

Chapter summary – *God continues His theme for chapter eleven into chapter twelve concerning how to get the most out of life! He continues to stress that if we take heed to His counsel we will reap huge blessings even in this broken world.*

God begins chapter twelve still addressing the youth in particular and will close the chapter and the book, addressing all generations again.

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IV. In Solomon's search for an answer to his question, he now tells us how to live for that which exists above the sun, (Ch. 7:1-12:7)

1. SOLOMON DESCRIBES FOR US THE BEST WAY TO BENEFIT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM OUR LIFE UNDER THE SUN, (7:1-12:7)

- 1) Solomon details the real value of wisdom that is from God, (7:1-9:18)**
 - 2) Solomon warns us against playing the fool, (10:1-20)**
 - 3) Solomon gives us some practical advice, (11:1-12:7)**
 - (1) Solomon advises all generations, (11:1-8)**
 - (2) Solomon advises the younger generation, (11:9-12:7)**
- 1a Enjoy your youth, (11:9-10)**

William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) was one of the greatest physicists of nineteenth-century England. When he was away at college, his father wrote to him: "You are young: take care you be not led to what is wrong. A false step now, or the acquiring of an improper habit, might ruin you for life. Frequently look back on your conduct and thence learn wisdom for the future."¹

That is exactly what God is telling all of us, but especially the young people. But, before we as adults say "Amen!" too loudly, let me quote William Poe. He said, "The most important thing in the world that makes young people civilized, is good old people." We have our part too. Our young people can shout "Amen!" right back at us. We are in this together. It takes teamwork.

NOTES:

¹ (Cited in G.K.C. MacDonald, *Faraday, Maxwell, and Kelvin*, 1964)

2a Remember your Creator, (12:1-7)

NOTES:

1b Remember Him in your youth or you will regret it, (1)

¹ **Remember** (imperative), **now** (today, not later, not when it's convenient), **your Creator** (live your life remembering you are a part of His creation and are thus accountable to Him),² **in the days of your youth** (in other words, don't waste your days, but make everyday count for eternity—Give your Creator your best), **before the difficult days** (the days of misery when old age and failing health), **come, and the years draw near when you say** (because of your remorseful memories for not remembering your Creator and/or your daily pain and/or your ever failing abilities), **"I have no pleasure (no delight), in them"**.³

There is a definite difference between the younger generation and the older generation. It's hard to tell just where the one ends and the other begins, but it's somewhere around 9 P.M.

1c You will regret it when the gleam in your eye is the sun reflecting off of your trifocals, (2a)

² (Remember your Creator), **While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars, are not darkened** (while your eyesight and perception are still sharp),

2c You will regret it when you need a smaller house with a bigger medicine cabinet, (2b)

and the clouds do not return after the rain (depicting the time in old age when you finally get over one ailment, only to find that a new one arrives—there are a lot of rainy days for the older generation—there are lots of new pills to take);

3c You will regret it when your trembling body begins to trigger the Richter scale, (3a)

³ (Remember your Creator in the days of your youth rather than trying to), **(In the day when the keepers (the heads), of the house tremble** (when ones head wobbles and ones arms and hands tremble),

COMMENTARY:

² God is saying to you young people, that you are a part of something much bigger and more important than yourself!

³ Matthew 6:33 is synonymous with Ecclesiastes 12:1. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

4c You will regret it when your back goes out more often than you do, (3b)

and the strong men (once young and healthy, later), **bow down** (when their shoulders, legs and knees weaken and sag, and their back stoops);

5c You will regret it when you can whistle while you brush your teeth, (3c)

when the grinders (ones teeth), **cease because they are few** (you don't have enough teeth to adequately chew your food), **and those that look through the windows** (through the eyes once clearly, now), **grow dim**, (your vision begins to decline, cataracts begin to form, and maybe you lose your sight altogether);

6c You will regret it when the noise level goes up, but your hearing level goes down (4a)

⁴ **When the doors** (through which came all kinds of sounds), **are shut in the streets** (no more sound comes through them), **and the sound of grinding is low** (you hardly hear it during the grinding process—yet); **when** (one tries to sleep), **one rises up at the sound of a bird** (When you want to hear you can't, and when you don't want to, you do!),

7c You will regret it when your voice sounds like your cereal: snap, crackle and pop, (4b)

and (eventually without exception), **all the daughters of music** (those with beautiful voices), **are brought low**, (lose their ability to sing those beautiful notes—while others lose the ability to hear and enjoy them).

8c You will regret it when mole hills really become mountains, (5a)

⁵ **Also they** (the older folks), **are afraid of height** (terrified of ladders and steps), **and of terrors in the way** (of stepping on or tripping over something, or just slipping—anything in an older persons path is a potential danger and thus an enemy.)

9c You will regret it when you have more hair on your chest than on your head, (5b)

when the almond tree blossoms (when the hair turns silvery gray like the almond blossoms—some just hope that they have some hair left to turn gray),

10c You will regret it when you get worn out dialing long distance, (5c)

the grasshopper is a burden (he drags himself along, it takes the older person so long to get from one place to another),

11c You will regret it when you not only can't remember what you were going to do, but when you do finally remember, you don't want to do it, (5d)

and desire fails, (normal human desires, passions like sex; begin to die away—I'm glad that this one is last on the list!)

