

Ecclesiastes

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains for ever. The sun rises and the

5 sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied

10 with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already, in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to happen

15 among those who come after. I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. What is crooked

20 cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered. I said to

myself, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over
Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and
knowledge." And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness
and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much
5 wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.
I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself."
But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of
pleasure, "What use is it?" I searched with my mind how to cheer my body
with wine--my mind still guiding me with wisdom--and how to lay hold on
10 folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under
heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works; I built houses
and planted vineyards for myself; I made myself gardens and parks, and
planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to
water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had
15 slaves who were born in my house; I had also great possessions of herds
and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also
gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces;
I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, man's delight. So
I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my
20 wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep

from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained

5 under the sun. So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I perceived that one fate comes to all of them. Then I said to myself, "What

10 befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity. For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all

15 is vanity and a striving after wind. I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me; and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all

20 the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a man who has

toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by
a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What has
a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun? For
all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night
5 his mind does not rest. This also is vanity. There is nothing better for a man
than that he should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in his toil. This also,
I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who
can have enjoyment? For to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom
and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and
10 heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a
striving after wind. For everything there is a season, and a time for every
matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant,
and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a
time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to
15 laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to
refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep,
and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep
silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for
20 war, and a time for peace. What gain has the worker from his toil? I have

seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with.

He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be

5 happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; also that it is God's gift to man that every one should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil. I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be,

10 already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away. Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work. I said in my heart with regard to

15 the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts. For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of

20 man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth? So I

saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, for that is his lot; who can bring him to see what will be after him? Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of
5 their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive; but better than both is he who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is
10 vanity and a striving after wind. The fool folds his hands, and eats his own flesh. Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind. Again, I saw vanity under the sun: a person who has no one, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I
15 toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a
20 man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A

threefold cord is not quickly broken. Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice, even though he had gone from prison to the throne or in his own kingdom had been born poor. I saw all the living who move about under the sun, as well as that youth, 5 who was to stand in his place; there was no end of all the people; he was over all of them. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind. Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash 10 with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words. When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow 15 than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase, empty words grow many: but do you fear God. If you see in a province the poor oppressed and justice and right violently taken away, 20 do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher,

and there are yet higher ones over them. But in all, a king is an advantage to a land with cultivated fields. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money; nor he who loves wealth, with gain: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them; and what gain has their owner

5 but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much; but the surfeit of the rich will not let him sleep. There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture; and he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. As he came from his

10 mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil, which he may carry away in his hand. This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go; and what gain has he that he toiled for the wind, and spent all his days in darkness and grief, in much vexation and sickness and resentment? Behold, what I have seen to be good and to be

15 fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life which God has given him, for this is his lot. Every man also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and find enjoyment in his toil--this is the gift of God. For he will not much

20 remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in

his heart. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon men: a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them; this is vanity; it is a sore
5 affliction. If a man begets a hundred children, and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but he does not enjoy life's good things, and also has no burial, I say that an untimely birth is better off than he. For it comes into vanity and goes into darkness, and in darkness its name is covered; moreover it has not seen the sun or known anything; yet it finds
10 rest rather than he. Even though he should live a thousand years twice told, yet enjoy no good--do not all go to the one place? All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the
15 wandering of desire; this also is vanity and a striving after wind. Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity, and what is man the better? For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a
20 shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun? A

good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death, than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart

5 is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity. Surely oppression makes the wise man foolish, and a bribe corrupts the mind. Better

10 is the end of a thing than its beginning; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools. Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of

15 wisdom is like the protection of money; and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after

20 him. In my vain life I have seen everything; there is a righteous man who

perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his
life in his evil-doing. Be not righteous overmuch, and do not make yourself
overwise; why should you destroy yourself? Be not wicked overmuch, neither
be a fool; why should you die before your time? It is good that you should
5 take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand; for he who fears
God shall come forth from them all. Wisdom gives strength to the wise man
more than ten rulers that are in a city. Surely there is not a righteous man
on earth who does good and never sins. Do not give heed to all the things
that men say, lest you hear your servant cursing you; your heart knows that
10 many times you have yourself cursed others. All this I have tested by
wisdom; I said, "I will be wise"; but it was far from me. That which is, is
far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out? I turned my mind to
know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the sum of things, and to
know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness which is madness. And I
15 found more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and
whose hands are fetters; he who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is
taken by her. Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, adding one
thing to another to find the sum, which my mind has sought repeatedly, but
I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among
20 all these I have not found. Behold, this alone I found, that God made man

upright, but they have sought out many devices. Who is like the wise man?

And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his countenance is changed. Keep the king's command, and because of your sacred oath be not dismayed; go from his

5 presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" He who obeys a command will meet no harm, and the mind of a wise man will know the time and way. For every matter has its time and way, although man's trouble lies heavy upon him. For he does

10 not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be? No man has power to retain the spirit, or authority over the day of death; there is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.

All this I observed while applying my mind to all that is done under the sun, while man lords it over man to his hurt. Then I saw the wicked buried;

15 they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because

20 they fear before him; but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he

prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God. There is a vanity which takes place on earth, that there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this

5 also is vanity. And I commend enjoyment, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink, and enjoy himself, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of life which God gives him under the sun. When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night one's eyes see sleep; then I saw all the

10 work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out; even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God; whether it is love or hate man does not know. Everything

15 before them is vanity, since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good man, so is the sinner; and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all; also the hearts of

20 men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after

that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope,
for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they
will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the
memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have
5 already perished, and they have no more for ever any share in all that is
done under the sun. Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine
with a merry heart; for God has already approved what you do. Let your
garments be always white; let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life
with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life which he has
10 given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil
at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with
your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in
Sheol, to which you are going. Again I saw that under the sun the race is
not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor
15 riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill; but time and chance
happen to them all. For man does not know his time. Like fish which are
taken in an evil net, and like birds which are caught in a snare, so the sons
of men are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them. I have
also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me.
20 There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it

and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. But there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded.

- 5 The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off an evil odor; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. A wise man's heart inclines him toward the right, but a fool's heart toward the left. Even when the fool
- 10 walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to every one that he is a fool. If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for deference will make amends for great offenses. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves
- 15 on horses, and princes walking on foot like slaves. He who digs a pit will fall into it; and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them; and he who splits logs is endangered by them. If the iron is blunt, and one does not whet the edge, he must put forth more strength; but wisdom helps one to succeed. If the serpent bites
- 20 before it is charmed, there is no advantage in a charmer. The words of a

wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is wicked madness. A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him? The toil of a fool

5 wearies him, so that he does not know the way to the city. Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of free men, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness! Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.

10 Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything. Even in your thought, do not curse the king, nor in your bedchamber curse the rich; for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter. Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, or even to eight,

15 for you know not what evil may happen on earth. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie. He who observes the wind will not sow; and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb

20 of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes

everything. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good. Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun. For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let

5 him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Remove vexation from your mind, and put away pain from your

10 body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity. Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong

15 men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the

20 grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his

eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets; before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, says

5 the Preacher; all is vanity. Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find pleasing words, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings which are given by one Shepherd. My son,

10 beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

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