

01-03-04b Ecclesiastes

We're ready now to resume our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2. And we see that Solomon is perplexed about something. That's why he started on this investigation in the first place. Most of us just blow through life and don't necessarily stop and evaluate what is the lasting value of what we're doing.

It's easy to just get caught up in day-to-day life. And there's been songs written about this and lots of truisms and observations made over the years that you stick up your head one day and realize that your kids are grown and you've gotten old and you didn't. That's why people are always saying stop and smell the roses and all of this because we get caught up in the cycle of daily life and wind up frittering away most of our time if we're not careful.

Well, I heard a preacher on the radio this morning. Oddly enough, he's in Ecclesiastes. I didn't know it until it came on.

But he was in Ecclesiastes chapter 2 and he is following the traditional understanding of this book which is that Solomon was unhappy and was going to try different avenues to be happy and that he tried all of these bad ways. And I want to familiarize you, if you are not already, with how this book is typically approached because you can see how it came about. It is not an easy subject to introduce.

It's not an easy subject to explain. And when Solomon says, and it doesn't help any that the translation is not the best. So, when you start out in verse 13 of chapter 1, after having seen that all vanity, vanity, all is vanity, and people saying, well, what's the point? It's all futile, why bother? Which is not it at all.

But that's how people come into the book. So, when they get to 12 and 13, I was king, I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done. This burdensome task God has given to the sons of men by which they may be exercised or tested or afflicted.

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun. Indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. It's all a waste of time.

Well, the problem with the traditional approach that says Solomon thought he would use all of the human means to try to achieve happiness is, if Solomon begins and says, when I look around and I see everything that's done under the sun, it's all a waste of time, then why would he launch, I mean, he's already found his conclusion, it's all a waste of time. So, why try these different things? Because most people go on and say, well, Solomon is going to try to find happiness in, first of all, in wisdom, in intellectual pursuits. So, he says, I've got greatness, I've gained more wisdom, my heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge, in verse 16.

And in 17, I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceive that this also

is grasping for the wind. So, most, if you go to most quarterlies or most commentaries, they'll say, well, here's Solomon on his quest for happiness and fulfillment.

And the first thing he tries is philosophy and intellectual pursuits. And he says, I tried that and I came up empty. So then, he said, well, I'm going to try to find happiness and fulfillment in pleasure.

And so in chapter 2, I said, in my heart, come now, I'll test you with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure. But surely this also was vanity. I said, of laughter, it's madness, and of mirth, what does it accomplish? I searched in my heart, so in humor and pleasure and all that, he's not having any luck either.

I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, with guiding my heart with wisdom, how to lay hold on folly, so that I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. So, basically, people kind of gloss over the finer points and just say, well, he tried the brain approach and that didn't work. Now, he's trying the body approach.

He's going to gratify his flesh, eat, drink, and be merry. But he says this also isn't any good. So then, he's going to try the third thing.

And, of course, you can get all kinds of application out of this for wrapping up your sermon. The place where the fellow was this morning was in verse 4. And he says, well, here's Solomon in his third area of investigation. He's going to try to find happiness in his work.

So, I made my works great. I built houses, planted vineyards, gardens, orchards, fruit trees, water pools, growing of trees, male and female servants, great possessions, herds and flocks, gathered silver and gold, treasures of kings, acquired singers, delights of sons of men, musical instruments. In verse 9, great, excelled more than all before me in Jerusalem.

My wisdom remained with me, didn't keep anything. And so, this is, then they have to stop here. You know, he doesn't make any conclusion there.

But they say, well, this is Solomon trying to find gratification in his work. And woe unto you if you get so busy and you're gone all the time. And you say, well, I'm busy making the money for my family and you're not there.

All of these things are fine. Those principles are good. We shouldn't let work overwhelm us any more than any other area of life.

And that's all fine. But that is usually as much as is taken from this passage. It is what they used to fondly refer to in seminary as a springboard passage.

A springboard passage is one that doesn't have a lot of good meat in it when you're looking at it in terms of it doesn't preach very well. So you use it as a springboard. It's like a diving board.

And you spring off of that passage and dive into something you really do want to talk about. So if you think, well, we've got the workaholic syndrome here, I'll come to Ecclesiastes 2, verses 4 through 9, and I'll launch off into, woe unto you if you don't take care of your family ahead of your work. Perfectly good principle.

