



Ecclesiastes 3-5

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Tape # 7235
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter three as Solomon the Preacher continues his observations of life from the standpoint of a man who has lived, who has tasted it all, who has found the emptiness of the life under the sun. Now he is reflecting upon the things that he has learned in his observations of life.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (3:1).

Our times have been appointed by God. There are seasons and times for every purpose under heaven. It is always exciting when you come to one of those special times that God has appointed for work in your life. Now he puts several things into contrast here, some fourteen of them.

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, [tear] and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace (3:2-8).

Speaking of everything having a time and a place, he then asks a question.

What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? (3:9).

Life seems to move in cycles, there are opportune times, there are apt times, for every purpose under the sun.

I have seen the travail, which God hath given the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world [eternity] in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end (3:10-11).

He begins to talk now about how that God has given to each of us an awareness and a consciousness of infinity. Years ago, when I was sort of being weaned from the faith that I had received from my parents and the beliefs that they had instilled within me, and was seeking to come to my own understanding and decisions. There came a short space in my life where I began to question the existence of God. I wondered if God really did exist or was this all something that man just made up. That didn't last for long because I found that it was much easier to believe in God than not to believe in God.

When I tried to sort of take the position of an atheist that there is no God, I found out that there were too many unanswerable things in life, life itself. So I concluded that God must exist and the conclusion largely came from the study of the human body and all of the marvelous facets of the human body. I realized that it could not have just come about through fortunate accidental circumstances, that there was a design; the design declared a designer, the creator. So I concluded that God did exist and that was the first foundation stone of my own faith that I began to build upon. Yes, there is a God.

You can't just stop there. If there is a God and his existence is proved by his creation then he must have a purpose for creating man. I exist and the fact that I exist by divine creation would indicate that there was a purpose in the mind of the creator when he created me. As I began to deal with that premise, I realized that if he had a purpose in creating me it would be necessary that he reveal himself in such a way as to reveal his

purposes for me. I concluded that God, in having a purpose in creating man, would have to reveal that purpose early in the history of man and would have to maintain that revelation to the present time.

I immediately set aside all the religions that have existed in history but have been cast aside as not being of God because God, if he was great enough to create man and have a purpose in it, would be able to maintain the revelation of himself to the present day. I also discounted all of the new religions that have come on to the scene of late because that would be saying that God wasn't interested in the earlier men that existed, but suddenly he now has an interest in his creation and thus is revealing himself in this new light, new revelation. People are always claiming to have some new revelation of God, new light. That sort of discounts all of those who have lived up till now.

God would have to reveal himself early in the history of man, would have to maintain that revelation to the present time and God would be interested in all men, not just a select few. There would have to be something within that revelation of God that would have sort of a missionary impedance to it so that those who came to the knowledge of God would have a push to share that knowledge with others because I concluded that God would be interested in all of his creation. I was left with basically Judo-Christianity, Mohammadism and Buddhism. Through a process, I eliminated Mohammadism and Buddhism and came to the conclusion that the Bible had to be the revelation of God. The prophecies of the Bible intrigued me, an area that really is not entered into in Mohammadism or Buddhism.

God revealed himself early to Adam. God has maintained that revelation to the present day; the Bible still stands. I became convinced that the Bible was God's revelation of himself to man.

Here Solomon declares that God has placed eternity in man's heart. I could not get away from the consciousness that life has to be more than three score and ten years of existence on this earth. There was that sense of the eternal that was just innate within my heart; the awareness of the existence of God. To not believe in God takes a real struggle. You have to work at it constantly. The natural bent is a belief in God; God has put eternity in our hearts. Belief in God is a very natural thing, not to believe in God is unnatural and it takes a lot of effort and a lot of work.

