



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

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## **Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14**

The Providence of God and Aging

### **Enjoy the present and look forward to the future, 11:7-10**

In this conclusion of his investigation into the "vanity" of life, Solomon reminds us to enjoy all of life. Our lives are meant to be joyous, as pleasant to the eyes as the rising sun in the morning light, but with the consciousness that we must render an account before God.

vv. 7-8—The metaphors of light and darkness represent life and death respectively. We are to enjoy life now to its fullness. Enjoy the "pleasant light of the sun;" "enjoy them all." Death is filled "with days of darkness" and "comes with vanity" (in the sense of being an enigma).

vv. 9-10—The counsel here is to enjoy life, especially the years of "youth." "Follow the ways of your heart" and "the sight of your eyes" must be tempered by the reality of accountability toward God. Do not abuse this blessing of enjoyment with evil comforts and pleasures. Life must be livened with the values of eternity in view. V. 10 declares that wise living before God (i.e., accountability to Him) will reduce anxiety, sadness and sorrow in our lives. This results from a prudent lifestyle lived in the fear of the Lord.

### **Live for God every day, 12:1-7**

12:1—The focus here is on God as Creator and that we as His creatures. We are to "remember our Creator." The term "remember" means much more than mere recall. It connotes the idea of reflecting on and pondering the work of God in creating us. Such reflection and pondering of all that He is and all that He has done for us, naturally leads to a call for decisive action. God is the "Author" of life, which means we must obey Him faithfully and serve Him responsibly. Being a creature stipulates dependence. Live according to this proposition from your youth, Solomon suggests. To do so will lead to responsible living "before the evil days come," which, in context, clearly refers to the coming of old age—the subject of the next paragraph. There is little or no "pleasure" in those years.

v. 2—the approach of old age is compared to the coming of rain clouds, which block the light (i.e., the "sun, the moon and the stars.") Old age sees diminished joy (=light) and frequent gloom (=dark). There is diminished vitality with old age.

vv. 3-5—the figurative language of a decaying and unprotected house depicts the progressive

decay of the physical and psychological powers that go with old age. Each hampers our effectiveness in serving our Creator. For that reason, we are well-advised to serve God now with all our being before these "days" set in:

- "keepers of the house tremble"=arms and legs grow weak, often with palsy and feebleness
- "strong men stoop"=legs grow bent and feeble
- "grinders cease because they are few"=teeth lose the ability to chew
- "those looking through the windows grow dim"=eyesight is diminished
- "doors to the street are shut"=lips sinking in as teeth are lost
- "sound of the grinding is low"=toothless old age when only soft foods may be eaten; no noise accompanies eating.
- "one rises up at the sound of birds"=cannot sleep
- "all the daughters of song are brought low"=impaired hearing such that one cannot enjoy music
- "afraid of what is high and of terrors in the way"=fear of height and fear of stumbling and of venturing out
- "almond tree blossoms"=hair turns gray and white, for such blossoms are white
- "grasshopper drags himself along"=bent body and one's walk is slowed
- "desire fails"=diminished appetites
- "man goes to eternal home and mourners go about in streets"=death, grave and grieving people.

v. 6-7—Remember God (as in 12:1) before death comes:

- "before silver cord is snapped" which holds "the golden bowl"=the spine and nervous system deteriorate and the brain is affected
- "pitcher is shattered at the spring and wheel broken"=the heart and the circulatory system fail
- "dust" returns to ground and "spirit" to God=separation of the body and spirit that death brings

### Conclusion, 12:8-14

v. 8—here the common theme of the book is reiterated. How futile to have lived and not to have known the key to living. What a waste to have died without having enjoyed life or known what it is all about. By repeating the second verse of chapter 1, Solomon indicates that he has completed his argument. Hence, the conclusion.

vv. 9-10—here Solomon reviews his work, which was compiled in this book. He was a "wise" man, who "imparted knowledge to his people" (i.e., through this book). He took great care in producing this book, as reflected in the words "weighing," "studying" and "arranging." He therefore searched to find the "right words" that were "upright" and "true." The description of his method removes all doubts about hastiness of his thoughts and expressions.

w. 11-12—his words are like “goads” (used to prod oxen in to action) and “firmly embedded nails” (used by shepherds to fasten their tents), which means they are a guide and a stimulus for godly living and a secure basis for godly living. “Given by one Shepherd” is a clear reference to God, the Shepherd of Israel (see Genesis 49:24; Psalm 80:1; Psalm 95:6-7). But he warns his people to not seek anything in addition to His words, for there are many books and much study is wearying!

w. 13-14—the conclusion:

- “Fear God”—a worship word
- “Keep His commandments”—obedience
- Because humans are accountable to God—for everything, even the “secret” things. This is a comfort and is also most convicting.

What then is the profit of living? What does the human race get for all its work? What is the value and purpose of life? The answer is the living God! Humans are responsible beings, not brutes. The beginning, middle and end of life is coming to know and trust God; receiving His good gifts; learning how to enjoy these good gifts; understanding the major part of His plan for us; and being guided into the joyous and strenuous pursuit of the art of living, even though portions of this life are mysterious and uncertain.

The box of the universe is not closed. There is a transcendent God who has revealed Himself to us. We can know Him. We can enjoy Him. We can walk with Him. We can experience the joy and fulfillment He has intended for us. It is a life of faith and confident trust in Him.

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