Notes: The Wise Die Too: Solomon’s Honest Crisis About Life’s Purpose  
Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

**2:4-11:** **Earthly pursuits fail to fully satisfy the human heart**

After proving that success, wisdom, and pleasure provided no lasting satisfaction, Solomon proceeded to test a list of earthly pursuits for meaning in life.

a. The pursuits

1) Great building projects: They fail to fully satisfy

2) Great public works & services: They fail to fully satisfy

3) Great engineering feats: They fail to fully satisfy

4) Servants & slaves (employees): They fail to fully satisfy

5) Property, farms, & ranches: They fail to fully satisfy

6) Wealth & treasures: They fail to fully satisfy

7) Music & the arts: They fail to fully satisfy

8) Unrestricted sex—a harem of beautiful women: It fails to fully satisfy

9) Fame, honor, & greatness: They fail to fully satisfy

10) Countless possessions: They fail to fully satisfy

11) Unrestricted pleasure: It fails to fully satisfy

12) Enjoyment of one’s work: It fails to fully satisfy

b. The conclusion: All pursuits …

1) Are meaningless—do not fully satisfy, last, or endure

2) Are chasing after the wind—quickly passing away

3) Gain nothing—not of permanent, eternal value

**Ecclesiastes 2:12-17**

1. A Moment of Honest Reflection
2. Preparing for a New Approach

**Ecclesiastes2:12**

**Main Question:**

* *Does living a wise, moral life truly offer more in the end than living foolishly in sin?*

**Solomon’s Investigation:**

* The king (Solomon) pondered the **advantages of virtue** over **folly**.
* He had fully applied himself to life’s pursuits, so **no successor** could exceed his level of effort or dedication.
* **Nothing more** could be added to his achievements—he had *reached the pinnacle*.

**Key Realization:**

* **Possessions and accomplishments** do not guarantee true meaning or satisfaction.
* The real issue lies not in *what* one has or does, but in *how* one **lives**.

**Shift in Focus:**

* Solomon began to **test whether wisdom**—as opposed to foolishness—held the key to **lasting fulfillment**.

**Thematic Insight:**

* Life’s value may be found in **living wisely and morally**, even if external outcomes appear similar for both the wise and the foolish.

**Ecclesiastes 2:13-17**

**1. Wisdom Is Better than Foolishness (vv. 13–14)**

* Solomon acknowledges a clear advantage to living wisely and morally:
  + Wisdom spares one from unnecessary heartache.
  + The wise person **guards his eyes**—walks in light and moral clarity.
  + The fool walks in **darkness**, spiritually blind and morally reckless.
  + The difference between the wise and the fool is as stark as **day and night**.
* **Application:** Common sense and God’s moral compass prevent destructive paths.

**2. Death Comes to Both the Wise and the Fool (v. 15)**

* A sobering truth: **both the wise and the foolish die**.
* Solomon was likely facing his own mortality.
* Conclusion:
  + If both share the same fate, **what lasting gain is there** in wisdom alone?
  + Death **levels the playing field**; it renders wisdom seemingly meaningless.
  + **Even the virtuous will be forgotten** in time—just like the fool.

**3. The Reality of Death Can Lead to a Hatred of Life (v. 17a)**

* Solomon makes a startling confession:

“**I hated life!**”

* Why?
  + Death robs us of the enjoyment and purpose of our labor.
  + All that he had accomplished—wealth, fame, success—was fleeting.
  + Death made life seem **like a betrayal**: all ends in loss.
* The joy of achievements is **overshadowed by the certainty of death**.

**4. Death Makes Life Feel Meaningless (v. 17b)**

* Once again, Solomon uses familiar refrains:
  + “**Meaningless**”
  + “**Vexation of spirit**” or “grasping after the wind”
* Death underscores the **futility of life apart from God**.
* Nothing is lasting or truly satisfying under the sun when death has the final word.

**Theological and Moral Reflections**

**Thought 1: Choices Have Consequences**

* Scripture emphasizes the *principle of sowing and reaping*:
  + **Galatians 6:7–8** – What we sow determines what we reap.
* Sin has natural consequences—even after forgiveness.

**Illustration: The Maniac of Gadara (Mark 5)**

* He was delivered and forgiven by Christ, but **bore the scars** of his sinful past.
* **Lesson:** Christ saves completely, but consequences may remain in this life.

**Supporting Scriptures: The Certainty and Impact of Death**

* **Romans 5:12** – Death entered through sin and passed upon all.
* **1 Timothy 4:8** – Godliness benefits both now and eternally.
* **Hebrews 9:27** – All will face death and then judgment.
* **Psalm 49:10** – Both the wise and the foolish die and leave their wealth behind.
* **Proverbs 3:13–14** – Wisdom is more valuable than silver and gold.

**Key Takeaway:**

* **Wisdom is better** than folly, but it is **not enough** to bring lasting meaning **apart from God**.
* True fulfillment, significance, and joy **must be rooted in eternal truth**, not temporal achievement.