The Bible began to really speak to me at that point. I began to study it to understand it to know God. It became very satisfactory. The more I read it the more convinced I was that it was indeed God's word to the point that as much as I have studied as I have now I have not the slightest qualm, not the slightest hesitation to declare to you, "I believe that the Bible is the infallible, inherent word of God to man as he has revealed himself to man in the Bible".

He declares that God has established times and places for all things and that God makes everything beautiful in his time. If we will yield our lives to God, God in working in our lives will bring beauty out of every situation in his time.

The Bible does picture God as a potter and as man as the clay. It's a rather awesome picture because it teaches the awful sovereignty of God. Awful unless you know him. But knowing the potter, I have no difficulty in surrendering my life to the touch the potter. The potter has sovereign power over the clay to make of it whatever kind of a vessel he wants. The clay has no right to challenge the potter. Clay is very common, one of the most common substances on the face of the earth and in its native state, quite worthless. Yet, through the skill of the potter, that worthless clay can be made into a priceless treasure.

When the potter places the clay upon the wheel and begins his work, there is within the mind of the potter what he desires to make of that clay, the vessel that he is seeking to form. It is in his mind and he begins to work with the clay to express in the clay that, which is in his mind. The clay can only understand what is in the mind of the potter by yielding to the touch of the potter. If the clay resists the touch of the potter then the vessel becomes marred in the hands of the potter. Jeremiah uses that picture, "the Lord spoke to me and said go down to the potter's house, I'll speak to you there. So I went down to the potters house" he said, "I watched him as he worked his work on the wheel. The work became marred in the potters' hand. So the potter took that clay and began to work it again working out the lumps and the stiffness, put it back and

made a vessel". God spoke to Jeremiah and said, "Is not Israel like clay in my hands? I can make of it what I want. The vessel Israel was marred because of its stiffness, its resistance but I am able to work it and still create my purpose".

"God makes all things beautiful in his time" (3:11). A lot of people have, like the clay, been marred in the hands of the potter because of their resisting or their rebelling against that work of God. People have tried to run from God. They've rebelled against God and the purposes of God were thwarted. Many times they can mess up their lives royally until the vessel is so marred, you question whether or not anything could ever come out of that of worth or value.

I love the fact that the potter doesn't give up, that he takes and reworks that clay to make of it a vessel that will be pleasing to him, useful for him. I see so many lives that have been marred, messed up, and I see how God has begun again a work in them. I see the beauty that God has brought out of messed up lives. "He makes all things beautiful in his time" (3:11), providing we are yielded to his touch.

"He's put eternity in our hearts, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end" (3:11). We don't know what God has purposed, what God has planned. God knows the end result that he is seeking to work out. I don't know yet, getting some pretty good hints at this point, fully the plan and the purpose of God for my life. As Pedro said, "It would probably take all eternity for us to know it all" or "Through the ages to come, God shall be revealing unto us the exceeding richness of his kindness and his mercy towards us in Christ Jesus".

"I've seen the travail, which God has given to the sons of men" the laborer, the effort, "that they might be developed by it" (3:11). God has a purpose in these trials and in these temptations. The purpose is the developing of character. He has a purpose for the sufferings that we experience. There's that development that God is working in me and in you.

I have found that character isn't really developed much in the good times, in the time of prosperity, in the times of ease, in the times of partying, it doesn't develop much character at all. Character is really developed in the times of suffering, the times of pressure. A person who has endured a lot of pain and suffering is a person usually of great depth of character. It has a way of developing character like nothing else.

"I've seen the travail of man, that God has given that he might be exercised in it or developed by it and he's made everything beautiful in his time and he's set eternity in their hearts" (3:10-11). You really don't know what God's full plan is from the beginning to the end.

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life (3:12).

We are told by Jesus to rejoice in tribulation. We are told to "count it all joy" by Peter when we are going through trials, knowing that God uses these to develop character and to develop his purpose and his plan in our lives. It is good to rejoice and to do good.

And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God (3:13).

