

Who Knows? Who Can Tell?  
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Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. <sup>11</sup>The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? <sup>12</sup>For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain<sup>[a]</sup> life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

A good name is better than precious ointment,  
and the day of death than the day of birth.

<sup>2</sup> It is better to go to the house of mourning  
than to go to the house of feasting,  
for this is the end of all mankind,  
and the living will lay it to heart.

<sup>3</sup> Sorrow is better than laughter,  
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

<sup>4</sup> The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,  
but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

<sup>5</sup> It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise  
than to hear the song of fools.

<sup>6</sup> For as the crackling of thorns under a pot,  
so is the laughter of the fools;  
this also is vanity.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Surely oppression drives the wise into madness,  
and a bribe corrupts the heart.

<sup>8</sup> Better is the end of a thing than its beginning,  
and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

<sup>9</sup> Be not quick in your spirit to become angry,  
for anger lodges in the heart<sup>[c]</sup> of fools.

<sup>10</sup> Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?"  
For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

<sup>11</sup> Wisdom is good with an inheritance,  
an advantage to those who see the sun.

<sup>12</sup> For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money,

and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.

<sup>13</sup> Consider the work of God:

who can make straight what he has made crooked?

<sup>14</sup> In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

<sup>15</sup> In my vain <sup>[d]</sup> life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. <sup>16</sup> Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? <sup>17</sup> Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? <sup>18</sup> It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.

<sup>19</sup> Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.

<sup>20</sup> Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

<sup>21</sup> Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. <sup>22</sup> Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.

<sup>23</sup> All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. <sup>24</sup> That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out?

<sup>25</sup> I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. <sup>26</sup> And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. <sup>27</sup> Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things— <sup>28</sup> which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. <sup>29</sup> See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes. — Ecclesiastes 6:10-7:29

In the Face of Vanity We can Still Know and Do Good

### 3 Reflections

1. This is Wisdom: The Day of Death is Better than the Day of Birth.
2. This is Reality: Sin is Far More Pervasive than We Think.
3. This is Hope: Jesus is Greater and the Solution!

Sin – anything (whether in thought, attitude, or action) that does not conform to the holy character of God is expressed in his moral law.

Depravity – the sinful condition apart from God’s grace, where humans are inclined to serve their own will and desires and to reject God’s rightful rule over them.

“I cringe inside when I speak in churches about the holiness of God. I can anticipate the responses of the people. They leave the sanctuary convinced that they have just been in the presence of a holy man. Because they hear me preach about holiness, they assume I must be as holy as the message I preach. That’s when I want to cry, ‘Woe is me.’ I am sure that the reason I have a deep hunger to learn the holiness of God is precisely because I am not holy. I am a profane man – a man who spends more time out of the temple than in it.” – RC Sproul, ‘The Holiness of God’

‘And we rejoice that for our sake God made him who knew no sin to become sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God.’ – 2 Corinthians 5:21

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,<sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,<sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. – 1 Corinthians 1:22-24

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.<sup>[a]</sup> Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” – John 11:25-26

1. Consider: What do you binge watch? Where do you go for ‘escape’?
2. Don’t suppress hardship and mystery. Let it lead you to Jesus.
3. Embrace the training.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,<sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age... - Titus 2:11-12

4. O Death, Where is Your Sting! Qohelet didn’t know what we know!

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,<sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on<sup>[a]</sup> we may not be found naked.<sup>4</sup> For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but

that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. – 2  
Corinthians 5:1-5