Good thing to think about and all. But that's not what Solomon is after here. First of all, where has Solomon anywhere in this first chapter and a half said anything about being happy? About whether or not he personally was happy? He hasn't, has he? He has said, I have seen things that are havel and that are grasping for the wind.

And if you translate that vanity, then you can say, well, I want to find something that doesn't seem like it's futile. And you can infer from that that, well, he must be looking for happiness. Solomon hasn't said anything about, I was desperately unhappy, and I said, I'm going to try to make myself happy by pleasure.

I'm going to try to make myself happy in wisdom. I'm going to try to make myself happy in my work. Solomon is happy.

Happiness is not what he's looking for. Let me have you skip ahead just a little bit. This section I quickly reviewed here in chapter 2, verse 4 through 9. Where does he say it here? Oh, yeah, verse 10.

Whatever my eyes desired, I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, and my heart rejoiced in all my labor. And this was my reward from all my labor.

He enjoys it. He has great joy. And he exposes himself and indulges in all different kinds of mirth and pleasure.

He's having a good time. He's not over in the corner, kicking his toe in the dirt, saying, oh, this party's no fun. Oh, I'm not having a good time learning or partying or building and working.

That is not the point. But that is the way this is typically understood and applied. So I just want to let you know the path that we are diverging from.

That's it. That's how you would normally hear this interpreted. But it doesn't work very well because as you go forward in the book, you have to start saying, well, Solomon is just expressing human viewpoint.

He's saying things that don't match the rest of the Word of God. And so it's inspired uninspiration, if you will. It's all inspired.

Every word, you know, this is the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration. Every word of the original is inspired. It's God-breathed.

So if this is a part of the Bible, but Solomon is expressing human viewpoint, we need some way of knowing that. We can't just pick and choose and say, well, chapter 3, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck and all that. That's inspired.

And 3.14, I know whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added, nothing taken from it. That's inspired.

But chapter 4 is not inspired or it's inspired human viewpoint or it's the inspired record of human viewpoint or something because Solomon says, I return and consider. Look at chapter 4, verse 1. I return and consider all the oppression that is done under the sun. And look, the tears of the oppressed, they have no comforter.

On the side of their oppressors there is power, but they have no comforter. Therefore I praise the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still alive. Yet better than both is he who has never existed, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Is this God's viewpoint, better to not ever be born and not have to see the evil under the sun? Well, if not, where is the marker that tells us, where in the text do we find out, well, this is God's thinking and this is not? Do we have to figure it out from the rest of Scripture and apply the rest of Scripture and say, well, now, that verse 2 and 3 out of chapter 4, that's not right. Well, if we're having to use the rest of the Bible to decide which of this expresses God's true viewpoint and which of it expresses man's viewpoint, what good is it? It's not telling us anything. We're having to go figure it out.

It would just be an exercise in application. The Word of God is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. And we've got plenty of situations to apply the Word of God to and decide, well, is this idea and this statement, this viewpoint here, does this reflect God's thinking? Is this biblical or is this human viewpoint? We don't need a book in the Bible to give us experience in that.

So why would this be here if it's here to tell us something? And if it's going to tell us some good things and some bad, there needs to be a marker. For example, I'll give you a great example over in Romans. Remember Romans chapter 7 when Paul says, once I was alive apart from the law, but when the law came, sin revived and I died, and I found there to be a law that with my mind, I'm paraphrasing, but with my mind I want to serve God, but with my body I serve the law of sin.

Who will deliver me from this body? There is a clear marker. If you remember our study in Romans chapter 7, there is a clear marker there where Paul says, this is how I was back then, and I there is put for the Old Testament age. This is where we were before Christ, where even when we wanted to serve, we could not.

But now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus for what the law could not do, Romans chapter 8, 1, 2, and 3 down through there, what the law couldn't do, Christ has done. So

his thinking and his limitations and so forth are delineated for us and marked out in Romans chapter 7, and then there is a contrast and we say, well now here we are in Christ in Romans chapter 8. There are no such markers in Ecclesiastes. This is one of the first clues that we have, that this book has been widely misunderstood because in order to make any sense of it from the traditional view, you just have to flip-flop and say, well now this is Solomon in his human viewpoint, but now here when he says, God will judge the righteous and the wicked in chapter 3, verse 17, there is a time for every purpose and for every work.

