

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

INTRODUCTION:

In many ways Chapter Five continues the observations of the previous chapters regarding the “vanity” of “*life under the sun.*” But the context of the first seven verses creates some difficulty and there are differences of opinion as to the direction the Holy Spirit was leading Solomon. Some see this as a parenthesis, revealing the right way to worship and to serve God, a breath of fresh air in the midst of the oppression of man over man. Words very similar to those found in Proverbs. Others see it as an additional reason why life under the sun is vanity. After carefully reading the passage what do you see?

Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. 2 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed — 5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. 6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God. Eccl 5:1-7

So some see this as advice to the righteous about how they should worship God. But others, since it doesn't easily fit into the context, seek to prove that these are observations about how vanity can even enter into the most sacred realms of life. Where one can be living “*life under the sun*” in false worship of the LORD. One can be out of the “*presence of the LORD*” even though they believe they are worshipping Him.

After reading through the passage several times it seems better to see this not so much as a complete parenthesis, but as words of wisdom leading to the conclusion in chapter 12. These are valid considerations that would fit well with the Psalms, Proverbs or even in the Prophets. Yet the theme remains. For there is nothing more futile, meaningless and fruitless than offering God worship He cannot accept.

“This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. 9 But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.” Mt 15:8-9

1. Walk prudently

Though the modern translations have used the English idiom “**walk prudently**”(NKJV), or “**guard your steps**”(NIV, NAS), the KJV and ASV used “**Keep thy foot.**” Although the term “foot” is used, it is not out of harmony to say “**watch your step,**” because the foot is used to walk. Hence we could say “**watch your foot, guard your foot, protect your foot, observe your foot**” and would still be in the context of where you are about to place it while you are walking.

“... to keep, to watch, to guard; to keep safe, to protect, to preserve; to retain, to reserve; to observe; to regard... with inf., keep diligently...” (Wilson p 236-237)

This term was first used when God told Adam to “*keep*” the garden(Gen 2:15). Cain used this term when asking if he was his brother's “*keeper.*”(4:9) Abraham was told to “*keep*” God's covenant(Gen 17:9-10). The Jews were commanded many times to “*keep*” God's commands (Ex 16:28; 20:6; Deut 5:10). Hence to keep one's foot is to be very careful where on places it. It must be carefully placed exactly where God says to put it. If it is placed anywhere else, then we are walking in “*vanity*” “*under the sun,*” for there is no eternal benefit to serving God with less than this! Our own idiom “*watch your step*” conveys the same idea. One must carefully watch the placement of each foot if they are ever to arrive at the proper destination.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. 14 “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. Mt 7:13-14

Although “life under the sun” can take up so much of our time and effort, that God can become an afterthought, it is critical that we do not fall into that trap. The conclusion of the book makes that clear:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all(whole duty of man). 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil. Eccl 12:13-14

The biggest vanity of all occurs when we miss this and do not give God the reverence and respect He is due.

when you go to the house of God;

Going to the house of God is not as simple as multitudes have imagined. This obviously does not refer to the physical act of walking there, for anyone could do that. Instead it speaks of the “*manner of life*” which was so important for their spiritual approach.

halak- to go, to walk, to come... to proceed, to move, to go away 2)... manner of life (figurative) (BDB # 1980)

This term is used of how Enoch, Noah, and Abraham “*walked with God*” (Gen 5:24,6:9,17:1). God asked His people to “*walk in all the way*” He had “*commanded*” them (Deut 5:33), to “*walk in his ways*” (Deut 8:6). Among the most comprehensive:

*“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to **walk in all His ways** and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, Deut 10:12”*

*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to **walk humbly with your God?** Mic 6:8”*

Going to the house of God expressed an entire walk with God. An attitude of reverence and respect, obedience and submission, and of love and devotion. When Nadab and Abihu were not walking prudently in their approach to the house of God they “*offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them,*” they were struck dead. Moses knew exactly what it meant:

Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the LORD spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.’” So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. Lev 10:3”

It ought to be obvious that when we go to the house of God we “*come near.*” Therefore we must carefully guard our feet when we approach that house to be certain we are approaching Him in holy reverence and submissive honor. We must be careful not to stumble over our own pride, ignorance, or hard heartedness. There are countless examples of those who ignored this great wisdom. Their worship was vain, for God rejected it.

- A. Cain did not “*walk prudently*” when he offered his sacrifice. Gen 4:1-12
- B. Saul did not “*walk prudently*” when Samuel came late and he offered the burnt offering. Later, he did not “*walk prudently*” in his mission to destroy Amalek. I Sam 13:8-14; 15:1-22
- C. Balaam did not “*walk prudently*” when we sought to go to Balak. Num 22:4-22
- D. All who do not “*watch their step*” and knowingly or inadvertently step over the boundary suffer serious consequences. “*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2 John 9-10*”

When one has a casual attitude toward their approach to God’s house, their worship is vanity. It is just another variant to the same life as all the others who choose to live “*under the sun.*”

God is our Creator, He is greater than we in every possible way. No one can afford to allow their relationship with Him to be a casual thing. It is to be the single most important thing in our life. When we are going to His house, when we are about to begin worshiping or honoring Him, or if we are offering sacrifices we must be watching our step. Take time to think seriously about what you are doing and why you are doing it. God must be treated as holy by all who draw near to him. When you go to the house of God, watch your step! So many have fallen before you, so few have successfully walked the road!

and draw near to hear

The term “*draw near*” is the same term Moses used in Leviticus 10:3. Those who draw near to God are those who want to worship and honor Him. They want to be close to Him. This same term is used in Ps 145:

The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. Ps 145:18

But if we want to draw near to God, it must be “*to hear*.” God wants us to “listen,” and “obey.” He wants us first to “hear” with “*our ears*,” then make this hearing both “*intellectual and spiritual*.” God wants us to hear “*diligently*,” “*certainly*,” and “*attentively*.”

shama` 8085, “to hear, hearken, listen, obey, publish.” This word occurs throughout the Semitic languages including biblical Hebrew and Aramaic. *shama`* occurs in all historical layers of Hebrew, and about 1,160 times in the Bible. ... Basically, this verb means to “hear” something with one’s ears... the word may mean to “come into knowledge about.” Moses told the unclean men to wait while he “listened” to what the Lord would command regarding them.... The verb can represent the mere “hearing” of something, as when Adam and Eve “heard” the sound of God walking in the garden Gen. 3:8... “Hearing” can be both intellectual and spiritual. Spiritually, one may “hear” God’s Word Num. 24:4, or “learn” it from God. Conversely, God told Abraham that He had “heard” his prayer and would act accordingly Gen. 17:20. In this context, to “hear” means not only to hear what is said, but to agree with its intention or petition (Vines)

“... to hear, to listen, to give heed, obey... with inf., hearken or hear diligently, surely, certainly, attentively, indeed. ...” (Wilson p 211-212)

When one draws near to God, they must draw near to listen and obey! They must enter God’s house with the intention of hearing “*diligently, surely, certainly and attentively*.” One who wished to hear exactly what God has to say has certainly come with the right attitude. They are hearing with reverence and respect. God calls this trembling at His word:

“For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. Isa 66:2

Cornelius and those living in Berea were also like this:

“And so I sent to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” Acts 10:33

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, {to see} whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

God wants us all to come like this:

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Jas. 1:19-22

Those who are wise come near to God to hear what he has to say. Others are not so wise.

rather than to give the sacrifice of fools,

If the care, concern and effort which Koheleth exhorts them to put forth is not heeded, there is only one other option available. To do anything less than watch one’s foot as one approaches and draws near to hear is to offer the “*sacrifice of fools*.” The term “fool” is defined:

kecil 3684, “stupid fellow; dull person; fool.” This word occurs in the Old Testament 70 times. All of its occurrences are in wisdom literature except 3 in the Psalms. The *kecil* is “insolent” in religion and “stupid or dull” in wise living ... They have knowledge of God but do not properly evaluate or understand what they know. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

This fool is a “*stupid fellow*,” or a “*dull person*,” who “*is insolent in religion*” because he does “*not properly evaluate or understand*” what he knows. This perfectly describes the worship of someone who does not study and reverently seek to please God. A foolish person does not hear to understand, and therefore makes mistakes.

God revealed that this is what made Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. Heb. 11:4

Abel's faith was based on a careful approach to hear. All faith comes by such hearing:

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom. 10:17

Though he is dead, the testimony of his careful drawing near to God still speaks today. This was what made Abel's deeds righteous and Cain's evil.

not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. 1 John 3:12

The sacrifice of fools is therefore the offering of sacrifices by those who have not drawn near to hear. Those who have drawn near in obstinate stubbornness and a hardened heart that cannot be moved or changed. This is the offering of sacrifice by a fool. It is actually worse than vanity, for it not only fails to glorify God making it futile, meaningless and fruitless, but it is actually an insult to Him. It is an act which he views in a very unfavorable way.

