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IDYLLWILD BIBLE SCHOOL - 1992

UNDER THE SUN - THEMES FROM ECCLESIASTES

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Study #5: Wisdom and Folly

Reading: Ecclesiastes 5:6-10

I'm saving my voice for choir as well! so if I'm just silent through the next 50 minutes, you won't mind, will you?

We were in Ecclesiastes 5 yesterday and the passage we just left from there forms the link into our subject for today, in fact, we shall still spend quite a bit of time in Ecclesiastes 5, because I think we'll discover that it will help put into context the parts from chapter 6 through chapter 9 which if you get any book on Ecclesiastes, will say various coverts about wisdom and folly, in other words, they're very hard to categorize. A little bit like the book of Proverbs, they're little snapshots here and there and quite awkward for us to put into any form of order. So what I think we have to do is to just stand back a little bit and see just what it is that Solomon is trying to bring before us, and Ecclesiastes 5 and verse 6, will be a verse that I think we'll find helpful in doing that.

'Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands'. Now you'll recall that the context of this is vowing a vow, and we looked at what the Law had to say about vows and how they should be made. Verse 6 is just continuing that same idea and we are not to speak ill-advisedly with our mouth. So 'suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin', we don't have any difficulty with that first part of the verse, it's the next part of the verse that we might not be real certain just what it means. 'Neither say before the angel that it was an error wherefore should God be angry at thy voice'. It's just saying to us that because God's angelic host is in control of affairs in this dispensation, then God is listening to us through His ears, and His angels are His ears, just as God's angels are His eyes, as we read in Zechariah, 'the eyes of the LORD are in all the earth', and the seven spirits in Zechariah are the eyes of the LORD which go to and fro; speaking of His angelic ministers who are there in order that they can see all that is happening in all the earth. In fact, it's very fitting that Zechariah should be the prophet who revealed this aspect of the work of the angels because Zechariah was writing in a time when the world empire was the Persian

empire. The Persian emperor had a specific official at his court who was known as the king's **eyes**, just as he had an official who was known as the king's ears, and they were the head of his intelligence network. You can understand why they were given those names! the Persians also had a very efficient system of officialdom which ran throughout the roads in the Persian empire; so there was the main royal road which ran east-west throughout Persia, and posts would travel along that road regularly carrying information from the centre of the empire to the farthest outposts and bringing it back again. So the king's ears and the king's eyes would have their own sub-officials below them who would then discover just what it was that was happening.

Just look now at verse 8 of Ecclesiastes 5 and see how that idea is picked up. Say when we look at governments, when we look at organizations, when we look at authorities in the world, 'if thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter for he that is higher than the highest regard it; and there be higher than they'. So here is the hierarchy which existed in all forms of government, we've just explained it from the Persian government, but it's true in any government, it's true in the government of this country, that there are petty officials and they have people who are set over them, who have people would are set over them, and they're responsible to others. It's like, you may recall, when brother Peter was dealing with the miracle of the centurion's servant, and it was recognized by the centurion of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He too was a man, not a man of authority (even though He was) but a man **set under authority**, recognizing that the Lord Jesus Christ's authority came from the LORD God Himself, just as the centurion's authority came from the officials higher than him, and there was a higher than they, and for the centurion that was Caesar and all authority was delegated from Caesar in the same way that in the Persian empire, all authority was delegated from the emperor.

So, here in verse 6 of Ecclesiastes 5, 'Neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: we can understand that it's speaking now of the angels who are **seeing** and **hearing** on behalf of the LORD God Himself, and that when we say anything we must recognize that we're speaking in the presence of God. Now clearly that is one way we can understand the verse, and there is no problem in our understanding it that way. But there may well be a more specific understanding too! if you'll just turn over into Malachi and chapter 2, and the problem here was that the priests in Malachi's day were not godly men. It was true of Levi who is introduced to us at the end of verse 4, that God's covenant was with him of life and peace, and God gave those commandments to him and the work that he had to do, 'for the fear wherewith he feared God, and was afraid before the name of God'. So it was possible to say that the work of the priest was such that the law of truth was in their mouths and iniquity not found on their lips', and so long as the priests properly instructed in the ways of God, they walked with God in peace and equity. Because of their work, they turned many men and women away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.' He is the 'malak' the Hebrew