It was a sad day in the church when they thought that being spiritual was being sour and doleful. You would not dare to smile because that was a sign of carnality and a Christian should never be happy or enjoy himself. God wanted us to always be very serious and very doleful. To appear very spiritual, the ministers used to go around with their hands folded and they had sort of a doleful kind of a voice and said, "Good morning brother". That was to show deep spirituality, the man must have just come from an encounter with God, he's so serious and sober. You dare not to smile or laugh because surely you'll be accused of unspiritualness. That was a tragic day in the church. I'm glad that we passed from that and that we realize that it is the purpose of God that you experience the fullness of joy. Jesus spoke of the fullness of joy over

and over again. He related that fullness of joy with your prayer life and with your fellowship with God and with abiding in him.

Therefore Solomon came to that conclusion, “Man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all of his labour, it’s a gift of God” (3:13) the enjoyment of the fruit of your labour. The fruit of our labour all depends on what I have been laboring for. If I have been laboring just for myself, the fruit of that labor can be very empty. But if I am laboring for God, the kingdom of God, I know that my labour for the Lord is never in vain, never empty and to enjoy the fruit of our labour for God is a glorious thing.

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: (3:14).

The work of God is eternal. The work that you do for God is eternal. Jesus said, “Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal”. That work that I do for the Lord is eternal in its benefits. I know that whatever God does is forever. It is complete.

nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him (3:14).

That completeness of God’s work, when God is working he does a complete work. I am thankful for that. God doesn’t start something that he doesn’t intend to finish, “He who has begun a good work in you shall continue to perform it”. God didn’t start a work in you just to say, “Ah I tried but no way, just give up. Forget him,” he doesn’t do that. He having begun is going to continue. We may slow the process; we may hinder the process. I, many times, have gotten in the way trying to help, “Okay God, I’ll help you”. I found out that he didn’t need my help that so often only slowed the process because as God works in your life, he wants the glory for that which he has wrought in you. He doesn’t want you going around bragging, taking glory, and taking credit. Be careful when you try to add to what God has done or be careful when you try to take away.

God does it in order that we might worship him, in order that we might reverence him, in order that we might praise him. Paul uses a phrase in Ephesians, the first chapter, “To the praise of the glory of his grace” as he is talking about the work of God in us, having chosen us and having predestined that we should be adopted as his son, redeemed us and accepted us. All of these is for the praise of the glory of his grace. It’s God’s work. He does it so that he might receive the praise and the glory from it.

That which hath been is now; (3:15).

We get into the idea of the eternal nature of God. As we pointed out this morning, it is something that we cannot comprehend. I can understand that God has put eternity in my heart, that is, the capacity to realize that there can be infinity. That puts me above my dog. My dog cannot understand that infinity exists. I can sit all day and try to explain to my dog the distance to the sun and the distance to some of the stars out there. He has no way of comprehending infinity or that infinity could exist. All he knows is that he is hungry at dinner time, he comes to the back window and lets me know. He can’t even understand wait five minutes and I’ll feed you.

God has put eternity in our hearts, that is the ability to comprehend that eternity exists though I don’t understand it and can’t comprehend it. I know that I can accept the concept of infinity. Eternity is infinity actually as far as time goes. Eternity is infinity of time and time past, time future. What ever has happened is happening, eternal. You are outside the time continuum.

and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past (3:15).

Interesting scripture.

And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgement, that wickedness was there; (3:16).

That's interesting that he made that made his observation in his day. I've made the same observation in my day. That even in the place of judgement, within the judicial system, within our courts, wickedness is there. That's because we have placed men as judges. Many of them, who are lacking the fear of God, believe that they are gods and they begin to act like gods and demand to be worshiped as gods.

the place of judgement, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work (3:16-17).