2b Remember Him before your death or you will regret it, (5e-7)

1c You have an appointment with death, (5e-6)

A personnel manager had no doubts about this fact when a newly hired consultant breezed into the personnel manager's office and interrupted his conversation with another employee to ask how many of the company's employees were approaching retirement age.

The personnel manager said, "All of them. Not one of them is going the other way."

For (the body goes so far down hill that in the end), **man goes to his eternal home** (he eventually even dies from the scene), **and the mourners go about the streets**, (where he once lived, worked and played).

⁶ (Because of these future inescapable, demeaning conditions), **Remember your Creator before the silver cord** (of life that connects your soul and spirit to your body), **is loosed** (is torn or snaps and you are separated from your body and enter eternity), **or the golden bowl is broken** (your body ceases to function), **or the pitcher shattered at the fountain** (your blood ceases to circulate), **or the wheel broken at the well**, (your heart ceases to beat).

2c You have an appointment with God, (7)

⁷ **Then** (at death), **the dust** (that made up your body), **will return to the earth as it was** (from where it came),⁴ **and the** (immortal), **spirit will return to God who gave it**, (to live forever and to give an account on how one spent his life).⁵

⁴ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return." Ge 3:19

⁵ And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Ge 2:7

F APPLICATION:

NOTES:

One of our greatest fears is that we may have an insignificant life, that we will make no difference in the world. Our real significance is our impact on other human beings. "All acts live forever in that they give shape to immortal souls....It is impossible to gauge the consequences of any act. The casual word of encouragement or condemnation, the letter written or not written, the little lie, the time devoted to raising a child, the friendship encouraged or neglected, the [inappropriate] racist joke (told or laughed at), the love shown the unlovely, the hours spent in prayer, the request for forgiveness, the harboring of an offense--all these things and many more determine the character of our lives and the lives we touch, all stretching into eternity." Kierkegaard said: "One lives only once. If when death comes the life is well spent, that is, spent so that it is related rightly to eternity [how well we remember our Creator]--then God be praised eternally. If not, then it is [remediless] irremediable--one only lives once."⁶

“Our real significance is our impact on other human beings” not on things we own, things we build, books we write. Our significance is determined by how well we impact peoples lives.

It is so easy at any point in our life, to get all caught up in our own desires and/or our pain and thus neglect our Creator God. It is especially easy though, to neglect God, in ones youth. There are so many pleasures to enjoy and opportunities for adventure. There is so much of the world to explore. There is so much that you don't know and want to experience. You want so much, but there seems to be so little time to acquire it.

The warning that God is giving the youth especially here, is that if you do not remember God, but neglect Him during the days of your peek potential, you will have little or no pleasure in the days of your old age. You will look back at all the time you wasted on yourself, seeking the immediate, but only temporal pleasures your pursuits provided you. During the days of your old age when you know you are on the threshold of coming face to face with your Creator God, you will see so clearly the wisdom of this verse. You will see that if you had applied it to your life, how much happier the days of your old age would be. Those days will be difficult enough with your failing health and energy, but to look back and only see a wasted life will greatly intensify your distress in those days. If you don't think this is true, just ask a few older saints. They will tell you it's true.

This does not mean that our senior years cannot be meaningful and productive.

⁶ "*The fear of insignificance*" by Daniel Taylor. Christianity Today, Feb 3, 1989. Pages 25, 26.

The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness...The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, (Pr 16:31; Ps 92:12-14).

God is saying to us that if we want to get the most out of this life here on earth, we must remember Him, your Creator, especially in our youth, and not neglect Him.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Co 5:14-15)

V. Solomon gives his concluding remarks concerning life on this earth, (Ch. 12:8-14)

Do you have a mind like concrete? Is your mind all mixed up and permanently set? Sometimes we call it being hard headed. A life-long learners mind is not like concrete. It is open and flexible to new and additional truths about the realities of life and how they apply to us on a daily basis.

1. SOLOMON SAYS IT, THE WAY IT IS, (8)

⁸“**Vanity of vanities** (wind and more wind),” **says the Preacher,** “**All** (everything under the sun, without exception), **is vanity.**” (You might as well chase after the wind as to think this world and all it has to offer can bring you lasting fulfillment. You’ll never get a grip on lasting fulfillment if you leave God out of the picture; just like you will never be able to grasp the wind. It’s vanity).

F APPLICATION:

God has created a void in our heart that only He can fill. Life upon this earth then, only becomes fulfilling when we begin to live it “above” the sun with God. Living “under the sun” without God, you can do nothing. But with God, every situation and condition in life becomes meaningful; the good, the bad, as well as the ugly. Believers in Christ experience everything everyone else does, but the believer knows that **God uses it all for good to them who love Him**, (Rom. 8:28). **The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a crushed spirit. Many** (not few), **are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.** (Ps 34:18-19) Even Jesus Christ Himself experienced good and bad things on this earth. That never stopped Him from living a fulfilling life though. It is the same for all believers.