So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." 1 Sam. 15:22-23

The children of Israel never quite grasped this. They were condemned again and again for it.

For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. Isa. 1:11

Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. 14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Isa. 1:13-15

Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," Says the Lord of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. Mal. 1:9

These are just some of the "sacrifices of fools." Whenever one brings something to the Lord without carefully pondering first where he ought to place his feet, such will be the outcome. The saddest part of all is that they cannot even see it:

for they do not know that they do evil.

Herein lies the heart of the vanity of those living "under the sun." Those who walk in the "presence of the LORD" know full well that the above is true. Not only is it true, but it is fundamentally true. It is the foundation of all dealings with the LORD. No one who does not "know" this has any hope of succeeding. Yet the fool does not even "know" he is doing such an evil. One has to wonder how they could not know. It is not a difficult thing to do. This term for knowledge is primarily what is "observed" or "experienced." It is knowledge that comes from either "experience with the senses," "by investigating and proving," or "by reflection and consideration."

yada` 3045, "to know." This verb occurs in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Phoenician, Arabic (infrequently), biblical Aramaic, and in Hebrew in all periods. This verb occurs about 1,040 times (995 in Hebrew and 47 in Aramaic) in the Bible. Essentially yada` means: (1) to know by observing and reflecting (thinking), and (2) to know by experiencing. ... In contrast to this knowing through reflection is the knowing which comes through experience with the senses, by investigation and proving, by reflection and consideration (firsthand knowing)... Consequently yada` is used in synonymous parallelism with "hear" Exod. 3:7, "see" Gen. 18:21, and "perceive, see" Job 28:7. ... Thirdly, this verb can represent that kind

of knowing which one learns and can give back... In addition to the essentially cognitive knowing already presented, this verb has a purely experiential side. The “knower” has actual involvement with or in the object of the knowing. ... (Vines)

It does not take a genius to have this kind of knowledge. It only takes care, concern and a desire. Even a casual reading of Scripture will give one the ability to “observe” it. The smallest investigation into Genesis(Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah, The tower of Babel, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph) or the Law(Moses, Pharaoh, Israel, Aaron, Miriam, Korah, Amalek, Balaam, Kadesh Barnea, Massah, or Meribah) clearly reveals this truth. Even a little reflection on all the warnings about not adding to or taking from, about reverence, respect and fear ought to reveal it to them. Yet on they walk in their wilful and inexcusable ignorance! They could know, they ought to know, they have only closed their eyes. Jesus stated this was why He spoke in parables:

Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Mt 13:13-17

If people wish to have any hope of enjoying this life and of living it to the fullest possible enjoyment, then they must worship God properly. If they do not, then each time a scripture or a good intentioned person who points out an error they are involved in will cause them great emotional turmoil. Cain was provoked to the point of killing his brother and bringing grave consequences upon himself because he did not harken to this all important thing. When One draws nigh to God let them draw nigh to hear. Anything else will most likely end with them doing evil and not even knowing it. They will do things that are “bad,” “disagreeable,” “malignant,” “unpleasant,” “giving pain, unhappiness, misery,” “unhappy,” and “hurtful.”

ra` - as an adjective: 1) bad, evil a) bad, disagreeable, malignant 1) b)... (giving pain, unhappiness, misery) c) evil, displeasing ... e) bad (used of value) f) worse than, worst (comparison) g) sad, unhappy h) evil (hurtful) l) bad, unkind (vicious in disposition)... 2) evil, distress, misery, injury, calamity a) evil, distress, adversity b) evil, injury, wrong c) evil (ethical) as a feminine noun... (BDB #7451)

2. Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.

Not only the foot but also the mouth. Just as one must watch their feet, they must also watch their mouth. The specific thing to watch over is that we are not “rash” in our mouths and that our hearts do not utter things “hastily.” The first term is defined:

bahal- to disturb, to alarm, to terrify, to hurry, to be disturbed, to be anxious, to be afraid, to be hurried, to be nervous a) (Niphal) 1) to be disturbed, to be dismayed, to be terrified, to be anxious 2) to be in haste, to be hasty b) (Piel) 1) to make haste, to act hastily, to be hurried, ...” (BDB # 926)

It is evident from a careful review of the above definition that there is a cause and effect in this passage. Something occurs to “disturb” “alarm” or “terrify” that leads one to “hurry.” Something makes one “anxious” or “afraid” and therefore they are “hurried.” Whenever we are “dismayed,” “terrified” or “anxious,” we must watch carefully over our mouth lest things tumble out too quickly.

This is a very natural reaction, but fraught with grave peril. Before commenting further, the second clause must be taken into consideration. Don’t let your heart utter anything hastily before God. The term “hastily” carries the same idea as rash:

mahar- (Qal) to hasten a) (Niphal) to be hurried, to be anxious; to be hasty, to precipitate, to be impetuous b) (Piel) 1) to hasten, to make haste ... 3) to hasten, to prepare quickly, to do quickly, to bring quickly (BDB #4116)

One must not be “hurried,” they must not “prepare quickly” or “do quickly.” When it comes to what is in one’s heart, it must not be hastily spoken before God.

With both phrases now set forth, the idea behind them seems to be obvious. In the course of our lives, excitement, tragedy, dire circumstances and wonderful blessings will come and go. During such times, our emotions are stirred to fervency, and desires in the heart are kindled that flame up, then slowly ebb away. If one is to keep vanity out of their service to God, they must carefully ponder this danger.

It is never wise to utter promises or make vows without carefully thinking them through and even giving the heart time to logically reflect on the real impact of both the events and the promises that one is considering.

It is so easy in tongue and mind to devise great plans and ideas and make great promises. But it is never wise to make a commitment to God without thinking it through. All communication with God should be carefully and cautiously pondered. God is not insulted if we wait several days after an event to make promises about changing the course of our lives.

People can make God promises that they later find they do not want to keep. They can make vows they later find they do not want to fulfill. They can poison and destroy their relationship with God by making commitments that they will not do.

How many people have found themselves in a terrible set of circumstances making promises to God about what they will do if God gets them out of it? Later, after they are cleared of the problem, they forget the promises. This is no way to conduct a relationship with God.

For God is in heaven, and you on earth;

God lives eternally in heaven. He is the omnipotent ruler of the universe. Man lives upon the earth, he is mortal, and subject to the “vanity” of “life under the sun.” We must be very careful when we utter things before the Great and Awesome God. Paul saw this clearly when speaking of any conflict between what man thinks or says and what God has revealed.

Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: “That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.” Rom 3:4

God is always right, He is always true and faithful. No one can know His mind, no one can counsel Him, no one can give to Him first.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” 35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Rom 11:33-36

When we recognize this difference between us and God, we will have the reverence, awe, respect and fear to be careful with our mouths.

Though Job was under great strain and sorrow, his health failing, his property lost, his children dead, and his friends slandering him, his words were too hasty before God, and he found that he later had to retract and repent for them:

Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said: 2 “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it.” 3 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 4 “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.” Job 40:1-5

Job had contended and reproved God. He made rash accusations that were not well thought out. But this is not the only way this can happen. The writer of the 73rd Psalmist

Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ... 15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,” Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. Ps 73:1-3, 15

Moses spoke unadvisedly with His lips when he was angry with the children of Israel and was denied entry into the promised land.

They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; 33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly with his lips. Ps 106:32-33

Jephthah spoke rashly when he promised to offer the first thing he saw as a burnt offering when he returned home. Judges 11:30-35 On and on it goes. It is so easy for man to be snared with his mouth. The best advice closes out verse two:

Therefore let your words be few.

With all the above in mind, the words of a man toward God should be few. He should not make many promises or many vows. He should not speak of his frustrations nor his accusations. He should keep both his heart and his mouth in check allowing the secret things to belong to God and the things that are revealed to be followed. Reverence, respect, fear and submission keep the words of the righteous to a minimum.