Okay, well that is good thinking there, but over here in chapter 4, that is not good thinking. Back and forth, flipping and flopping around with no clue as to how we are supposed to take it and we have to try to work backwards and make judgments on the text rather than being instructed by the text. And that is the big flaw with this well-meaning but very superficial grappling with Ecclesiastes.

So if it seems like we are having to spend a lot of time here at the beginning reorienting ourselves, this is why. It is a very difficult thing to get into this book and shed the baggage of vanity, vanity and this idea that Solomon is some sort of a hedonist and a guy who is going to try every human means for happiness. Happiness is not the issue.

Permanence is the issue. Eternity is the issue. That is what this book is about, not happiness.

Solomon is happy. Solomon is going to talk about many happy people that he sees who are both righteous and wicked. He is not on a quest for happiness.

He is not on a quest for fulfillment in that traditional sense. What he does want is an answer to the question where is the net profit? Where is the yitron? After all of these suns have finished rising and setting, after all the winds have blown and the creeks have flown, at the end of the day, literally, what do you have left that you can hold in your hand? Lots of people are happy. As I mentioned in the first session, we have this false notion.

Of course, it ties in. We have so many misconceptions, I think, in the church today. We think our mission is to evangelize.

We think we are supposed to take the gospel to a lost and dying world, which is certainly one of the functions that the church fulfills. But we then move from that and say, well, our life is primarily valuable for its testimony effect. You mainly need to be holy because it's a testimony so that you can evangelize.

And your main goal is to find ways to witness and to preach the gospel. Win the world by the year 2000, they used to say, five or six years ago. Well, now we are in 2001 and the world has not been won and it never will be won.

The world will never be won. There will only be a brief period when it's even close to being won.

And that's in the early days of the Millennial Kingdom.

But within weeks, there's going to begin the seeds of the Gog Magog Rebellion springing up. And over the course of that thousand years, there's going to be a huge segment of the human population that's going to rise up and join with Satan when he is loosed from the pit in the Gog Magog Rebellion. And there will be these tares growing amongst the wheat all during Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

So, you're not going to win the world by any year and that is not our purpose. But in connection with all of this, people say, well, you know, you need to... Christianity needs to be attractive. You've got to have a good witness and it ought to be something that draws people.

And so, this is how the prosperity people... Why do you think they put all that gold on the chairs down at TBN and hang the big drapes and gild and over-gild and over-decorate and make a big splash? How do they rationalize that? Christianity needs to be attractive. We don't want the hair shirt. That's not going to win anybody to Christ, saying, well, you're not going to be any more prosperous.

It's offering happiness. God will solve your problems. God will make you happy.

God will give you prosperity. God will give you peace. God will make the crooked straight.

God will fill the gap. Well, that is true, but not in the way that people think. Because if people come to God saying, you know, I'm lonely and I want relationships or I'm poor and I want money or I'm being held down and I want professional accomplishment or I want a better family life or I want a better marriage or I want a better sense of fulfillment and control, I want to lose my insecurities, I want to lose weight, I want to gain weight, I want to do whatever.

People have goals that they want to accomplish, and Christianity in connection with psychology says, well, hey, you know, if you want to bring people in, get them under the roof of the church, offer them what they're looking for. If they want a glorious feeling, if they want to be carried off on a wave of positive emotion, create a worship service that produces that effect with music and with praise, with praise chants and with smiling people who are going to turn around and shake your hand and so forth. And all of this makes sense.

All of this is justifiable because it's all contributing to the mission. We've got to win people to Christ. We've got to make Christianity attractive.

It's got to look good. It's got to be desirable. It's got to be like the woman whose lips are dripping with honey so that they'll follow it and pursue it.

That is not the biblical view, but people just don't, believers do not sit down and read their Bible. The Bible doesn't say, where does the Apostle Paul or Peter or John or the Lord Jesus Christ ever say, you've got to go out and make the cross attractive. You've got to put a, what does the

Bible say about Christ? He had no form or comeliness that we should admire him.

His face was marred. He bought our salvation with his stripes and his bruises. He didn't come waltzing in being carried on a golden chair.

Well, I could rant on that for a while. But the point here is we have to pay attention to what the Word of God is saying. And it is not a quest for happiness that we're engaged in.