word 'malak'(4401) of the LORD of hosts, that's why the book **Mala-chi**, is called Malachi, 'my messenger', but it's the same Hebrew word that means 'angel'. So the priest is the angel of the LORD of hosts and it's only by the context when we come across this Hebrew word 'malak', that we can tell whether it's speaking of a heavenly angel or an earthly messenger and clearly here in Malachi 2, it's speaking about an earthly messenger. We have if you'll notice the same problem or the same situation when we move to the New Testament and the Greek word 'aggelos' (32) also means 'messenger' or 'angel' and we have to decide which it means so that when we come to second and third chapters of the Apocalypse and the letters to the ecclesias, 'to the angel of the ecclesia in Sardis write' and we're not certain whether it means one of God's heavenly angels who is overseeing that particular ecclesia's operations, or perhaps and I think I'd lean towards the second view, that the angels were those, not necessarily an individual but those who were especially appointed by God, earthly men, to take charge of the affairs in those specific ecclesias. It's the context and it helps us, and there's still a difficulty remaining. But here in Malachi clearly the messenger is the priest, the angel is the priest.

Now if we just take that information back into Ecclesiastes 5 verse 6, 'Neither say thou before the **messenger** (neither say thou before the **priest**) that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?' Where is the historical background to that which is going to help us understand what we are to do in our own lives today? That little phrase that we get in Ecclesiastes 5 verse 6, 'it was an error' is found word for word in Numbers 15, let's just have a look at it, shall we? and the special provision that was made in the Law for the nation of Israel, Numbers 15 and look at verse 22 which is the start of the section that concerns us today, 'If ye have **erred** (if ye have made an error)' so you see how the idea is already being introduced to us, 'if you have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses, All that the LORD hath commanded you by the hand of Moses', then verse 24, 'Then it shall be, if aught be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation; that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD. Verse 25, 'And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them'. Now let me read the next part from the RV, 'for it was an error', and that's the phrase, the words are exactly the same as the ones we find in Ecclesiastes 5 verse 6, the KJV says 'for it is ignorance', for it was an error, and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance'.

Who do they bring it to? they bring it to the priest! Verse 25, 'The priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel'. So by the bringing of the sacrifice, they are saying before the angel, before the messenger, before the one whose lips should keep knowledge, as Malachi 2 verse 7 tells us, that what they'd done was an error that it was done in ignorance. Now this was a remarkable provision within the Law of Moses, because it was allowing a covering for those sins which have not

been presumptuously (we're going to move on to presumptuous sin in a moment because that's how Numbers 15 continues). But this provision could so easily be abused! in fact, it is in human nature to abuse it! You will have heard probably better than me, the saying which I think comes from the North American Indians really that 'you don't criticize a man until you've walked a day in his moccasins'. Alright! you've got the idea that if we don't understand someone else's problems, we always make excuses for ourselves because we think we know the circumstances; but we're very quick to criticize someone else! That's human nature and this provision for that reason could be abused; we come up with all the reasons why because we said we'd do something and didn't do it, there's nothing wrong in us, for not doing it! We're so good, we're making excuses for ourselves. So in that understanding this provision could be used wrongly, and if it was used wrongly then what Ecclesiastes 5 tell us is that then is **a sin** in itself. 'Don't say before the angel it was an error, God will be angry at thy voice and destroy the work of thy hands', so even though there was this merciful provision brought into the Law, to take advantage of that, and somehow just like the Pharisees did, to show ourselves to be something great because we're now offering this offering because what we've done is done in ignorance when really it wasn't, is in fact itself, to sin.

Well, while we're in Numbers let's just stay in Numbers 15, shall we? and just read on a little further, verse 29, 'Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that's born among the children of Israel and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger the same reproaches the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people'. So you see, saying that something that was not an error, was an error, is in itself sinning presumptuously; you've brought upon yourself by wrongly taking advantage of that merciful provision in the Law, the consequences of this other law about presumptuous sin, about **deliberate rebellion**. That's how serious the situation was! So what we're being told to do and what Solomon was reminding the people of in his day in his words in Ecclesiastes, was for absolute honesty before the LORD God. Of course, we've got to be honest amongst ourselves but particularly to the LORD God; how can we possibly start covering up those things which we do, when the LORD's eyes are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry day and night! That's what Solomon is bringing before us in a very graphic way by the language that he's using. So Numbers 15 is important then, and the reason the soul should be cut off from among his people, verse 31, is because 'he hath despised the word of the LORD, and have broken His commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him', and in one of these fascinating places where a provision of the Law is brought before us and then an actual incident in the life of the people comes hard upon it, we discover that we move straight from that message about 'presumptuous sin, about rebellion, into chapter 16 and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, which then stands as an example against our sinning presumptuously at any time before the LORD God, and then saying, 'ah, but it was an error!' Presumptuous sin is something which we must be careful about!