He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. 28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. Prov 17:27-28

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Mt 12:36-37

3. For a dream comes through much activity,

There is nothing deep or special here by way of revelation. He is only using a well known truth to drive home the need to keep our words few. The source of dreams is “much activity.” Dreams come when peoples minds are overly busy, when they are taxed with cares and concerns. The term “much” has the idea of “abundance” or “large amount”

rob 7230, “multitude; abundance.” This noun occurs about 150 times in biblical Hebrew. The word basically means “multitude” or “abundance”; it has numerical implications apparent in its first biblical appearance: “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude” Gen. 16:10.... When applied to time or distance, rob indicates a “large amount” or “long”: (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

When our business, tasks, or occupations become large and abundant, it will enter into our dreams. This is a simple statement of fact that leads to the following conclusion. Yet there may be an allusion to something stated by Jeremiah:

I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ 26 How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, 27 who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. 28 “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord. 29 “Is not My word like a fire?” says the Lord, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? ... 32 Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” says the Lord, “and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,” says the Lord. Jer 23:25-29, 32

And a fool’s voice is known by his many words.

You can always find a fool’s voice in any crowd. He is one who is never silent. One who is always speaking and never taking the time to weigh his words. The wise man is one who speaks seldom, but what he says is well thought out. The fool says whatever comes into his heart before weighing and deciding whether it really ought to be said or not. The more one speaks, the more of a fool their voice will sound like.

*The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. Pr. 15:2
Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive Pr. 17:28*

A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul. Pr. 18:7

A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back. Pr. 29:11

4. When you make a vow to God,

A “vow” is a promise that is made to God. The term itself refers to either “conditional” or “unconditional” promise made to God.

neder, “vow; votive offering.” This noun occurs 60 times in biblical Hebrew and is often used in conjunction with the verb (19 times): “...any of thy vows which thou vowest...” The vow has two basic forms, the unconditional and the conditional. The unconditional is an “oath” where someone binds himself without expecting anything in return... The obligation is binding upon the person who has made a “vow.” The word spoken has the force of an oath which generally could not be broken: “*If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do [everything he said]*” Num. 30:2. The conditional “vow” generally had a preceding clause before the oath giving the conditions which had to come to pass before the “vow” became valid: “*And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will [watch over me]..., so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God... and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee*” Gen. 28:20-22. “Vows” usually occurred in serious situations. Jacob needed the assurance of God’s presence before setting out for Padan-aram Gen. 28:20-22; Jephthah made a rash “vow” before battle Judg. 11:30; cf. Num. 21:1-3; Hannah greatly desired a child 1 Sam. 1:11, when she made a “vow.” Though conditional “vows” were often made out of desperation, there is no question of the binding force of the “vow.” Ecclesiastes amplifies the Old Testament teaching on “vowing”: “*When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it.... Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.... Neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error*” 5:4-6. First, “vow” is always made to God..... Second, a “vow” is made voluntarily. It is never associated with a life of piety or given the status of religious requirement in the Old Testament. Third, a “vow” once made must be kept. One cannot annul the “vow.” However, the Old Testament allows for “redeeming” the “vow”; by payment of an equal amount in silver, a person, a field, or a house dedicated by “vow” to the Lord could be redeemed Lev. 27:1-25. (from Vine’s 5088)

The Law was very clear about vows made to God.

If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. Num 30:2

“When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. 22 But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. 23 That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth. Deut 23:21-23

Vows are generally made in a moment of severe emotional distress or need.

- Jacob vowed to God to give a tenth when he was leaving home alone(Gen 28:20).
- Hannah vowed to give her first born because she was barren(1 Sam 1:11).
- Jonah vowed in the belly of the fish(Jonah 2:9).

When in a dire circumstance, man tends to make promises. God accepts these promises, but demands we keep them. Hence if someone is in an accident, or faces death and says “LORD, if you get me out of this I will...” Whatever the promise, it is a vow! Whether a vow was ever made or not was completely discretionary. No one had to make a vow. But if a vow was made, God wanted it paid quickly.

do not delay to pay it;

If we make a promise we must not “hesitate,” “tarry,” “defer,” it.

‘*achar*- 1) to delay, to hesitate, to tarry, to defer, to remain behind a) (Qal)... 2) to cause one to delay, to hinder, to keep back... (BDB #309)

It must be paid. We have put ourselves in God’s debt by making such a promise and we must “recompense” “repay and “restore” it to Him.

shalam, “to recompense, reward, be whole, be complete, sound.” A common Semitic term, this verb is found in ancient Akkadian and Ugaritic and in all periods of Hebrew. The root is familiar to most people in the word *shalom*, which is the common Jewish greeting. The verb *shalam* occurs just over 100 times in the Hebrew Bible. In its first occurrence in the Old Testament, the word has the sense of “repaying” or “restoring”: “Why have you returned evil for good?” Gen. 44:4, (Vine’s # 7999)

When we voluntarily put ourselves into God’s debt. It is sheer folly not pay it quickly.

For he has no pleasure in fools.

Only a fool offers a vow to God and then when all is done will not pay it. No one with any sense is going to make a voluntary promise to God and then when the time comes to pay it seek to cheat Him out of it. No one ever has to vow! It is not mandatory. When someone does it is out of their own heart. This obviously strengthens the guilt. Only a fool would make a promise to God he never had to make and then not do it. God has no “pleasure” in this. It gives him no “*delight*.”

chepets, “pleasure; delight; desire; request; affair; thing.” None of the 39 occurrences of this word appear before First Samuel. All its occurrences are scattered through the rest of biblical literature. This word often means “pleasure” or “delight”: “*Hath the Lord as great **delight** in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?*” 1 Sam. 15:22 ... *chepes* can mean not simply what one takes pleasure in or what gives someone delight but one’s wish or desire... Third, *chepes* sometimes represents one’s affairs as that in which one takes delight:... (Vine’s #2656)

No one could possibly expect that they could so insult God and bear no consequence. The terrible fact is that many people make such promises and because they do not pay it quickly they forget it was made. They then go on to live year after year without taking care of their promise to God. The remain for the rest of their lives as swindlers and cheaters of God. This would be vanity indeed!

Pay what you have vowed.

With all the above being true, whatever you vow, no matter how terrible the consequences would be to repay it, you must do so. If you made a promise, whatever it may cost, pay it! Anything less will leave you extorting, cheating and swindling God.

5. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

This carries Moses statement in Deuteronomy to its logical conclusion.

But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. Deut 23:22-23

God will not view any one as being less if they never make a vow. There is nothing holy, righteous or special about the person who makes vows. But if a vow is made, then it must be paid. It is better never to make a vow than it is to make any vow and then not pay it.

It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows. Pr. 20:24

6. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin,

What began as a caution against being hasty in word, now ends with the mouth’s ability to cause the body to sin. There is a grave risk in the commitments that the mouth makes leading to something the body later doesn’t fulfill. Note that he does not say that the mouth sins. The mouth causes the flesh to sin. The context clearly shows that the mouth makes some type of commitment, obligation, vow, or promise to God. There is nothing wrong with that original commitment. The sin is not in the mouth, it is in the body if it does not carry out what the mouth promises. The term “sin” here has the same root meaning as that found in the NT. It means to “*miss*” in the moral realm hence “*moral failure toward both God and men.*”

chata’, “to miss, sin, be guilty, forfeit, purify.” This verb occurs 238 times and in all parts of the Old Testament. It is found also in Assyrian, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Sabeian, and Arabic.... The basic meaning of this verb is illustrated in Judg. 20:16: There were 700 left-handed Benjamite soldiers who “could sling stones at a hair breadth, and not miss.” The meaning is extended in Prov. 19:2: “He who makes haste with his feet misses the way”... The intensive form is used in Gen. 31:39: “That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it....” From this basic meaning comes the word’s chief usage

to indicate moral failure toward both God and men, and certain results of such wrongs.... Sin against God is defined in Josh. 7:11: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them...." The word is used concerning acts committed against men, as in Gen. 42:22: "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child...?" ... (Vine's # 2398)

When someone makes a promise to God, and then does not later do it, it is a "moral failure" and a "moral wrong." The problem with such a circumstance lies in how one can repent of it. If one makes a vow that they latter cannot keep, how can they repent since repent means to change one mind and ones life back to the original course? Our mouths must be guarded and carefully pondered. Once a promise is made, it must be kept. This is the very essence of Psalm 15. After asking who is worthy to abide on God's holy hill, he answers with "he who walks with integrity," "speaks truth in his heart," "does not slander with his tongue," and "swears to his own hurt and does not change." He concludes with: "He who does these things will never be shaken."

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? 2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; 3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; 4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5 He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved. Ps/ 15:1-5

nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error.