You would think that that's what it's all about. That's what Christianity goes forth and says. Come to God and he'll make you happy.

Happiness is not the issue. For an unbeliever, sin, righteousness and judgment is the issue. And rather than going out and being a happiness peddler, we saw the movie of the musical Oklahoma.

And you remember Eddie Albert is in there. He's a traveling sales guy and he's got his little cart and he gets tangled up with that 8-0 Annie and so on. But he's trying to find something that people are interested in.

They come up and he shows them one thing and they don't want it. He shows them something else and they don't want it. He shows them something else and they bought it last year and it broke and they don't want another one.

So then the old Mrs. Partridge there, Shirley Jones, comes up. Well, I had to work my way back. Shirley Jones comes up and she's young and she doesn't want any of that other stuff.

But then he brings out this bottle of snake oil and he says this is from Egypt and you sniff it and everything will come clear. So she goes and sits in a rocking chair and sniffs it. And then a couple of ballet dancers come in and it gets weird at that point.

But the idea there is he's selling happiness. He's trying to find what people are looking for and give it to them. And today when you look around the church, it's just like Eddie Albert in that play, in that movie.

Digging through the wagon trying to find something that somebody will buy to get them to come in. And it's a sad travesty and it's a great failure on the part of the church to not pursue our calling as individuals and as the body of Christ and let God and the Holy Spirit convict of sin and righteous judgment for us to be ready to give an answer, for us to concentrate not on finding happiness. Part of the reason people keep offering that to others is they think that that's why they came.

Well, I'm here for happiness and I think I've found it. I've got a squeaky clean social life. I've got a good place for my kids to go on evenings and weekends.

I kind of get a catharsis every week or so and get rid of my baggage of guilt. I feel like I've kind of put my chips on a good number here because I'm kind of doing the right thing at church and so God's not going to hammer me too bad and so I should have a measure of financial security and hopefully nothing bad will happen to me. This is why people fall apart so badly when disaster hits.

And you look around in the Christian community and when somebody gets hospitalized, when somebody suffers a setback or adversity, you have a bus full of kids get killed someplace, Columbine type of things. We had this shooting over in Fort Worth at the church. And people, it completely shakes the whole fabric of their faith because this is what has happened.

We've moved into that Israelite view that prevailed in Jesus' day where we kind of figure, well, we've covered the bases with God and he's going to kind of provide that prosperous happy life and that's the goal. Well, Solomon says that's not the goal he's looking for. He's looking for something that has value.

When you subtract your expenses and so forth from your profits and you arrive at the net, that's what made it worthwhile. That's what made it worth doing. Why do you engage in a business? Dan's got a business.

We've been self-employed. Everybody that goes through that, especially when you have your own, and it's all up to you, if you don't have an employer, if you don't do it, it doesn't get done. Or you've got to hire somebody to get it done.

But if you hire somebody, that's an expense. And you say, I'm buying equipment, I'm investing in travel and training and all of these other things, I've got phones and all kinds of bills. Well, when all is said and done and you subtract out all your expenses and from your income, hopefully you've got a positive number there that makes it worthwhile.

And, well, you're not running a charity where you just go into red month after month after month. Of course, the United States government does, but we're supposed to be making a profit. And that's what Solomon's looking for, Yitron.

That word is going to be coming up again here soon. So we have to understand this. And I've beat on it about as much as I dare without losing your interest.

So when we see these labels, even in the New King James, it says the vanity, it's not the vanity of wisdom. They've labeled this section, the last part of Chapter 1, the vanity of wisdom. It's not the vanity of wisdom.

Where in here does it say anything about the vanity of wisdom? I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning everything that's done under heaven. If Solomon didn't have his wisdom with him, he wouldn't be able to judge because wisdom is that measuring stick I mentioned earlier. How are you going to know when you find that tangible, graspable thing? It's

actually intangible, but it's that thing that you look for when you reach out and instead of grasping the wind, you grasp and you lay hold on something.

You know, in the New Testament it says lay hold on eternal life. He tells Timothy, lay hold on that for which you were laid hold of by Christ. He says that's what he's doing for himself.

He uses different words and different vocabulary, but Paul talks many times about seizing and laying hold of something that lasts. That's what Solomon's looking for. How do you know when you find it? Because it's not just something that makes you feel good.