In observing the wickedness in the places of judgement, in his heart he said, "One day God will judge." These men who have been in the seats of judgement judging over other men will one day be judged. One day they'll stand before the judge of the universe and as the scripture says, "It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God". I'm glad I'm not going to have to be in the shoes in a lot of people when they stand before God. Sort of glad I don't have to be in my own shoes, that Jesus will stand in my place. If you don't have Jesus standing in your place you're in big trouble; I feel sorry for you.

I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts (3:18).

Man, apart from being born again, is as a beast, is like an animal. There is a great endeavor by man today to relate himself to the animal kingdom. In trying to understand man, we seek to understand animals. In so many of the theories and sociology and psychology have come from the observation of rats. It is interesting to me that man has chosen the rat as more or less the prime creature for which to gain knowledge for himself. I can understand why but Solomon was talking now...Remember we said that the women had turned his heart from God and he is looking at the world from just a worldly viewpoint and he sees man as animals; "that they might see that they themselves are beasts".

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity (3:19)

This is true apart from the new birth in Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus said, "You've got to be born again if you want to kingdom of heaven." That which is born of the flesh is flesh and born of the flesh you are born as an animal, you're a beast, you're sort of in the same category as an animal possessing a mind and living in a body. It's not until you are born again that your spirit is alive and that lifts you from the animal kingdom to the divine kingdom. Thus once a person is born of the spirit he begins to relate to God rather than to the animal kingdom. You begin to relate into the eternal realm rather than that which passes, the animal kingdom.

All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth down ward to the earth? (3:20).

"Don't know" Solomon says. But we do know, by the further revelation of the scriptures and Jesus Christ. Solomon is saying that no one came back to tell us where there spirit went, so who knows.

Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? (3:22).

Who knows what's going to happen so just enjoy what you got, spend it while you got it because who knows what they're going to do with it after you're gone so enjoy yourself is basically what he is saying.

SO I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter (4:1).

I've observed how the strong were oppressing the weak. The oppression, the tears of those who were being oppressed and no one to help them, no comforter and no hope.

Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive (4:2).

You're better off dead than alive. This is a conclusion of the natural man.

Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been [born], who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun (4:3).

A child that is stillborn is better off, he says, than those, which have the opportunity to see the oppressions and the evil of life.

Again, I considered all travail, and every right work that for this a man is envied of his neighbor. This is also vanity and vexation [frustration] of the spirit (4:4).

You try and do the right thing and all you get for it is your neighbor becomes envious of you, the emptiness of it.

The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation [frustration] of spirit. Then I returned, and I saw vanity [the emptiness] under the sun. There is one alone, and there is not a second; (4:5-8).

He's by himself.

yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; (4:8).

Here he is all by himself no heirs or relatives to leave his money to and yet he is working like crazy to build up a fortune and he says, "How ridiculous that this fellow should travail and labour and work so hard when all he's got is himself and no one to really leave his goods to.

neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, [emptiness] yea, it is a sore travail (4:8).

So Solomon observes life under the sun, life lived apart from God and the consciousness of God and the emptiness and folly of it. A man without any relatives laboring so hard, trying to get rich and never satisfied, never enough, "the eye is not satisfied with his riches" (4:8).

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour (4:9).

At least you're feeding someone else.

For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up (4:10).

The loner, no one to help him. If he falls there is no one there to lift him up, no one there to help him up.

Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? (4:11).

It's a cold bed when you are there by yourself.

And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly [easily] broken (4:12).

The value of close relationships and not being just a loner.

Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, (4:13).

There he sees himself. This poor little child doesn't have anything but he's wiser than this old foolish king.

who will no more be admonished (4:13).

Who has seen it all and you can't tell him anything.

For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor (4:14).

Solomon actually had placed heavy taxation upon the people and they were impoverished by his heavy taxation; it was greater than the people could bear. It was only enriching himself living in this total luxurious lifestyle and he sees now the emptiness of it.

I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity [empty] and vexation of spirit (4:15-16).