In the question session earlier in the week, there was a question about the 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit', and in answering that it was necessary to turn into the letter to the Hebrews; can we just go there again. I'm sorry for those that have heard this before, but the majority in the room did not, so in Hebrews 10, you'll see how the same idea is now carried forward and the force of the message that Solomon introduces to us in Ecclesiastes 5, is opened out now and the background to the passage in verses 19 to 31 of Hebrews 10, is Numbers 16 and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Look for example at verse 31, 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God', and it was a fearful thing for the people who rebelled with Korah, to fall into the hands of the living God who made a new thing in the earth, and the earth opened up and swallowed them all. So what we read here, verse 24, 'let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works', and this is one of the messages of Ecclesiastes. That what we are to do, although we are looking at our own lives individually, nonetheless, we are able to help each other on the road to the kingdom and we are to consider one another to provoke to love and to good works; 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is (and it's interesting isn't it, that we discover that Ecclesiastes means 'calling an assembly') so all that Ecclesiastes was doing was bringing in together not only wise sayings and aphorisms, which I understand is a word which means 'wise sayings' and having discovered it, I have to use it; **aphorism (s)**, so, now you're just as wise as I am and you can make use of it as well. It sounds lovely, it sounds like you know what you're talking about when you bring it out of your treasure house. So, Ecclesiastes is not just a collection of wise sayings, but it's also the people being collected to hear them! and 'now we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhort one another so much the more as you see the day approaching', and you can see how the background of Korah, Dathan and Abiram fits in here, because what they did was to cause a separate assembly and they constructed a separate tabernacle. They felt it was possible to approach God on terms which they would decide, not on ones which God Himself had brought out to them. So Ecclesiastes 5 verse 1, 'watch thy step when you go to the house of God', was particularly true in those circumstances and the incident of Korah's rebellion may well have been in the mind of Solomon under inspiration when he wrote those words.

'For' verse 26 of Hebrews 10, 'if we (like Korah, Dathan and Abiram) sin **willfully** after we received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins'. And significantly, Korah was a Levite and Malachi 2 verse 7 says, 'and truth was in his mouth' or at least it should have been, here's the messenger of the LORD of hosts, he's an angel, he had received the knowledge of the truth and should have been an instructor in truth, and was not, and for one like that who openly rebels and retains that rebellious spirit throughout his life, for one like that there remains no more sacrifice for sins'. Well, we've seen there wasn't because that's what we saw in Numbers 15, 'the soul that sinneth presumptuously that soul shall be put to death'; well of course, we must introduce a caveat, it matters that there is a possibility of forgiveness even for

those who have an act of rebellion. But experience shows and the examples of scripture show, that those who set their feet on the path of rebellion become leaders and lead others in that way; so Cain forged a way, and it became the way of Cain! and there are others who have sinned after the likeness of Korah's rebellion and they became fixed in that way! Once people become fixed in that way, it's a quick descent because God gives them over to uncleanness and to iniquity, as we read in Romans 1.

You'll notice as well when we were looking at Ecclesiastes 5 verse 1, 'keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God', and we thought from Isaiah 1 verses 11 and 12, 'who are you that trample My courts, do you remember? well, that comes out as well here in verse 29 of Hebrews 10, 'How much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood for the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?' That sort of rebellious spirit is going to be punished by God, by the person himself perishing. So you can see how that verse in Ecclesiastes 5 is an important one, and it teaches us the necessity for absolute openness; as we read elsewhere in Hebrews that just like the sacrifices that were brought to the priest, which were opened up down the middle and parted, so the priest could examine them to see if they really were unblemished; so we are naked and open before Him with whom we have to do! If we understand that in our daily lives, if all that we are doing is naked and open before Him whom we have to do, then we are not going to say before the angel, 'it was an error', and we're not going to bring out our string of excuses for our behaviour which, of course, is our common way of doing things. If we do we will 'destroy the work of our hands', and how easy it is to do that! Just to destroy it, quite simply! Well, let's move on, shall we? into some later chapters in Ecclesiastes, just bearing that in mind because the fool is lost in his multitude of words, Solomon tells us. That's explaining to us this whole list of reasons why we couldn't do what we said we were going to do. The wise man considers, lays these things to heart, recognizes the position in which he stands before God and watches his step when he comes before God.

