

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (July 21, 2024)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

This morning, and for the next two Sundays, we take a short break from our year-long sermon series in the book of Acts. We are turning our attention to the book of Ecclesiastes. The writer of this book, a very wise soul, reflects on: wisdom, pleasure, our temporariness, wealth. He gave himself to, and explored, each. What he discovered challenges our world, and our priorities, today.

His great wisdom only took him so far. This week he will say the same about his pursuit of pleasure. The temptation to make pleasure our life focus is pervasive and perennial. His life, chasing pleasure without restraint, did not bring him what he hoped for. He learned hard lessons. He paid a high cost. We can learn from him ... and save ourselves much grief. Will we? Will I? I pray so ...

Summer Series Ecclesiastes: Pleasure is Vapor (Ecclesiastes 2) ESV

Some verses omitted due to space. Please read the entire chapter.

^{2:1} I said in my heart, 'Come now, **I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.**' But behold, this also was **vanity**. ² I said of laughter, 'It is mad,' and of pleasure, 'What use is it?' ³ **I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine**—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the **few days of their life**. ⁴ I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

⁹ So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰ And **whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil**, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹ Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, **all was vanity and a striving after wind**, and there was **nothing to be gained** under the sun.

(verses 12-14 omitted) ¹⁵ Then I said in my heart, "**What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?**" And I said in my heart that this also is **vanity**. ¹⁶ For of the wise as of

the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. **How the wise dies just like the fool!** ¹⁷ So **I hated life**, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for **all is vanity and a striving after wind**.

(verses 18-21 omitted) ²² What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³ For **all his days are full of sorrow**, and **his work is a vexation**. Even **in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity**.

²⁴ There is **nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil**. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ **for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?** ²⁶ For **to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy**, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is **vanity and a striving after wind**."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. How does this writer describe his pursuit of pleasure?
2. What does he say about the brevity of life?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What does "vanity" mean to the writer of Ecclesiastes?
5. What does, "whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them" mean? v.10
6. What does, "how the wise dies just like the fool" mean? v.16

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. What are some pleasures (simple/complicated) people chase after? Are some pleasures good and others bad? Explain.
8. When does pursuing a pleasure become harmful?
9. Is the Bible for, or against, experiencing pleasure? Examples?
10. Did God create pleasure? Should Christians pursue pleasure?
11. What simple and complicated pleasures do you enjoy?
12. How do you guard yourself from the dangers of pleasure?
13. How do our pleasures here relate to pleasures in heaven?

As you spend time praying, remember that prayer is meant to be a natural part of your day. Prayer is a conversation: talking to God and listening to God. Ask God to help you reflect honestly on the pleasures you pursue in your life. Ask for God's help in seeking Him above all pleasures. He will help you because He loves you.