It's not just something that puts up an appearance that other people can look at and admire. You have to have wisdom to tell you here it is. So Solomon is going to use Chakmah, C-H-A-K-M-A-H.

That's what I'm going to use, he says in verse 13, concerning all that is done under heaven. This grievous answer, this unsatisfactory answer, this misery-inducing answer, Ra, that's so often translated evil there in verse 13, this burdensome task as they translate it here. It's not a task and it's not a burden.

It's unsatisfactory. It doesn't answer the question. It doesn't give this answer that God has given to the sons of men to be answered with.

I've seen all the works that are done under the sun. See, they label this the vanity of wisdom. What is he looking at when he says that it's Havel and grasping the wind? He's looking at the works that are done under the sun.

The works are Havel. The works are grasping at the wind. How does he know that? He's applying Chakmah.

He's applying wisdom to draw that conclusion. Because he looks at the works done under the sun and he says, look, they're working and working and working trying to straighten this crooked stuff out and it's not straightening. They're shoveling and shoveling and shoveling trying to fill in this lack and it's not being filled.

So he communed with his heart. He says, look, I've attained greatness. I've gained more Chakmah than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

By the way, I've been thinking about this before me in Jerusalem because the people that say this wasn't written by Solomon, hundreds of years later and so forth, it's pseudo-Solomon, and that he sort of had a slip here. And what he's really thinking about is he's posing as a king and thinking of all of the kings that reigned in Judah and that they were all in Jerusalem and they had their ups and downs in prosperity and so forth. But he sort of slips because he's supposed to be Solomon and there really has only been one king before him in Jerusalem, and that's David.

So when he says all those who were before me in Jerusalem, well, there's only one before him in

Jerusalem in terms of the king. And David is the one that came to Jerusalem. Before that, it was the Jebusite capital.

So is he talking about the Canaanite kings who were before him in Jerusalem? That doesn't seem to make much sense. It doesn't make much sense to me any way you slice it if you look at it in terms of chronology, all who were before me chronologically in Jerusalem because there just hasn't been that many. But this is another one of those versatile phrases, actually, in Hebrew because this is literally before my face.

This word works the same in Hebrew as before does in English. We can say bow before me, and that means bow in front of me, bow because you're standing in my presence. We also say before in the sense of back then, yesterday, years gone by.

And so before is actually a very excellent translation of this. It literally means before my face. The word *pene* is there, my face or face.

And so Solomon says all those who were before my face in Jerusalem. And my understanding of this is that Solomon is not so much looking back historically as he's looking around. You remember Solomon had one of the largest cabinets, one of the largest governments that has ever existed.

David assembled a lot of this. You go back to the roster of David's mighty men, the singers and the Levites and the priests and all the others that were assembled by David and were set up, the sons of Korah doing the singing and all the rest of it. And then he's got all of these administrators.

And Solomon's kingdom is vast. It's as big as Israel ever got. He's got governors and whatever you want to call them, satraps and administrators and higher and higher levels of military leaders, administrative leaders, government leaders all over the place.

They all work for him. They're all in front of him. They're all before him.

And there are other very rich individuals. Solomon is not the only one amassing wealth and amassing experiences in Jerusalem. Everybody, you know, the rising tide has floated all boats here.

And there are many, many prosperous people, contractors for the temple and for the palace, the trade, the security that Solomon enjoyed because of David's military victories. Merchants are doing well. Everyone is doing well.

And so there's a huge population in Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel. And everybody before Solomon's face, there are lots of Donald Trumps and rich entrepreneurs in the land. So I would suggest to you that when Solomon says in verse 16, I have attained greatness, I have gained more wisdom than all, this were is not, you know, you can't do much with tenses in Hebrew.

It can mean were, are, sometimes even will be. All who are before me in Jerusalem, it may just be the people that he's observing, everybody that he looks around and sees. And it could include his father.

He looks around and he says, there's nobody in my view, nobody before my face, whether you're looking chronologically or geographically. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge. And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.

The infinitive here in verse 17, to know, is from Yadah. And the infinitive, a lot of times for a Hebrew verb, you put the Lamed in front of it. You put an L, just like we put TO in front of a word.

We say, know, I know, you know, he, she or it knows. And then if we want to make an infinitive, we say, to know. To know oneself is man's greatest something.