Well, what is it that Solomon understands as a result of the things that he's looked at? Well, first of all, he says when we experience life and throughout our life, we see anomalous; chapter 7 verse 15 for example. 'All things have I seen in the days of my vanity; I've seen a just man perishing in his righteousness, but a wicked man prolonging life in his wickedness. I've seen just and good and godly and righteous men dying young; being cut off prematurely; and I've seen wicked men who are known to be wicked by all around them and they seem to enjoy long life and all the good that this world has to offer'. Some might say that that's life experience, it was his and I'm sure it's ours as well!

Chapter 8 verse 10, 'I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity'. Have you seen the same? tombs and monuments erected apparently by grateful citizens to the biggest rogues the world has ever seen, as if somehow they are

lionized by all the people and they think they're marvellous! Inscriptions are written about them, and the lives of some of the leaders of governments don't bear close examination as we discover, and yet they're held up as examples. It's crazy! the world is mad, this is what Solomon discovered, wasn't it? Verse 14 of Ecclesiastes 8, 'There's a vanity done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said this is vanity!' It's a topsy, turvy world, is what Solomon was saying.

On to the next chapter, Ecclesiastes 9 and verse 3, 'This is an evil among all things done under the sun, there's one event to all; the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, madness is in their heart while they live and after that they go to the dead'. 'I can't sort it out', is what Solomon is saying, remember his horizon is restricted, all of these things are **on the earth and under the sun**. Then in quite a long passage in the rest of Ecclesiastes 9, from verse 11, this is what he has to say, which sums up this first point which Solomon is making from his observation on life, 'that life is full of anomalies, verses 11 to 16, 'I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, or bread to the wise, or riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; **time and chance** happeneth to them all. Man also knoweth not his time as the fishes taken in an evil net and as the birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly unto them' ... **anomalies**, that's his first point. The second point is that although it causes man when he reflects on these things to lift his eyes and see the work of God, he can't really fathom, **he can't fully fathom the workings of God**. Go back into chapter 7 and look at verse 24, 'That which is far off' (he's now talking, you see, he introduced to us in chapter 3 his concept of time; and although time controls man's events, it does not control God's because, 'a day is as a thousand years with God, and a thousand years as a day'). In the same way, 'far off' here is in contrast with those things which are 'under the sun'; 'that which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?' (he's just beginning to touch the edges of the workings of God, but we can't fully fathom it, it's impossible for us to do).

He says the same in chapter 8 as well, verses 16 and 17, 'When I applied mine heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done upon the earth; (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes); Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it'. So even the wise man is limited in his ability to fully discern the workings of God. His ways are passed finding out, the LORD God Himself is inscrutable and all of those things which express the majesty and power and the very nature of God Himself, His complete and extensive power, how can man failing and frail man find out these things of God? Also if you look at chapter 9 verse 1, 'How can he know fully the mind of God? of course, he tried. 'For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; no man

knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them'. You don't know what's in the hand of God! let me read this verse from the RV as well; 'Their works are in the hand of God and they don't know whether it be love or hatred; man knoweth it not. All is before them' (if you just want to drop down against the end of that verse-Jacob & Esau, that's the scriptural example. These things that are in the hand of God, man does not know whether it be love or hatred; Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated and it was not known by them, but nonetheless it was true, and as we read in that passage in Romans, that was part of Him that willeth and knowing before hand these two boys, God loved one and hated the other. But it's impossible for us to see that, just as it was impossible for them. **So, we can't fathom the working of God and we can't know His mind.** That's the second point that Solomon is bringing before us!

