

Lesson 85 - CHRIST, OUR REASON FOR LIVING *Ecclesiastes 1–2*

(Eccl. 1:1-11) - The principal doctrine of this book is that compared to the things of salvation and eternal life in Christ, the world and all things in it and of it are vain things. *“The fashion of this world passeth away”* (1 Cor. 7:31). Our Lord said, *“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?”* (Mark 8:36). What remains of this world (its labors, glory, relationships, titles of honor, wealth) after we are dead? Nothing at all! These all die with us. We go naked out of this world as we came into it. At the end of this book, the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to bring all of these thoughts to a grand conclusion - *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Eccl. 12:13-14).

(Eccl. 1:12) - Solomon was a man of whom it could be said that he had all that humans desire in life. As King of Israel, he had power and riches. As God’s appointed king and preacher, he had knowledge and wisdom that qualified him to teach others, especially in matters of salvation, righteousness, and eternal life by God’s grace in and by the promised Messiah. And though Solomon was a sinful man who showed great weakness in his life, he was a sinner saved by God’s grace. As king, Solomon judged in Israel righteously, but he did not always, in his personal life, act righteously. It is clear that the only righteousness he had before God was (and is) the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to him and which he received by God-given faith. If there was anyone who could speak first-hand of the vanities of the world and the true riches of God, it was the preacher-king, Solomon.

(Eccl. 1:13) - God the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to give his *“heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven”* (cf. 1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:29-31). *“This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith”* (cf. Eccl. 3:10-11). Mankind has a God-given desire for life, knowledge, and wisdom, but because of spiritual death and depravity, none desire or can attain to the knowledge and wisdom needed. This can only be given to us by God in His revelation of Himself in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). God gave this revelation, along with much wisdom in other areas, to Solomon.

(Eccl. 1:14-18) - Recognizing the vanity of *“all works that are done under the sun,”* and the impossibility of man being able to fix or even number the problems in the world due to sin, Solomon looked within his own heart rather than seeking council from other sinful men. We need to understand that Solomon’s heart was guided by God’s wisdom revealed to him. *“I gave my heart to seek and search out wisdom.”* Solomon made himself master of the arts and sciences; he gained knowledge of trades and vocations; he studied politics, philosophy, education, and history. He pursued human wisdom; not just superficial knowledge, but he penetrated into the depths of all that men can know. He concluded that when it comes to the best that men can attain - *“Behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit ... in much wisdom is much grief.”* The more a man knows of life here on earth, the more sensible he becomes of his ignorance and the insufficiency of such knowledge to make him eternally happy. All that worldly knowledge and wisdom can do, ultimately, is cause vexation of spirit and promote grief and sorrow. The wisdom of men is foolishness with God and only serves to take a man farther from God and promote misery of soul.

(Eccl. 2:1-11) - Solomon reasoned that since he could not find happiness in natural wisdom, he would seek it in all that this sinful world could offer. His conclusion - *“all was vanity and*

vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” There is no solid and substantial happiness nor lasting peace in any of it. It is a road that has no end and a hunger and thirst that is never satisfied. It always brings us to want more and more. This was (and is) a great testimony that nothing in human experience or human works can save us from our sins, make us eternally righteous or happy, nor gain for us eternal life. Salvation is not by the experiences or works of man. IT IS ALL OF GRACE BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE AND WORK OF CHRIST AS OUR SURETY, SUBSTITUTE, AND REDEEMER! God’s Word says, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6)*. Christ is the well-spring from which flows rivers of living water to quench our spiritual thirst. In and by Him our cups *“runneth over,”* and we are satisfied. We can truly rest our souls in Him and His finished work.

(Eccl. 2:12-23) - Wisdom is better than foolishness, but the wise man, like the fool, dies and leaves it all behind. Solomon’s view of natural life here on earth was, *“Therefore, I hated life, I hated my labor; for in itself, it is vanity and affords no peace nor rest.”* Here is the conclusion of the whole matter. There is a good life here and a greater life hereafter, if these things are put in their proper place. We can enjoy the good things God gives us in this life, but we do not overvalue them and trust in them.

(Eccl. 2:24-25) - Is it wrong for a man to study, to improve his mind, acquire an education, become a teacher, a mechanic, a builder, or an artist? Is it wrong to marry, build a house, plant a garden, raise a family, and enjoy our friends and life? No! *“There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink and enjoy his labor,”* for it is all from the hand of God! All that God gives us is to be received with thanksgiving and enjoyed. *“Who knows that more than I,”* says Solomon. God made me wise, God made me king, and God gave me what I have.

(Eccl. 2:26) - *“God gives to the man who is good in His sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.”*

1. Who is the man that is good in his sight? *“There is none good,”* say the scriptures. This is the man who is righteous and good in Christ because God has justified him by His grace based on the blood of Christ and His righteousness imputed (*Rom. 3:20-26; 2 Cor. 5:21*), and who has been given faith to believe, rest in, and follow Christ and live for the glory of God (*1 Cor. 1:29-31; 10:31*).

2. God gives him that wisdom, knowledge, and joy that enables him to properly enjoy the good of his labor. He is not spiritually wise by nature but made so by the regenerating grace of God. He has been made wise unto salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“I am what I am by the grace of God.”* What he knows and what he has, both temporally and eternally, are gifts of God (*James 1:17*)!

3. God gives the believer wisdom (*1 Cor. 1:24-30; Col. 2:3*). This enables him to understand the mysteries of grace and life, to understand what true riches are, to remember that a man’s life is not in meat and drink, to look on things which are NOT SEEN, and to hold lightly to all material possessions and relationships; for they are temporary (*Matt. 6:19-24; John 6:27; Luke 12:13-21*).

4. God gives the believer knowledge (*2 Tim. 1:12; John 17:3*). He knows the source of all mercies and blessings. He knows how to use them and not be used by them. He knows how to be a generous and good steward. He knows how to be abased and to abound. He knows that the earth is the Lord’s!

5. God gives the believer true joy (*Rom. 5:11*). Our eternal joy is not in this world nor in anything it holds; our joy and rejoicing are in our Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 15:13*). We rejoice that our names are in His book, and we are in Him (*Php. 3:1-3*).