Where the KJV and ASV translate "angel" the NKJV NAS and NIV have "messenger." Which fairly well sums up the two possible interpretations of this passage. If it is a human messenger, it would be a "prophet" (mouth) of God. If it is from heaven then it an "angel."

mal'ak ... appears 213 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. Its frequency is especially great in the historical books, where it usually means "messenger": Judges (31 times), 2 Kings (20 times), 1 Samuel (19 times), and 2 Samuel (18 times). The prophetic works are very moderate in their usage of *mal'ak*, with the outstanding exception of the Book of Zechariah, where the angel of the Lord communicates God's message to Zechariah.... The word *mal'ak* denotes someone sent over a great distance by an individual ... in order to communicate a message. ... God also sent messengers. First, there are the prophetic messengers: ... 2 Chr. 36:15-16. Haggai called himself "the messenger of the Lord," ... There were also angelic messengers. Third, and most significant, are the phrases *mal'ak Yahweh*, "the angel of the Lord," and *mal'ak 'elohim*, "the angel of God." The phrase is always used in the singular. It denotes an angel who had mainly a saving and protective function: ... The relation between the Lord and the "angel of the Lord" is often so close that it is difficult to separate the two ... This identification has led some interpreters to conclude that the "angel of the Lord" was the pre-incarnate Christ. (Vine's)

If we understand the messenger to be human, then we have a situation where a representative of God has placed himself in the position to receive our vow or promise. It might be a priest or a prophet, for whom we must fulfill it.

And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. 2 Chr 36:15-16

For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. Mal 2:7

In this case, instead of giving the vow, we must explain that it was all a mistake(error). We are sorry but we are unable to fulfill the solemn promise we made to God. We hope they understand, but there isn't much we can do about it. We simply cannot fulfill what we said we would do.

But it may actually be an angel that it is the one witnessing us refusing to fulfill our promise to God. We do not know much about angels. They were the messengers God sent to Sodom & Gomorrah to bring about its doom(Gen 19:1). It was an angel who was sent before Abraham's servant to help him select a wife(Gen 24:7,40), angels met Jacob (Gen 32:1), an angel shut the mouths of the lions for Daniel (Dan 6:22). The possibility that God should send an angel at the time when our vow is to be paid cannot be easily dismissed. Either one of these is a serious situation for a child of God.

One that need never happen if we watch our tongue and do not make promises or vows that we cannot later keep.

The term error describes things that are an *“inadvertent sin”* an act *“done in ignorance”* or *“imprudence.”*

7684 *shagah*- *sin*, sin of error or inadvertence, inadvertent sin; an error

To err from imprudence, rashness, or ignorance, but not wilfully, being deceived... that which is done in ignorance, unwittingly, or unawares... (Wilson p. 148)

Will such pleas as these bring release? Will the messenger find the excuse of ignorance, rashness or imprudence enough to excuse? The next clause says no!

Why should God be angry at your excuse

Though placed in question form, there is little doubt that God is angry with the above excuses. Remember, it would be better not to vow than to vow and not pay! If you make a promise to God you must pay it. This is a very special term for anger. It refers to an anger of a superior to an inferior who has let him down. It is an *“outburst of anger.”* Thus the concern that we must have is that such an excuse will only lead to God’s being angry with us.

qatsap, “to be wrath, angry.” This verb appears 34 times and is found mainly in the Pentateuch and in the prophets, and a few times in the historical books and the poetic literature. ... The general meaning of *qatsap* is a strong emotional outburst of anger, especially when man is the subject of the reaction. The first usage of the word brings this out: *“And Pharaoh was wrath against two of his officers... and he put them in [custody]...”* Gen. 40:2-3; cf. 41:10. Moses became bitterly angry with the disobedient Israelites Exod. 16:20. ... Naaman was strongly irritated by Elisha’s lack of a sense of protocol 2 Kings 5:11. King Ahasuerus deposed Vashti in his anger Esth. 1:12. In these examples an exalted person (generally a king) demonstrated his royal anger in radical measures against his subjects. He was in a position “to be angered” by the response of his subjects. ... The noun derived from *qatsap* particularly refers to God’s anger. The verb *qatsap* is used 11 times to describe man’s anger and 18 times to refer to God’s anger. This fact, coupled with the observation that the verb generally is an expression of a superior against a subject, explains why the biblical text more frequently uses *qatsap* to describe God’s anger. (Vine’s # 7107)

Ananias and Sapphira are a clear example of this type of thing.

and destroy the work of your hands?

This threat ought to bring enough terror and dread to keep us from making any promises to God that we do not intend to keep. God does not take lightly the promises men make to Him. They do not have to make them, but if they are made, they must be paid. One only makes oneself an enemy of God when they do such a thing. God cannot bless those who are unfaithful to Him. This is a great and grievous snare that none need ever place themselves in. Do not vow or promise unless you intend to pay it!

7. For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.

This final clause once again simply states a simple fact of human existence. A multitude of dreams can only teach vanity. Human dreams comes from activity. There is no control and no method by which they can be verified. Human dreams are best understood as being futile, meaningless, empty and fruitless. They teach nothing but the fact that we are putting much effort into something. Human dreams are often looked upon as more than they are, but God condemned it (Jer 23:26-28). Dreams are vanity. They are empty. They offer no guidance to the future, they offer no insight into the heart of the dreamer.

Just as human dreams are vanity, so also are the many words which humans speak. The term “many” is defined, *“multiply, become numerous, become great.”* When man’s words become numerous, just mark it down, there is vanity within them. Whenever one starts talking a lot, just mark it down, there will be vanity in the words. There will be words some wish had not been said, things that should not have revealed, unbecoming jokes that should never have been made.

Whenever one starts talking a lot, there is going to be vanity.

Therefore fear God. Be careful what you say. It is better to be a man or woman of few words than to be the life of the party and say too much. Hold him in reverence and watch your mouth.

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise. Pr. 10:19

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

8. If you see the oppression of the poor.

Although this subject was introduced in a general way in Ecc. 4:1-3, Solomon here develops a it more fully.

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. Ecc 4:1

The truth of these words are obvious. Man's cruelty to his fellow man has no limits and the poor are especially vulnerable. What the curse did to animals, man has often done to his fellow man. Life "under the sun" and out of the "presence of the LORD" closely resembles the jungle. There the weak receive no compassion or help, they are devoured. This is exactly what one often sees "under the sun." A poor man who has no recourse is often treated poorly. The term "oppression" describes both "to treat with violence and injustice," and "things taken by force or fraud." This leads to "anguish" and "distress."

"To treat with violence and injustice, to load with hard, injurious usage; to bear hard upon a person, in opposition to showing mercy... to oppress by violence or fraud... violence and calumny; something taken away by force or fraud, unjust gain; anguish... distress... an oppressor... pl. oppressions, injuries... forcible exactions... (Wilson p 296)

As a class, the poor have often been exploited by the rich and powerful. God dealt with this many times even among the Jews who were to all see themselves as brothers.

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the poor for a pair of sandals. 7 They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. Amos 2:6-7

The Lord will enter into judgment With the elders of His people And His princes: "For you have eaten up the vineyard; The plunder of the poor is in your houses. 15 What do you mean by crushing My people And grinding the faces of the poor?" Says the Lord God of hosts. Isa 3:14-15

"Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, Who write misfortune Which they have prescribed 2 To rob the needy of justice, And to take what is right from the poor of My people, That widows may be their prey, And that they may rob the fatherless. Isa 10:1-2

Even in our own nation we read of the terrible working conditions, poor medical care, high taxes, and injustice they received at the turn of the twentieth century. Often the wealthy and the powerful will increase their wealth by oppressing and abusing them. Even in our noble fiction we speak of the tyranny of the government over the poor (Robin Hood, Prince and the Pauper, etc.). God was so concerned about the poor that He gave laws to stop it, and sent His prophets to condemn it.

'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. Lev 19:15

God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. 2 How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. 3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. Ps 82:1-4(see also Ps 10:2;8-18; 109:16);

He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy. Pr. 14:31

Therefore, because you tread down the poor And take grain taxes from him, Though you have built houses of hewn stone, Yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, But you shall not drink wine from them. 12 For I know your manifold transgressions And your mighty sins: Afflicting the just and taking bribes; Diverting the poor from justice at the gate. 13 Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, For it is an evil time. Amos 5:11-13 (See also Amos 4:1-3)

But in spite of all God has done to warn man against it, Koheleth reminds us not to marvel at it. Even with these and many many more verses of instruction and condemnation, it will still happen.