I saw that one passes and another comes and they pass, another comes and see the generations going and it's not long before you forget. I cannot even tell you the names of my great grandfathers. I can tell you the names of all the grandkids but looking back, you are soon forgotten. He sees life as an empty frustrating rut really. People just get in this rut and emptiness.

KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, (5:1).

Probably keep your foot out of your mouth is what he is saying.

and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil (5:1).

As Romaine always points out, "God gave you two ears and one mouth. That should tell you something".

The sacrifice of fools. When Saul disobeyed God in the command to utterly destroy the Amalekites and he brought back some of the finer cattle and sheep when faced by the prophet Samuel, for the sin, he said, "I brought them back to sacrifice them to the Lord" the sacrifice of fools. Samuel responded, "To obey is better than to sacrifice and to hearken is better than the fat of rams". David, when he was in that sin with Bathsheba in the unconfessed state, he spoke of his not bringing sacrifices to God, "sacrifices and offerings thou its not". It would have been the sacrifice of fools while in a sinful state sought to appease God with a sacrifice, when he was continuing in that sinful state.

God, through the prophet Isaiah, to the nation of Israel in their state of having turned away from God said that "he hated and abhorred their sacrifices," their celebrating of their holy days, their sabbaths and their new moons. They were still going through the motions. They were still offering sacrifices, but there was sin, unrepentant sin. Thus it was the sacrifice of fools. It was not accepted by God, God said, "When you lift your hands in prayer I will not hear you for your hands are filled with blood". The sacrifice that God desires is a repentant heart that he'll not turn away.

They were going through religious ostentatious kind of demonstrations. One of the things to show a great religious kind of a fervor and feeling was to tear your clothes. It showed a great remorse and grief to tear your clothes. God says to tear your hearts and not your garments; I'd rather see a broken heart than your shredded clothes. God's interested in what's going on in your heart and if your heart really isn't right and honest before God than your sacrifices become an abomination. He says, "I have observed them".

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed (5:2-4).

When you come into the house of God don't be quick to speak and to make promises to God. Usually when a person makes a vow to God, it is seeking to drive a bargain with God; "God if you'll do this for me then this is what I'll do for you". The vow is usually to strike a deal with God. So he is warning us not to be hasty and making vows, making promises.

Through the years I've learned a few things. One of the things I have learned is not to make vows. I had a period in my life, in my early Christian experience, where I was promising God every week that I would do better. Next week is going to be better, I am going to be more faithful in my devotions and I'm going to pray more. This week is going to be better. I was constantly promising God I was going to do better. It was an acknowledgment that this past week wasn't too good, I've failed on several occasions but next week don't give up on me, I'm going to do better. I was constantly making promises to God.

I came to the place in my understanding of God's grace for me where I quit making vows, quit making promises to God. To promise to be better is really to trust in my flesh. In my flesh there dwells no good thing. Thus my promises were not kept. I wanted to do better and I wanted to be better but I failed to realize that God excepted me as I was. God accepts you as you are in Christ and to promise to be better is only to trust in the flesh. So I quit promising. I just began to see myself complete in Jesus Christ and let God work in me.

Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not sin

Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? (5:5-6).

You misunderstood me God, that's not what I really meant.

For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear [reverence] God. If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they (5:7-8).

This is something that I really need to take because I do see oppression of the poor, I do see a violent perverting of judgement. I think that we have some classical instances of it at the present time as the courts have taken such a firm stand against those who went out to protest abortions and the unjust sentences that are being given to these people. I compare that with the sentences that were giving out against the gay activists that went into Saint Peter's Cathedral and maliciously destroyed things and upset the services and had suspended sentences, fifteen dollar fines. Yet I see the kind of sentences the judicial system is giving out against those who have been involved of trying to save the lives of the unborn infants. I see that violent perverting of just judgement and justice in this province.

He said, "he that is higher than the highest takes note of it," God sees. There is a higher judgement than they and so they themselves will one day stand before the judge of all the earth.

Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: (5:9).

