

**I. The Test of Wisdom (vv 12-14a).**

- A. Context: Seeking to answer the question of 1:3: Test of Pleasure (2:1-11) — Test of Wisdom (2:12-17) — Test of Labour (2:18-26)
- B. The Test of Wisdom Explained (Eccl 1:17)
- C. The Necessity of Wisdom (Eccl 1:9-10)
- D. The Benefit of Wisdom
  - 1) The word *excels* is the same for *profit* or *advantage* in 1:3
  - 2) The benefits of wisdom over and against folly
    - a) God has created the world according to wisdom (Pr 3:19)
    - b) Though it is painful for wisdom to show the sinfulness of sin, it is better than remaining in folly because it also shows to us the righteousness of Christ.
    - c) The greatest wisdom (so-called) of man is foolishness compared to the true wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:25)
    - d) Wisdom is better than folly because just as light causes darkness to flee, so will the wisdom of Christ in the Gospel conquer the darkness of this world (Jn 1:4-5)
    - e) Wisdom is better than folly because, like light, wisdom is the way of life while folly, like darkness, is the way of death (Pr 3:18)
- E. Uses from the Text
  - 1) We must recognize our (and others') total depravity (Jn 3:19)
  - 2) Heed the warning
  - 3) Obey the implicit command

**II. The Frustration of Wisdom (vv 14b-16).**

- A. The Two Problems
  - 1) We all die (Ruth 2:3)
  - 2) The wise are not going to be remembered (Eccl 1:11)
- B. The Two Frustrating Conclusions of Wisdom (v 15)
  - 1) If we're all going to die, why be wise? (Psa 146:4)
  - 2) Everything is just fleeting (Psa 115:17; Eccl 9:10)
- C. Uses from the Text
  - 1) Let us see this text as instruction in wisdom (1 Cor 8:1)
  - 2) Begin to deal with the fact death now before the final trial of dying (Job 3:20-26)
  - 3) Three-Fold Comfort
    - a) Wisdom is still better than folly.
    - b) Man may not remember our works, but God does

(Jdg 10:1-2; Psa 56:8).

- c) You may not be known but your works will continue to affect others after you (Pr 10:7; Rev 14:13)
- 4) This shows our need for a robust doctrine of heaven and hell (Psa 49:13-15)

**III. Solomon's Hatred of Life (v 17).**

- A. Solomon's Hatred of Life
  - 1) Exposition: Not that he hated his life, but was felt deeply and painfully the burden of all existence.
  - 2) Two-Fold Reasons
    - a) *Because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me* (Rom 7:21-25a)
    - b) The fleetingness of it all
- B. Uses from the Text
  - 1) We see here the horrific effects of sin in this life, and are therefore called to a rightly ordered affections (Gen 2:17)
  - 2) We are to discern between righteous vexation and sinful despair.
    - a) Cases of Conscience: (i) Is the affection itself proper in its content, context and proportion? (ii) Can you find any parallels, precepts, or promises in the Scripture which address your situation? (iii) Do you scorn the reminder of God's promises from others, particularly from our elders? (iv) Do you view your suffering as taking precedent over your duties toward God and others, or do you still fulfill your vows and obligations? (v) Does this suffering point you to this world, or to the Lord, as your portion?
    - b) How to overcome the temptation to despair of life: (i) Do not overestimate your sorrow/suffering. (ii) Do not underestimate your sorrow/suffering. (iii) Apply faith that all this is for your good. (iv) Remember that this vale of tears is temporary and fleeting. (v) Meditate upon the hope of heaven. (vi) Fellowship with the saints. (vii) Find ways to serve others rather than yourself.
  - 3) Let us believe that God the Son freely came into this world and has borne this curse and our sins upon Himself, and (as the one greater than Solomon) the Lord Jesus Christ despised its shame (Heb 12:2)
  - 4) Let us consider this hatred, which is actually a removal of all earthly pride and glory in ourselves, is a good place to start in the Christian life (Lk 14:26; Phil 1:21-23)