And the violent perversions of justice and righteousness in a province,

Added to oppression comes something even more difficult for godly people and anyone who is under such trouble to comprehend. How can any man born in the image and likeness of God become so perverted? How can anyone who would hate to be so treated, act like this? Yet there will be there will also be “*violent perversions*” of both justice and righteousness. He chose a word that portrayed any judgment that “*tears away*” by “*fraud or injustice,*” or “*takes by force*” “*the possessions of the poor.*”

“to pluck off or away, to tear away, to take by force, by open violence, oftener by fraud or injustice of any kind, e.g. the property or possessions of others, to seize upon, to take by force to claim as one’s own; especially of the rich and powerful who seize upon the possession of the poor by fraud and violence... violence, violent perverting” (Wilson p. 468)

It is not uncommon even today, while reading the paper or listening to the news to hear of a court verdict that causes us to groan. Another violent perversion of justice. Habakkuk bemoaned this very thing in his own day.

O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. Hab 1:2-4

Although when God is in control these things could never occur, “*under the sun*” they are common place. We will read of obvious cases of right and wrong violently perverted, innocent people harmed, and the guilty go free. Although no one speaks of it, abortion is a “*violent perversion of justice and righteousness,*” where the “*rights*” of an unborn child to life are perverted by the “*right*” of a woman to be absolved of all consequences of her behavior. We see how perverted this is when we consider that anything can be done to this “*child*” in the womb, but after birth any mistreatment by parents or others brings seriously punishment and condemnation. We see it when the guilty are freed on technicalities and the victim is left to wonder where justice has fled.

do not marvel at the matter;

When such things happen we tend to “*marvel.*” We think of it as something that ought to be impossible. We therefore feel “*astounded,*” “*stunned,*” “*dumbfounded,*” “*amazed,*” and “*astonished.*” We do this for two reasons. First, because we don’t comprehend how God can allow it. Second, we can’t comprehend how men created in the image of God could treat others in this way.

8539 tamahh- to be astounded, to be stunned, to be amazed, to be dumbfounded a) (Qal) to be astounded b) (Hithpael) to astonish yourself, to be astounded, to be astonished at one another

What exactly is the Spirit forbidding here? Is he telling us to become apathetic and calloused to it? Is He forbidding us to care and to be vexed as Lot? Obviously not. So from what is He seeking to insulate and protect God’s people?

Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. Ps 73:1-2

Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb ... 7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret — it only causes harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. Ps 37:1-2, 7-10

As long as sinful men are in the position of control, “*under the sun*” God will allow them to exercise their free will. Not to allow such oppression, but in hope of repentance.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

for high official watches over high official and higher officials are over them.

Sooner or later there will always be just retribution! There is no point to astonished and marveling at such things. Let your heart be settled about such things. These things will happen “*under the sun*,” but wait patiently for the time when something will be done. Sometimes this will occur when a higher human officials gets wind of it. There are still good people in positions of authority who are ministers of God’s vengeance.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Rom. 13:1-5

It always warms the heart to hear of a corrupt person who has abused and oppressed others being caught and punished. But sometimes it is too high for human intervention or there is so much corruption in a nation that there is no way it will be fixed by those in this life. But there are even higher officials than even these. When the most “*high*” and “*exalted*,” of human government or rule is exhausted, there are “*even higher*” This term is used three times in succession to emphasize it.

gaboah 1364, “high; exalted.” This adjective occurs about 24 times. The root seen in this adjective, in the verb gabah and in the noun gobah, occurs in every period of biblical Hebrew. This word means “high, lofty, tall in dimension”: ...the first occurrence. When used of a man, gaboah means “tall”... The word means “high or exalted in station”: ... In Eccl. 5:8, this connotation of “one of high rank” may be expressed in the translation “official” (RSV)... Gaboah may be used of a psychological state, such as “haughtiness”: (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

“**For high official (local government/state official) watches over high official (federal government) and higher officials (God, Christ, the Holy Spirit) are over them.** Hence when a local government is corrupt and state court will deal with it. If a state court is corrupt the federal courts will deal with it. When the federal courts are corrupt the supreme court will deal with it. When the supreme court is corrupt and there is nothing higher, do not fear, fret or be dismayed. Don’t be dumbfounded or astounded. There are even higher officials.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Rom 12:19-20

For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:30-31

God’s children must not overly trouble themselves over these things. They will occur “*under the sun*.” It is terrible to behold injustice, but God will deal with it in His own time and in His own way.

**9. Moreover the profit of the land is for all; the king himself is served from the field (NKJV).
The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. (NIV)
But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields. (ESV)
After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land. (NASB)**

The translations above fairly set forth the difficulty of properly translating this verse into English. The focus of the verse is either on the king or the land. Various scholars have also weighed in with their own translations

“a king for the well-cultivated land” Keil and Delitzsch

“It is an advantage for a country on the whole that there is a king over the cultivated field.” Leupold

“the profit of the land in everything is a king of the cultivated field.”

“But the profit of a land in all things is a king devoted to the field,” Pulpit

This passage may or may not be the cure, or the lessening of oppression. While some of the translations use “moreover” to contrast the passages, it is just as possible they contrast only within the verse. The NKJV contrasts the passages, but could have just as easily contrasted the verses:

Moreover the profit of the land is for all; the king himself is served from the field(NKJV).
The profit of the land is for all; **moreover** the king himself is served from the field(NKJV).

So some take this verse as the small comfort for those in a despotic state. A king who has in mind to organize all his subjects to the best cultivation of the land will at least have that as a blessing. But it makes more sense to see the contrast not in the oppression, but in the king. The best king, the one God would have to reign over all men, is one who is concerned most with the field and with agricultural pursuits. Concerned that the citizens in his domain have enough to eat.

The remainder of this chapter deals with various aspects and troubles that money and possessions bring.

10. He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;

This may have been one of Solemn's 3000 proverbs(I Kings 4:32) that did not make it into the book of Proverbs. It gives a very short inspired message about money. Those who love silver must factor in a very important truth. The term "love" can "be taken in the same extensive sense as the English word 'love'." It is "that in which a man delights" "which he earnestly desires." "It implies ardent and vehement inclination of the mind."

"... to love that in which a man delights, or which he earnestly desires; it implies ardent and vehement inclination of the mind, at the same time tenderness and fullness of affection, and is to be taken in the same extensive sense as the English word "love"..." (Wilson p 260-261)

157 'ahab or 'ahab- 1) to love a) (in the Qal) 1) human love for another, includes love for family and sexual love 2) human appetite for objects such as food, drink, sleep, wisdom 3) human love for God or toward God 4) the act of being a friend a) lover (a participle) b) friend (a participle) 5) God's love toward mankind a) toward individual men b) toward people Israel c) to righteousness b) (in the Niphal) 1) lovely (a participle) 2) lovable (a participle) c) (in the Piel) 1) friends 2) lovers (figuratively, used of adulterers) 2) to like

As the second definition shows, there are multitudes of things man can set this emotion upon. He can love his "family," "food," "drink," "sleep," "God," or "friends." Some of these bring satisfaction, some do not. Silver cannot bring "satisfaction." One never "has one's fill" and never is the "desire satisfied." No matter how much silver one gains, it never leads to feeling "sated" "satisfied with" or "fulfilled." The love of silver leads nowhere.

7646 saba` or saba` - to be satisfied, to be sated, to be fulfilled, to be surfeited a) (Qal) 1) to be sated (with food) 2) to be sated, to be satisfied with, to be fulfilled, to be filled, to have one's fill of (to have desire satisfied) 3) to have in excess, to be surfeited, to be surfeited with; to be weary of (figurative) b) (Piel) to satisfy c) (Hiphil) 1) to satisfy 2) to enrich 3) to sate, to glut (with the undesired)

Hence the one who allows himself to fall in love with silver has a goal that leads to dissatisfaction and unhappiness. They will never be satisfied no matter how much silver they gain. This is a dead end road for no matter how much a man sets his heart on, when he reaches it, he always wants more. This vicious chain continues until death takes him away.

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim 6:8-9

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Heb 13:5-6

Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.

He repeats the same term for "love" and now applies it to "abundance." This term refers first of all to a "multitude," "lively commotion," "tumult" "crowd" and "abundance." It is from this broad meaning that the term "abundance of possessions or wealth" comes.

hamon, "multitude; lively commotion; agitation; tumult; uproar; commotion; turmoil; noise; crowd;

abundance.” This noun appears 85 times in biblical Hebrew and in all periods. The word represents a “lively commotion or agitation”: ... *Hamon* represents the stirring or agitation of a crowd of people... Sometimes *hamon* represents the noise raised by an agitated crowd of people (a “tumult”): ... the word represents the mighty sound of a gathering army... *Hamon* sometimes means a “multitude or crowd” from which a tumult may arise. Frequently the word represents a large army: ... Finally, any great throng, or a great number of people... Gen. 17:4-- the first occurrence may be represented by this word. ... Abundance of possessions or wealth is indicated by *hamon*, as in: “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked” Ps. 37:16; cf. Eccl. 5:10-- parallel to “silver” [money]; Isa. 60:5. ... (Vine’s #1995)

Those who love to have great amounts of possessions, and who set their happiness on the next purchase will never find an end to it. Those who think they will be happy with a new car will soon want a better, a new house, a new TV, a new whatever. Our own society shows fully the truth of this. Things are obsolete almost as soon as they are bought, and no one is ever satisfied with what they have. They always want more. No matter how excited they are with a new purchase, it soon is just another one of their possessions and they still want and need more.