"The earth is the Lord's the fullest thereof and they that dwell therein" and God has intended that the earth produce for all men.

the king himself is served by the field (5:9).

God has made the fields to bring forth food; the profit of the earth is for everyone.

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity [emptiness] (5:10).

If to be rich is your goal in life, you'll never have a place of satisfaction, you'll never have enough riches, and you'll always be after more. "He that loveth silver will not be satisfied with silver" (5:10),

Donald Trump. With all the real estate holdings the fellow wouldn't have to lift a finger, he wouldn't have to be in debt and he wouldn't have to be going through all of this cash flow problems. He could have just kicked back a long time ago and lived on the interest. Have you ever figured what the interest would be on a billion dollars? Surely you could be satisfied living off the interest of a billion dollars. Don't touch your principles, just live on the interest. You should be able to get by. It doesn't work that way. When money is your god you are never satisfied, there is never enough, its empty.

When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: (5:11).

Here was Solomon, a rich man, but he had that many more servants to feed. It took ten prime beef and twenty commercial beef and a hundred sheep to feed the servants everyday plus the three hundred bushels of fine flower and the six hundred bushels of meal. This is not counting all of the deer and chickens for a single day, for everyday. The more you've got, the more you have to feed, the more mouths there are.

and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? (5:11).

You've got a lot of money but you've got a lot of debts. You've got a lot of people now really depending on you for their food. So the only benefit the owner has is you get to see them eat it all.

The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, (5:12).

You work hard and the sleep as soon as you hit the bed you're gone, you've been working hard, laboring, it's a sweet rest.

whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer [allow] him to sleep (5:12).

I have a friend who was one of the neatest easy going fellows you could ever run across. He was fun, always joking, and just a great guy. He owned a manufacturing plant and his business started picking up, had to buy bigger equipment and got a bigger plant and things kept growing. He got so much money, so much business, that he started worrying about all of his money, worrying about bank failures, worrying about business orders and things of this nature. You get all of that investment and you got to make all those payments. This fellow who was such an easy going great jovial fellow ended up walking the streets at night. He couldn't sleep. You'd find him at three or four o'clock in the morning just walking the streets worried. Finally died of a heart attack. It was tragic. "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet but the abundance of the rich man will not allow him to sleep" (5:12).

There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt (5:13).

Those that keep their riches and are hurt by it. It is a tragic thing; this man's riches drove him to a heart attack.

But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand (5:14).

When you are born in this world you don't have anything in your hand, you come into the world empty.

As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand (5:15).

When you were born there was nothing in your hand and when you leave there will be nothing in your hand unless someone puts a Bible in your hand in the casket or something. You go out empty. All of your labour, all of that sore travail to get rich, when you go you go empty. You don't take anything with you.

And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? (5:16).

You leave it, it's empty.

All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness. Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely [beautiful] for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion (5:17-18).

Enjoy what you have.

Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God (5:19).

I saw a beautiful motor home going down the street a while back and it had a little sign it "We are enjoying our kids inheritance". That is pretty much what Solomon is saying here. You worked hard; you might as well enjoy it. Who knows what they'll do with it when you're gone. God has given you the power to eat, take your portion and rejoice in your labour. This is the gift of God.

For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart (5:20).

Observations of life by this rich jaded king. An empty life that is lived for self and apart from God. In contrast, how rich is that life that is lived in Christ? How rich the reward of our labour for Jesus Christ. So the whole thing is living for now or living forever, living for the present or living for the eternal. Paul the apostle said, "We look not at the things which are seen for the things which are seen are temporal But we look at those things that are not seen for the things which are not seen are eternal". How tragic is the man who lives only for the temporal material things, how empty is his life that comes to the end of the road. On the other hand how full and rich that life is lived for Christ. What richness and fullness as you come to the end of the road because as you come to the end of the road is the beginning of the eternal inheritance for the saints of God in Christ.