Well, the first use here, I set my heart to know, that's the Lamed and then Da'at, which is the infinitive form of Yadah. It's a weak verb, the Y drops off and so on. Well, the second one here is just Da'at.

It doesn't have the Lamed in front. Sometimes in Hebrew, the infinitive drops that Lamed. But Da'at is also the word for knowledge.

So it is equally, you know, the evidence is 50-50. You could also translate this, I set my heart to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly. Now people say, well, it's a tautology, it's redundant, it makes no sense to say I set my heart to know knowledge.

But maybe not. You go back and read Proverbs Chapter 2 and there are phrases similar to this. So this may be sort of a balance.

I set my heart to know both ends of the spectrum, wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly. I wanted to fully, I wanted to comprehend it and understand it. Wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly.

I perceived that this also is grasping the wind. Just studying what can be known, that didn't give him the answer he was looking for. There is no permanence in gaining knowledge.

As soon as you go brain dead, your knowledge is gone. In much wisdom is much grief and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. We covered this last time.

And in much wisdom is much chaos. And it has the idea of frustration. The more you know, the more you realize that you can't get there from here.

We watched Gettysburg based on the novel The Killer Angels by Michael Schara last night. And one of the things, if you know anything about the Battle of Gettysburg, because the Union Army got there and seized the high ground, seized the good ground, and some of the Confederate

generals who could have taken that ground for inexplicable reasons just didn't. Because Jeb Stuart Lee's eyes wasn't there for inexplicable reasons, he didn't come to appreciate what he needed to do as soon as he could have.

But as that situation developed over the course of those three days, there were men who knew ahead of time that the Confederate army should not attack up that long slope to Seminary Ridge, that they shouldn't try to take Little Round Top. They could see it clear as day. They could see the whole thing unfolding before their eyes.

In fact, Schara does a good job of putting these words in Longstreet's mouth. Longstreet talks about it. He can unfold it.

He can see it happening as though it has already happened, as though it's already a memory. And he sees them going up the slope and being chopped up. John Buford on the Union side, Schara gives him the same vision.

If he doesn't take that high ground, if he doesn't use his dismounted cavalry and seize and hold that ground before the Confederate army comes up, he says, I can see it all now. It's like it's already happened. And the situation would be reversed and they would be the ones getting cut to bits.

So knowing ahead of time what could happen or what would happen, Longstreet was Lee's closest confidant. If Lee would listen to anybody in the army, it would be Longstreet. And Longstreet pleaded with him not to attack at Gettysburg, to move off and take a defensive position, cut off the Union army from its supplies and wait for them to meet them on the ground of their choosing and destroy them.

They came within an eyelash of winning at Gettysburg anyway. Pickett's Charge, they made it to the stone wall. They almost broke the line.

But Longstreet knew they couldn't take it. He knew it ahead of time. He had the knowledge.

And this is my point. Knowing something doesn't make you able to accomplish it. You can know exactly what ought to be.

If you've ever been in this situation, if you have a besetting sin or an area where you typically fail, you can sometimes, especially after you've failed in it a lot, and I think all of us, I can certainly speak from experience, sometimes you can see, usually when you start out, and you say, wow, I'm finding out this is my besetting sin, because you keep seeing it in your wake. You look back and you say, oh, again. And you look back and you realize.

But then, over time, you start to know that you're doing it as you do it. And sometimes you can see it coming on, and you know that the atmosphere is changing, you're in the right kind of mood, and things are just the right kind of way that you're going to commit your besetting sin. And that

knowledge gives you absolutely no power to stop.

It's like there are immovable forces, there are immovable objects and unstoppable forces at work. And you can see it happening, just like Longstreet looking at the battlefield. You know what's going to happen, and you have seemingly no choice but to just go forward and have it happen.

And you seem powerless, even with your knowledge, to make a change. This is what Solomon is talking about. You can find out where your folly is.

This word for madness is not really madness, it's more like foolishness. Madness sounds like insanity. And I spent about two hours studying this word for madness, because I couldn't get it to make sense, and the lexicon is not all that helpful.

Most of the uses of this word are in Ecclesiastes again, and I hate it when you're trying to go to the lexicon and get a definition for a word, and the only place where the word is found is in Ecclesiastes, and so they don't have any more than you do to tell you what the word means. But it's... You want to know what this word is, this word for madness? I'll tell you the root of it. H-L-L.