This also is vanity.

With the above being true, it is vanity(empty, futile, meaningless and fruitless) to love them. Why love something that can bring no value and no satisfaction? Why start down a road that leads to greater and greater desire and lessor and lessor returns from them? They are merely traps that some fall into and never get out of. Mark it down, it is a waste of your time to seek for the above two things. They are only a maze which once you enter you never get out of and in which you are never satisfied.

11. When goods increase,

Another sad fact about the total dissatisfaction regarding money is now described. These are priceless truths that can keep us from the folly of seeking things that not only can lead us away from the faith, but also bring no true satisfaction or contentment. They are truly a waste of our time. The more money one seeks to make, and the more possessions they seek for the actual less profit they bring. The quest for silver and abundance generally leads to goods and possessions “increasing.” But as they “*multiply*,” and “*become great*” a very unanticipated thing occurs.

rabah 7235, “to multiply, become numerous, become great.” This verb also occurs in Akkadian, Arabic, Amorite, and biblical Aramaic. Biblical Hebrew attests it about 220 times and in all periods. This word should be compared to *gadal* and *rabab*.... Basically this word connotes numerical increase. It can refer to the process of increasing numerically: God told the sea and air creatures to “be fruitful, and multiply” Gen. 1:22-- the first occurrence.... This verb can be used of being quantitatively large. In Gen. 7:17 the waters are said to have “increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.” So here the verb means “to increase in quantity.” ... *Rabah* is sometimes used with another verb to signify its increase in occurrence or frequency. In some passages it signifies that a process is continuing: (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

They increase who eat them;

The term “eat” can mean a simple eating of food, or it can be used figuratively to “*consumption*.”

‘*akal* 398, “to eat, feed, consume, devour.” This verb occurs in all Semitic languages (except Ethiopic) and in all periods, from the early Akkadian to the latest Hebrew. The word occurs about 810 times in Old Testament Hebrew and 9 times in Aramaic. Essentially, this root refers to the “consumption of food by man or animals.” In Gen. 3:6, we read that Eve took of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and “ate” it. The function of eating is presented along with seeing, hearing, and smelling as one of the basic functions of living Deut. 4:28. ... This verb is often used figuratively with overtones of destroying something or someone. So the sword, fire, and forest are said to “consume” men. The things “consumed” may include such various things as land Gen. 3:17, fields Isa. 1:7, offerings Deut. 18:1, and a bride’s purchase price Gen. 31:15. ‘*Akal* might also connote bearing the results of an action Isa. 3:10.... The word can refer not only to “eating” but to the entire concept “room and board” 2 Sam. 9:11,13,... (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

The more one possesses, the more people there are who will consume them. This is one of the

most fundamental problems of wealth and possessions. Up to a certain point we are taking care of ourselves, but when things multiply, it takes more people to care for them. When a man purchases a large mansion on hundreds of acres, with livestock and many other things, he must hire others to care for them. The point seems to be that there is no additional value to possessions after a certain point. They are more than can be cared for and at that point one simply becomes a manager of more people who take more and more of his profit and give him more and more headaches.

So what profit have the owners Except to see them with their eyes?

That being so, what is the profit to it? Why do it? One gets no satisfaction from silver or from the increase of abundance. But as these things increase, one becomes responsible for more and more people. When it is all said and done our inspired writer informs us that the only real profit to the owners of such great wealth is what you see with your eyes. Is it all the effort and toil, all the risk and frustration worth being able to see more? You can see more of the headaches of others.

As he progresses with this subject it will be shown increasingly that wealth is not what it appears. The great cost to ourselves is hardly worth the additional value received. The only real benefit from such wealth is to see these possession with the eyes. He leaves it to the reader to decide if it is worth it.

12. The sleep of a laboring man is sweet,

The man who works eight-twelve hours a day and then goes home with no concern about payroll, competitors, or all ups and downs of business has a good night sleep. Those with just enough to live on but nothing to bring him to the attention of thieves and covetous people will not have concerns of things being stolen. The one content with such things as he has does not worry about his possessions. Such a man has the sweetest life of all. The laborer is a man who “serves”, “cultivates” and “works” Generally, such a man “works for another” or “to serve another by labor.” In this way he “makes himself a servant.” We would call this person an employee.

ʿabad 5647, “to serve, cultivate, enslave, work.” This root is used widely in Semitic and Canaanite languages. This verb appears about 290 times in all parts of the Old Testament. The verb is first used in Gen. 2:5: “...and there was not a man to till the ground.” God gave to man the task “to dress [the ground]” Gen. 2:15; 3:23; cf. 1:28, ... ʿAbad is often used toward God: “...ye shall serve God upon this mountain” Exod. 3:12, ...” (from Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

5647 ʿabad- to work, to serve a) (Qal) 1) to labor, to work, to do work 2) to work for another, to serve another by labor 3) to serve as subjects 4) to serve (God) 5) to serve (with Levitical service) b) (Niphal) 1) to be worked, to be tilled (of land) 2) to make oneself a servant c) (Pual) to be worked d) (Hiphil) 1) to compel to labor or work, to cause to labor, to cause to serve 2) to cause to serve as subjects e) (Hophal) to be led or enticed to serve.” (BDB)

Whether he eats little or much;

The amount of food that he eats is not even a factor in the sweetness of his sleep. Whether he eats a great sumptuous meal or simple fare, has no bearing on it. The value is in the work and in the labor. The satisfaction comes from working and the sleep from that satisfaction and from the exhaustion that labor produces.

But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.

Although “*he who loves money will not be satisfied with money,*” (Ecc 5:10) it can keep him from sleeping the sound and satisfying sleep of a laboring man. The “abundance” of the rich keeps them from sleeping soundly. The term “abundance” is from the same root as “satisfied” in verse 10, but more narrow in meaning, speaking only of “*plenty*” or “*satiety*.” It is only used in eleven times in the OT, 9 of those times in the 7 years of plenty of Pharaoh’s dream that Joseph interpreted (Gen 41: 29-53), once in Proverbs (barns filled with plenty Prov 3:10) and here.

7647 saba` - plenty, satiety a) plenty (used of breadstuffs) b) satiety

The “*plenty*” and “*satiety*” of the rich keep them from sleeping at night. He may have more to look at than the laborer, but it would be hard to prove that he was better off.

The rich man can't sleep at night because there is so much on his mind about his business, or his possessions. Running a business or a vast estate requires forecasting, thinking about capital outlays, and many other complex things. Marketing trends, costs of employees, reliability and loyalty of employees etc. All of these must be continually on the mind of the successful business man. What is the point? The author vividly points out the contrast. The laboring man may not have as much, but he has a lot more joy in his life.

This is not always true, but it so often is that it is more the exception than the rule to find it otherwise. There are some wise business men who simply enjoy their business and know how to put it away when the right time comes to get a good nights sleep, but evidently not enough to even make it into this passage.

13. There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun:

Like a leech, parasite, or a spider among insects, there is a severe evil "under the sun" that lurks among men. The term "severe" is actually not a adjective of degree, but a verb. It generally means becoming "weak," "sick," "diseased," "grieved" "sorry" or "sore."

2470 chalah- to be or become weak, to be sick or to become sick, to be diseased or to become diseased, to be grieved or to become grieved, to be sorry or become sorry a) (Qal) to be weak, to be sick b) (Piel) 1) to be weak or to become weak, to feel weak 2) to become sick, to become ill 3) (CLBL) to entreat, to pray, to beg c) (Niphal) 1) to make oneself sick 2) to be made sick 3) to be tired d) (Pual) to be made weak, to become weak e) (Hithpael) to make oneself sick f) (Hiphil) 1) to make sore 2) to make sick 3) to show signs of sickness, to become sick 4) to grieve g) (Hophal) 1) to be made sick 2) to be wounded

Hence this is a weakening and sickening type of evil. An evil that leads to a diseased and grieved state of existence. Like a leech or parasite that slowly sucks the vitality from a man, or a spider that sucks the life out of an insect, there is a severe evil that men must face "*under the sun*." This is a moral evil, and evil that is "bad," "disagreeable," "malignant," "unpleasant," "giving pain, unhappiness, misery," "unhappy," and "hurtful."