Then as part of his inquiry, he tells us that life, all life of mankind is governed by two things. The first is in Ecclesiastes 8 verse 7, this is **the unforeseen event**; 'man does not know that which shall be; who can tell him when it shall be?' Impossible! we don't know what lies around the corner and thank God we don't! just look back on your own life and think of the things that have happened, would you rather have known in advance that they were going to happen? or would you have rather have had it happen the way God intended? and that is, that bit by bit our life is being unfolded for us, as if page by page, the book of life is being revealed to us. We would not be able to bear it, would we? it's the same, I've often had this thought that if you took a room full of people as we have this morning, and the problems which there are in the lives of brethren and sisters here; some of us know of some of them, none of us know all of them. It's as well that we don't because we'd be unable to bear them. That's why we meet together in order to break bread and drink wine, because we can and we do lay our burdens upon the only One who can bear them! 'come unto Me ye that labour and are heavy laden', the Lord says in Matthew 11, 'and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light', what a wonderful promise that is to us! So the unforeseen event although it's part of the pattern of life, is in fact, godly provision that we don't know in advance those things that are going to happen and it's as well that we don't. Solomon says the same in chapter 9 as well in verse 11, 'I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill'; that's what he's saying here, all these things are the unforeseen events, you'd have expected it to be different, but these things are just not seen before hand. It's impossible for us to say, because sometimes the strong-willed are victorious and on other occasions he will not and it's impossible to say before, and that's what volleyball teaches you, isn't it? I mean, it always looks as if it's always going to be the married men and the other characters who win, but just on occasions, Dan, it goes the other way! Most of the time it works the right way around. So that's the first thing, the **unforeseen event** occasionally happens.

Then the second thing is, **man's inevitable end!** Chapter 8 verse 8 is the expression of

this. 'No man has power over the wind (would be a better translation, it's the Hebrew 'ruwach' which as you know can be translated either breath, spirit or wind), to retain the wind; neither hath he power in the day of death: (he has no power over his own breath!) and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver them that are given to it'. So whether we're good or wicked, whether we're wise or fools there is no discharge in that war until the day which we do not know, and they're end is inevitable'. Expressed again in chapter 9 and verse 2, 'All things come alike to all; one event to the righteous and the wicked to the good and the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; as he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things done under the sun, there is one event to all:' We know that to be true, so life is governed by those two things, the **unforeseen event and the inevitable end** that comes to man. So those are the things that Solomon saw by experience and they were true whether a man was wise or whether he was a fool; whether he places his confidence in God or whether he went through life just sailing through it, with apparently no concerns at all.

But then alongside those three things that we've seen, that **life is full of anomalies, that man cannot fathom the working of God, that life is governed by unforeseen events, and the inevitable end that comes to us all**, Solomon puts 3 other things that he saw.

Chapter 8 verse 12, he saw by experience that **God is the moral governor of all that He has made and that His will will ultimately prevail**. 'That's what these verses teach us, Ecclesiastes 8 verse 12, 'Those that do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.' Just compare the end of that verse with the end of verse 18 of chapter 7, there Solomon is saying that it's good that thou shouldst take hold of this, also from this withdraw not thine hand, for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all!' It is at this point in his inquiries that Solomon is introducing that phrase about '**fearing God**'. It comes again, of course, right at the end of the book, chapter 12 verse 13, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments', something that we should be looking at tomorrow. So God is the moral governor of the universe! The first verse of chapter 9, (I know we've looked at it before but this also shows the same teaching), 'For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, **are in the hand of God**', so God is the moral governor of the universe and His will will prevail! That's the first thing!

The second is, and we've been seeing this as we've gone through that the things that God has put in the earth are there for man's enjoyment and for his instruction. So man can joyfully accept the benefit which God confers upon him; verse 15 of Ecclesiastes 8, 'I commend mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat and to drink and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour all the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun'. All of those things which God has given us, our daily work, our family life, the companionship of friends or partners, the blessing of

children, the food and drink, our clothing, all those good things of life are there for our enjoyment; not sybaritic enjoyment (isn't that a nice word as well, and that is when we go over the limit in our enjoyment) we are just them becoming drunk with wine, surfeiting on food, we become gluttons, we go into all the fleshly desires, we become like the Epicureans who Paul saw in Athens. That was their life, they just took things beyond the line every time; now that's not what we should do, but nor should we be Stoics, that is equally wrong. The LORD God is not asking us to afflict the flesh as if by doing that somehow we are showing how righteous we are; it's not that at all! There are things in life that we should enjoy to the full, and thank God for them! I was speaking with a young brother yesterday about daily work, and saying 'if during that 8, 9 10 or how many hours a day we work each day, we can't enjoy what we're doing, what a sadness it is!' If we see it just as a grinding labour, how then can we turn from that work and say, 'I'm doing this as if to God'? We ought to be able to throw ourselves into it heart and soul for that period of time, and to whatever God has given our hands to do, let us do it with our might. In our daily work, in our ecclesial work, in our family lives, in our reading and meditation upon the word of God, let's give it a 100% and don't let's be grudging about our giving either! Let's give to the best of our ability and do it to the best of our ability. Now I know this means problems, it does bring problems into the work place, because the person who works like that and is diligent and conscientious gets more laded upon him, so let us also be honest and open with our employers and say, 'while I am here, you will have all that I can give, but there will come a time, and that time is going to be 5:00, 6:00 o'clock whatever it's going to be, then my place is at my home and I'm then doing something else'. Make it clear up front, let him know what the situation is and let's do it, and it's a pattern which I have always tried to follow in my own working life (my working life is now different from what it used to be as you know) but I never took work home; I might have gone in early if there was a job to be completed, but I never took work home, and I might have stayed a little bit later on occasions, but I didn't take it home with me! and I was able to drive away from the office and leave it behind me, and I was extremely grateful for that; I could do it when I was there, but when I was away, that was something else and it was a different part and compartment, not as if somehow you can split your life into compartments, but you do different things at different times and I would commend that to you. **So we must joyfully accept the benefits which God confers.**