Halel. As in hallelujah? Because the root meaning from halel is to praise. Well, how on earth did we get to madness from praise? Well, if you get into the hithpahel, which is the reflexive stem of the Hebrew verb, you know, what reflexive is, you've got the cal stem, which is active, that means I praise God.

That would be active. Passive would be God is praised in the heavens. That's the nifal, is the passive.

God is praised. He receives the action of the verb. Hithpahel is the reflexive, which means I do it to myself.

And it came to be used for boasting, overweening boasting. And in the ancient world, boasting, saying you could do something that you couldn't, saying that you were something that you weren't, was thought to be the height of foolishness. And so the reflexive idea in praising, praising oneself, came to be used for foolishness.

Very foolish. Normally, halel, like the man's name, who was a scholar in the ancient world, was a masculine noun. But to make this distinction, they started putting it in the feminine.

And so the noun from halel, when you put it in the feminine, and then here it's also in the plural. So it changes and gets further and further away from the root meaning of praise, and it comes to mean foolishness. Something you should know better, but you do it anyway.

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child. Well, foolishness, the child knows better and they do it anyway. When a child knows better and they do it anyway, that kind of foolishness, that is what the rod will drive far from them.

That's why that verse is in there. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him. And that's why it's so important to make sure that they know.

Well, God makes sure that we know ahead of time. But this contrast, I set my heart to know wisdom and knowledge, foolishness and folly. And it's a different word here for folly, and this means, you know, even worse, where you're just too dumb to know any better.

Either way, whether it's foolishness in spite of knowledge or foolishness because of lack of knowledge, either way, I perceived that this is grasping the wind. Just trying to gain knowledge of what the problem is doesn't help solve it. You still end up with an empty hand.

So, in Chapter 2, Solomon says in his heart, Come now, I will test you or prove you. This is a lot like the Greek verb where you can test for the purpose of approval, dokimazo. Here, this verb means to test, to prove.

This verb is used of Abraham when God tests him. So, I will test you with mirth. Therefore, enjoy pleasure.

Well, it doesn't say enjoy pleasure. If you look at an NIV or an American Standard, it says something completely different. It literally means, the verb here that's translated enjoy is raah, which means to see or to look at or to consider something.

It's raah with the good a, with aleph, r-a-a-h, raah, to see or to look at, to consider. And the word is not pleasure, it's tov, t-o-v, it's good. And this is in the imperative.

And so, Solomon is, and it doesn't say I said in my heart, it actually says I talked with my heart. It's as though his heart's a separate thing, he's going to have a dialogue with it. He says, Come now, I will test you with mirth.

So, he's going to test his heart with pleasure. Therefore, consider with good or look with good. And the with there is the letter B, beit, it's prefixed to tov, betov.

So, it's in, by or with. Consider in good or with good. But then he continues and says, But surely this also was habel.

It didn't pan out. I said of laughter, madness. And this again is from Hillel.

It's foolishness. And of mirth, what does it accomplish? I searched in my heart to gratify my flesh with wine, all the time guiding my heart with wisdom. Now, this is an odd thing.

And people gloss over this when they talk about, Oh, well, he was just looking for happiness. Why does he make such a point of hanging on to his wisdom? He does all of this and his wisdom is with him. You find, as you go down through the rest of this chapter, he makes a point of noting that he kept his wisdom with him.

And yet it still turned out to be habel. Well, the answer is not in. And this gets back to why I brought this Can You Trust Psychology book.

Psychology is all about giving you knowledge of what your folly is. Giving you knowing. But knowing doesn't give you the power to change.

That cancer warning on the side of cigarettes doesn't give people the power to quit. Even the little patch doesn't give people the power to quit. They had to change their commercial and say, The power to help you quit.

We need something that you don't find under the sun. And we know where that is. And we know how to seize and lay hold of it.

How do we get something in our hand? How does the power of God come into the life of the believer? It is by faith in the Word of God. This is the Word of God. Everything Solomon says here.

And it's important for us to understand because it infiltrates the church. People have a knowledge cult within Christianity. People have a pleasure cult within Christianity.

And it's just as bad as going after the woman with the dripping lips. It is knowledge that puffs up and doesn't build up. We have to examine ourselves to see if we are in.