7451 ra`- as an adjective: 1) bad, evil a) bad, disagreeable, malignant b) bad, unpleasant, evil (giving pain, unhappiness, misery) c) evil, displeasing d) bad (used of its kind, land, water, etc.) e) bad (used of value) f) worse than, worst (comparison) g) sad, unhappy h) evil (hurtful) i) bad, unkind (vicious in disposition) j) bad, evil, wicked (ethically) ... 2) evil, distress, misery, injury, calamity a) evil, distress, adversity b) evil, injury, wrong c) evil (ethical) as a feminine noun: 3) evil, misery, distress, injury a) evil, misery, distress b) evil, injury, wrong c) evil (ethical) (BDB)

This is the real problem for those who have such a lifestyle. Money brings more risk of being weakened and sickened into unpleasant and painful misery, than it does of satisfying those who possess it. Koheleth then selects some examples of how this can occur.

Riches kept for their owner to his hurt.

Riches, wealth and the possessions they generally bring can be held on to in such a way as to bring about great harm to the one who possesses them. This is the first great evil spoken of in the previous verse. The term "kept" is a general term for "tending" and "taking care of." It can also mean "to keep" in the "sense of 'watching over' or giving attention to" it, or "to keep" in the sense of saving or retaining."

shamar 8104, "to keep, tend, watch over, retain." This verb occurs in most Semitic languages (biblical Aramaic attests only a noun formed from this verb). Biblical Hebrew attests it about 470 times and in every period. Shamar means "to keep" in the sense of "tending" and taking care of. So God put Adam "into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" Gen. 2:15-- ... The word also means "to keep" in the sense of "watching over" or giving attention to. In a third group of passages this verb means "to keep" in the sense of saving or "retaining." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

Wealth and riches can be tended, given attention to, or retained to the owner's hurt. This "hurt" is the same term as the severe "evil" of the previous verse. It is a moral hurt, leading to consequences that are "bad," "disagreeable," "malignant," "unpleasant," "giving pain, unhappiness," and "misery." There are times when wealth is not an asset at all. So found the rich man who asked Jesus what

he needed to inherit eternal life:

22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. 24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Lk. 18:22-25

So also the man in Proverbs who asked God not to give him wealth:

Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): 8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. Pr. 30:7-9

As well as our Lord's warning in the sermon on the mount:

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Matt 6:24-26

These are just a few of the kinds of terrible things money can do. Stories abound of people who have perished because they were more concerned with their possessions than they were with their own lives. There are some who will squander their own health in their quest to gain or maintain their wealth.

Wealth can cost one their friends, family, and every other thing they have. There are certainly times when one should realize that there are many things more important than money. Do we possess our possessions, or do our possessions possess us? This is the real heart of the matter.

14. But those riches perish through misfortune;

The worst of it now unfolds. The man who is a complete slave to his own money who cannot let it go even when it threatens his own hurt now find those riches have "perished." Wealth can "vanish," "be destroyed," or "lost."

6 'abad- 1) to perish, to vanish, to go astray, to be destroyed a) (in the Qal) 1) to perish, to die, to be exterminated ...3) to be lost, to stray b) (in the Piel) 1) to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish, to give up (as lost), to exterminate 2) to blot out, to do away with, to cause to vanish, ..." (BDB)

Suddenly a man who had everything and was enslaved to it to his own hurt has nothing. All his life has been spent accumulating and he now has nothing to show for it. This is the nature of "life under the sun." There is no certainty to anything. Political or economic upheaval can cost a man all he has in a moment of "misfortune." This terms is a repetition of the severe "evil" of verse 12 and the "hurt" of 13. This is an event or circumstance that is "bad," "disagreeable," "malignant," "unpleasant," "giving pain, unhappiness, misery," "unhappy," and "hurtful."

A man can allow wealth(mammon) to become a god. It can become so important to him that his greed becomes idolatry. Think of the agony when he then loses it all.

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Col. 3:5

When someone refuses to use his money as a means of gaining the favor of God while he has it, he will have little to draw comfort from when he loses it all.

"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. Lk 16:9

When such wealth has ruined the character of the one who has it and then he loses the money, there just isn't much left.

When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand.

The bitterness of heart in the man who must think about such things would be severe. Better to never have had wealth than to have it ruin you and then leave you empty with nothing. Even the joy of fatherhood would not remove the bitterness. Since there are no guarantees that such a thing will not happen, it is sheer folly to live like this. There is no happiness to it at all. All one gets while they have it is the ability to look at it, while it works its evil on their character and leaves them empty, times come when giving it up would be better for them, but they keep it to their own hurt, then suddenly and without warning, some misfortune rips it all away from them and they have nothing to even give to their children. Surely this is vanity.

15. As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return,

This is the most powerful and greatest antidote to allowing money to become a goal to strive for in life than anything he has said up to this point. People can rationalize the above away with statements like "that won't happen to me." or "I am too smart to lose everything!" They can even find examples where it did not happen(See Psalm 73). But there is no way around this one. There is no way that one can ignore this truth.

No one, no matter how wealthy, powerful or great brought anything with them from their mother's womb. All infants enter the world with nothing. They all enter the world naked. They also cannot deny that they take nothing with them when they go. Not even their bodies go with them. They leave this world in death and all that they have done is left behind. This is such an important truth that it is recorded several times in the Scriptures.

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, 1 Tim 6:6-9

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. Job 1:20-22

There is no satisfaction to wealth and riches. They bring slavery and sorrow. They are a mirage, illusion, and chimera. They cannot deliver what they promise. It is only a sad deception that wealth brings happiness. Even if he keeps it to the very end, still there is no comfort in that. He will still leave this world empty handed. Just as the rich man did in the rich man and Lazarus. There is no way to take any of the physical fruits of one's labor from this world to the next. Since that is impossible it is sheer folly to make it the goal of one's life. The uncertainty of riches gives way even to the best case scenario. He keeps his money his whole life and enjoys it, he still dies and leaves naked. Why not seek for a way to take it with you. This way is available to the children of God.

To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor Which he may carry away in his hand.

Making it even clearer, the writer takes it to its bitter conclusion. To go as he came, taking nothing with him of all the labor he had done while here. "You can't take it with you!" ought to be the death blow to all aspirations for wealth. It is folly of the worst type to spend one's life seeking something that cannot bring lasting(eternal) value. That it does not is a testament to the stubborn folly of those who live "under the sun" and refuse to learn. You cannot "remove" it from "under the sun" to heaven. You can't "depart" with it or "carry" it "away."

nasha' 5375, "to remove, depart, carry away." This verb occurs in all Semitic languages including biblical Aramaic and in all periods of Hebrew. The Bible attests this Hebrew word about 650 times.(Vines Exp Dict.).

When one makes the object of his "labor" the gaining of wealth, then he can take nothing away. This was at the heart our Lord's admonition to the people of his own day.

Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son

of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.” Jn 6:27

We can work for things that perish or we can work for things that bring eternal life. Seems like a “no-brainer” but many can’t seem to make the right choice? If one is going to “labor” which means “troublesome work”; *the emphasis is on the difficulty involved in a task or work as troublesome and burdensome,*” then it might as well be for something that is eternal.

16. And this also is a severe evil, That just exactly as he came, so shall he go.

This is a severe evil! These are the same two terms used back in verse . The term “severe” is actually not a adjective of degree, but a verb. It generally means becoming “*weak,*” “*sick,*” “*diseased,*” “*grieved*” “*sorry*” or “*sore,*” but can also be a moral evil. Joined together in this manner, we have a “*diseased unhappiness*” a “*malignant sickness*” or an “*unpleasant weakness.*” A situation that leads to “*pain unhappiness and misery.*” So is the circumstance of a man who expends all his labor, energy, and life on something he cannot take with him! We should pity the rich, but it seems foolish for God’s children to envy them does it not? If we do envy those with wealth, we ought to ask the same question posed next?

And what profit has he who has labored for the wind?

What was the profit? What was the value? What was the issue of such a life? What did he get out of it? Only the seeing it with his eyes while he was here. All he was doing was laboring for the wind. It is like a man going out and trying to work and labor to save up wind. You can catch it in a bag, in a jar, in a can, or any other container. You can store all of these containers in a garage, or even a bank vault, but what happens when it comes time to open the containers and see how much wind you have? This is what happens at the end of life for those who seek the things above. At the end of their life when they face death, or even after when they leave this life and they look back on all they accomplished and try to see what was the value to it all, it is like that. There just isn’t anything there.

