philippians 4:11. *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:*

12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)

This is the guy facing all these severe trials, one after another after another after another. That's a list, we just read, that no one would willfully want to sign up for. It doesn't sound like any fun. But in spite of dealing with all of this, he found how to be happy. He found how to have satisfaction in life in spite of his difficult circumstances. Don't get me wrong, being physical human beings, is it a lot easier to be happy when life is going good? Sure, it is. That's just being human. But the point here is in spite of all the adversity he finds satisfaction and meaning in life.

We won't take the time to do it, but if you read through a lot of Paul's epistles he talks about his joy and he talks about the things he is looking forward to. You see this vision and hope for the future and some satisfaction in all of this. Whereas you read through much of Ecclesiastes it's "everything is meaningless and I hate it." You can see this vast contrast.

One of the big bottom line lessons in all of this is true happiness and fulfillment in life comes from having our mind in sync with God's. It comes from God's spirit and our minds being ruled by God's spirit.

To wrap up here, let's turn to Galatians 5:22. This is a familiar scripture. What Paul shares with us here are the results of a mind that is being ruled by God's spirit.

Galatians 5:22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, ... (NKJV)*

Notice that second one.

22 Continued) ... joy, ... (NKJV)

Wasn't that what Solomon was seeking? How to have the most joyful enjoyable life?

*22 Continued) ... peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJV)*

We just read about the life of the guy who wrote this. He had adversities; he had trial after trial after trial, yet he still found joy in his life and meaning and satisfaction. That was because he found it spiritually through God being involved in his life and God's Holy Spirit ruling his mind. Just to further support this point, turn with me to 2 Timothy, chapter 1 and we'll read verse 7.

2 Timothy 1:7. *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (NKJV)*

The point I'm getting at here is that the most important factor in, you might say, mental health, satisfaction, fulfillment in life, is obtaining that spiritually through God's holy spirit ruling our minds. That is the most important key.

So to wrap up here, let's turn back to the end of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Just to summarize, as we know the story of Solomon, especially as recorded for us in Ecclesiastes, is very much a story of a man learning lessons the hard way. Because all learning in life is experiential, but we don't always have to be the one doing the experiencing. If we are smart we are able to learn from the examples of others.

As we saw in the introduction last time, Paul even shows us that is the very reason the Bible was recorded, to give us examples of all the experiences these individuals had gone through in hopes that we would learn from their example and not have to repeat all these things ourselves. Solomon was a man who set out specifically to find the way to have the most enjoyable, happy fulfilling life possible.

To end the sermon here, I'd just like to end with the same conclusion that Solomon gives us and the answer to that very question.

Ecclesiastes 12:13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

14) For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. (NKJV)