This is the third point, it is for man **to make use of life's opportunities!** We've already slid into this slowly, haven't we? as well as joyfully accepting, and we know to make full use of them. This is what Solomon says in verse 5 of Ecclesiastes 9, 'The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything, neither have they anymore a reward; the memory of them is forgotten'. We are to do these things while we live, if we don't do them then, well, we can't do it at any other time! Verse 10 says the same, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, device, knowledge or wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest'. So the 3 things that Solomon saw by experience which had to do and seemed to control men's lives, and those 3 things which if man appreciates them, they start to lift him above them, and to be able

to put them into prospective and to make use of them; he's being instructed by them, he's being taught about his own nature and how he should respond to the God who has given these things. It doesn't remove right anomalies, it doesn't mean that man can understand the mind of God fully, and it doesn't mean that the unforeseen event isn't going to occur in our lives, or that we're going to be saved from death. There's still a conflict between those two groups of things that Solomon has seen when he now applies his wisdom and sees the folly of men who take no account of it. The only answer to the tension that exists between those things which Solomon has brought before us, **the only answer is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.** I'm sure that Solomon in his own mind was brought to these things; the fact that the good suffer and that the evil triumph was focussed in the cross, and resolved in the resurrection! because people who saw the Lord Jesus Christ hanging upon a cross would have thought that at that time, evil men and their thoughts had triumphed over the good man who was crucified. If they thought that they were wrong, because what the cross displayed was the good life of the Lord Jesus Christ triumphing over the evil that was in the world. It was completely the other way around from what we would normally see, and the resurrection showed it as Peter says, 'It was not possible that He should be holden of death', of course it wasn't, and so the grave was burst asunder and the Lord's coming forth from the grave, gives promise to us as well. That those things which are still our lot, can be removed; we must pray as He did, to be delivered **from** death, or as the apostle Paul describes it, 'from this body of death'.

The other thing is that Christ's disciples are given the assurance of the Father's care in all the chances, in all those unforeseen events of life; this is what the Lord Himself says in Matthew 6 in a section here that commences in verse 25, 'I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what you should put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of heaven' and so on. The Lord does introduce into this passage in verse 29, Solomon, as if just giving us a hint that this understanding has come from His own meditation upon Ecclesiastes. Verse 28, 'Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: Yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. So if God so clothed the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' So we, verse 33, 'must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'. There's an assurance of the Father's caring in all the events of life!

Then finally, there is not only **the call for us to work**, and to do those things which are being given to us with all our might, but there is a greater assurance given to us, and it's here in Philippians 2 and verse 12, 'Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For **it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.** Do all things without murmurings and disputings'. So we

are asked to do things with our might and we've got that assurance that God works **with us and in us for our salvation!** That's what Solomon is coming to, and he's reached that point, by seeing all of these things which are happening in life, **time and chance happens to all!** He has seen all the problems in their different natures and he recognizes that there can only be one answer - and I believe that just like Abraham, Solomon rejoiced to see the day of the Lord and knew that that was the only answer to the tensions which he could see existed in the world around him; which exist in the world around us, it's the only answer for our world, just as it was the only answer for Solomon's world too! It's not going to miraculously solve in this dispensation, the world's problems, but if we have the mind of Christ and attempt to learn and to begin to fathom the mind of His heavenly Father, then we have that great assurance that we be not left alone; 'I will not leave you comfortless', the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'but I will be with you, and I will come unto you and make my abode in you'.