17. All his days he also eats in darkness, And he has much sorrow and sickness and anger.

This verse may be the continuation of the thought brought out in verse 13-14. A man who has wealth and then loses it, or it may be simply the conclusion to the thought of verse 16 that even should a man retain his wealth to the very end, still he must leave as he came. Either way this same conclusion follows. That the man who loses his money and has nothing will eat in darkness with sorrow, sickness, and anger needs little explanation or thought. When a man thinks about all that might have been, when he goes over how he lost his money and how he would do things differently now, when he considers all that he had and now does not have all these feelings and emotions are going to come to the forefront.

“Eating in darkness” is probably an idiom for depression, disappointment and frustration. The term “darkness” is often used figuratively for “*misery*” “*destruction*” or “*sorrow*”

choshek (kho-shek’); from 2821; the dark; hence (literally) darkness; figuratively, misery, destruction, death, ignorance, sorrow, wickedness: (Strongs # 2822)

The “sorrow” he feels is an emotion that takes in “*vexation*” “*anger*” “*grief,*” “*indignation,*” “*provocation,*” and “*frustration*”.

ka`ac (kah’-as); or (in Job) *ka`as* (kah’-as); from 3707; vexation: -anger, angry, grief, indignation, provocation, provoking, X sore, sorrow, spite, wrath. ***. *keeth`*. (3708 See 3706).

It is a sorrow born of frustration, disappointment and bitterness, full of recriminations of what might have been if only some things had gone differently. This mind set leads to a sickness that sometimes describes a physical disease or malady, but can also refer to anxiety.

choli, “sickness.” This noun occurs about 23 times. The meaning of “sickness” occurs in Deut. 7:15: “And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases [madweh] of Egypt...” Choli is used metaphorically as a distress of the land in Hos. 5:13. (Vine’s # 2483)

choliy (khol-ee’); from 2470; malady, anxiety, calamity: (Strongs #2483)

Finally there is an “anger” that burns as “rage” and “strife.”

7110 qetseph (keh'-tsef); ... figuratively, rage or strife: ... KJV-- foam, indignation, X sore, wrath.

What a terrible potential wealth has to destroy those who seek it. Leading to anger, frustration, bitterness and even illness which comes from plans which are completely out of our control. We simply cannot bring such plans to fruition and take a grievous risk. How can a man who desires to be wealthy, and even attains to that goal be said to have these things? Let Paul answer.

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. 1
Tim 6:9-10

The point to all this then is that one should not allow the pursuit of wealth or possessions to take too big a part in their life. There is no end to the quest and those who enter that path find it a maze from which it is difficult to extricate themselves from.

18. Here is what I have seen:

This is generally used when Koheleth seeks to make a conclusion or summation of his studies and explorations. Here is an inspired conclusion based on full exploration of what will make man happy.

It is good and fitting

These are two very pleasant and special words. “Good” describes those things in life that are “agreeable, pleasant, and desirable; beautiful.” Things which are “useful, fit, and suitable;”

“... This word, in its various forms, is used in a very extensive sense: of that which is good to the senses, agreeable, pleasant, and desirable; beautiful, fair... of that which is useful, fit, and suitable; of that which is morally good, honest, becoming, and virtuous; ... It is also applied to things prosperous and abundant; to happiness and joyfulness; to advantage and pleasure...” (Wilson p 197)

Fitting describes things that are “beautiful” “comely” “fair” “pleasant” and “bright.”

yapheh (yaw-feh'); from 3302; beautiful (literally or figuratively): -+beautiful, beauty, comely, fair (-est, one), + goodly, pleasant, well.(strong's #3303)

yaphah- to be bright, to be beautiful, to be handsome, to be fair (BDB #3302)

With these two terms the author seeks to stress the absolute goodness and beauty of the things he is about to speak of. They are good, wholesome, agreeable. They are pleasant desirable and enjoyable. They are also suitable, becoming, and comely. There is both an internal and an external beauty to them. They not only look good, they are good. They will therefore bring out the very end they promise.

for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun

This is the third time book Koheleth has said this or something similar.

Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? Eccl 2:24-26

I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, 13 and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor — it is the gift of God. Eccl 3:12-13

Food, drink, and the good of all labor are among the most simple and basic pleasures of life. They always bring what they promise. One who seeks his enjoyment and pleasure from life in these three things will never be disappointed! To have good food and good things to drink with the food along with a job one truly enjoys and finds good are the most wonderful gifts anyone can be blessed with. All should seek for their greatest pleasure and enjoyment here.

all the days of his life which God gives him;

This should be done all the days of one's life. It may be short, it may be long, this is in the hands

of God, but while he is here, it is to this that one ought to look for pleasure and enjoyment.

for it is his heritage.

This is the fourth time Koheleth has used this term to describe what man can expect from life.

*And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my **reward** for all my labor. Eccl 2:10*

And I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him? Eccl 3:22

The term “heritage” “reward” and “lot” is a broad term describing things that can be divided or parted. Things that one can take as their own.

“... to divide, to divide out as a spoil, to take away a portion... a part or portion taken from a whole, as of meat, prey, land, inheritance; that which is given to the poor; that which is assigned to man by God for his enjoyment...” (Wilson p 318)

*Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my **reward** from all my labor. Eccl 2:10*

*For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his **heritage** to a man who has not labored for it. Eccl 2:21*

*So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his **heritage**. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? Eccl 3:22*

*Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his **heritage**. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his **heritage** and rejoice in his labor — this is the gift of God. Eccl 5:18-20*

*Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a **share** In anything done under the sun. Eccl 9:6*

*Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your **portion** in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun. Eccl 9:9*

*Give a **servicing** to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth. Eccl 11:2*

This is what God has divided out to each man as the portion which he can enjoy “under the sun.” It is the common thing that all men can take from life. All of us need to take this to heart and strive to enjoy the “simple pleasures of life.” If we can learn to enjoy these things, we are truly getting all there is left of enjoyment “under the sun.” Those who seek for more will only be disappointed. Our Lord warns us though that even these if sought for can become a problem. We need to enjoy them, while we seek first His kingdom(Mt. 6:25-34)

19. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it,

Is Koheleth now retracting everything he said earlier? Obviously not! What then is the difference? Like I Tim 6:9-10, it is the love of money that leads to the grievous sorrows. When it is a gift from God to His righteous ones to enjoy in their lives, and it is used in exact accord with God’s plan, then it is entirely different. Even in I Timothy this is admitted:

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1 Tim 6:17-19

When it comes as a gift, and all of God’s wisdom is followed, and God gives one the power to enjoy

it for a time, then one is truly blessed. God should receive the praise, the thanks and the credit if he has wealth, and also the good health to enjoy it. Under this type of situation, where a man's labor and toil is blessed and he becomes wealthy, he can look to God in thanksgiving and praise. Those men who receive such blessings are now given advice.

to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor– this is the gift of God.

He too should receive his heritage (the right to eat and drink and enjoy the good of his labor), and also rejoice in his labor, and see it for exactly what it is: the gift of God. There is nothing more for any one than this. Under such a circumstance, wealth is really not even a factor. The poor man can do this if he trusts in the LORD with all his heart and refuses to lean upon his own understanding. The world may look upon such a person as miserable, but there have been many godly men and women who have known great joy even in poverty through this revelation. The wealthy man too will only understand this by trusting in the LORD with all his heart and not leaning on his own understanding. The dangers of wealth can only be removed by doing things God's way and seeing things God's way. Those who love money, or view poverty in the wrong light will be destroyed.

20. For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life,

There are many different ways to approach this verse. What strikes me as being most important would be that which ties it directly back to what has just been said. Those who are mindful to be rich dwell on the days of their life. It finally hits them sooner or later that they will not be here long, and the horrible conclusions that even this writer was struck with in the first few chapters hit home. What is the use to all the labor expended here since I must die and leave it to another?

But those who take God's advice to enjoy their food and drink, and the pleasure that comes from their labor will not be struck with such thoughts. They will enjoy what life has to bring while it slowly passes by. He does not dwell unduly on how swiftly these days are passing by. He does not for they looked for the city whose builder and maker is God.

because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.

A man can be kept so busy with his own heritage, and the joy that fills his heart can be so real and tangible, that he never takes the time to think of the days of his life and how short they are. This and this alone is the path to true enjoyment in this life. Those who are unduly concerned with silver, with possessions, with the length of their life will never be happy. Those who enjoy their food and drink, and how enjoy the good in their labor, whether wealthy or poor will not find this problem. God will keep such a one busy with his heritage and his heart will be full of joy.