NOTES:

2. SOLOMON DESCRIBES HIMSELF, (9-11)

1) Solomon describes a trait of his, (9a)

⁹ **And moreover** (in excess of, beyond this particular study on life) **because the Preacher was wise**, (this assessment on life comes from no dummy, nor is it limited to this particular study. God gave Solomon more wisdom than any man who walked the earth prior to Christ, and Solomon continued to study life beyond the period of writing the Book of Ecclesiastes, [1 Kings 3:3-28]).

2) Solomon describes his activities, (9b-11)

(1) Solomon taught others, (9b)

he still taught (or continued to teach), **the people knowledge**, (passing on to them what he found to be truthful and helpful to himself);

(2) Solomon continued to learn, (9c)

yes, he pondered (carefully thought through in his mind), **and sought out** (searched high and low) **and set in order** (carefully compiled), **many proverbs**, (Solomon continued to build upon what he had already learned through his experiences and observations written in this book—He continued as well to share these truths with others).

F APPLICATION:

A young man of thirty-two had been newly appointed president of the bank. He approached the venerable Chairman of the Board and asked for advice. The old man came back with just two words: "Right decisions!" the young man responded, "That's really helpful. And I appreciate it, but can you be more specific? How do I make right decisions?" the wise old man simply responded, "Experience." The young man said, "Well, that's just the point of my being here. I didn't have the kind of experience I need. How do I get it?" the Chairman's reply was, "Wrong decisions."

Isn't that the truth! That is not only often how we learn, but how we learn best. We need to learn from our experiences in order to make right choices in the future.

All of us should desire and strive to be lifelong learners. We ought to be weighing what we hear, see and feel in the course of a day. It would be to our advantage if we thought through the implications of our daily observations and experiences. We could ask ourselves questions like:

- When and why did I become angry?
- Was it righteous anger or sinful anger?
- Did I handle my anger appropriately?
- Is there anything I could do better next time?

(or)

- Why do I think my friend responded the way he did when I helped him without being asked?
- How did it make me feel?
- Was it a good investment of time and why?
- What should I do in the future?

(or)

- Why did I get the grade I did on my test?
- Was it a grade I deserved?
- Have I given my best or are there some things I need to do to get better grades?

(3) Solomon makes use of what he learned, (10)

“When do you like school the best?” a neighbor asked the little girl. Her answer was quick and decisive. “When it’s closed,” she said.

There are a lot of people who don’t like to study. One person asked the question, “Why study at all? The more we know, the more we forget. The more we forget, the less we know. The less we know, the less we forget. The less we forget, the more we know. So why study?!”

Well, Solomon is going to share with us why we should be lifelong students and why it is such a burden for some.

¹⁰ **The Preacher sought to find acceptable words** (*lit.*, “words of pleasure” Solomon tried hard to say the right thing at the right time that it may bring pleasure to the hearer); **and what was written was upright** (straight as an arrow—was right on the money—Solomon wrote) —**words of truth**, (they were words that captured the reality of life and ministered to the hearts of the hearers).⁷

F APPLICATION:

Solomon sought to build others up rather than tear them down. What kind of words do you use at school, home, work, or in the neighborhood? Are you careful about what you say? Do you think later about what you said and how you said it? Does it even matter to you how your words affect others? Solomon tried hard to use words that brought pleasure to those he spoke to and so should we.

⁷ Pr 15:23—A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

Pr 16:24—Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

Many mothers drill into their children’s head as they grow up, “If you don’t have anything good to say, don’t say anything at all.” Some of us would do a lot less talking if we followed that principle.

¹¹ **The words of the wise are like goads** ⁸ (they stimulate, admonish and direct the hearer),⁹ **and the words of scholars** (referring here to those, like Solomon, who live their life learning and passing down the general wisdom truths), **are like well-driven** (*lit.*, “planted” imbedded), **nails** (in other words, they hold you secure especially in a crisis [e.g., when Christ told the prostitute caught in the act, “*neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.*” Jn. 8:11] and are), **given by one Shepherd**, (God, the source of all true wisdom—which reflects God’s care, concern, sanctification and protection for his flock).

F APPLICATION:

A preacher talking to his colleague said, “I think a pastor needs to study diligently for his Sunday morning message.”

His colleague responded, “I disagree. Many times I have no idea what I am going to preach about but I go into the pulpit and preach and think nothing of it.”

The preacher replied, “And you are quite right in thinking nothing of it. I hear your congregation, I’m told, thinks the same.”

It is the same for a parent and Sunday school teacher as it is for the pastor. If one is going to have a lesson or a message that puts meat and potatoes on the table week after week, he is going to have to do a lot of work in the kitchen preparing it. In other words, he is going to have to do a lot of reading, digging, praying, meditating, wrestling, praying, collecting, organizing, praying, fine tuning, packaging, praying, assimilating, feeling, and then pray some more. It takes a lot of effort to speak words that are like goads and imbedded nails. Words that capture the realities of life and minister to the hearer.

⁸ The typical ox goad was about 8’ long and about 2” in diameter. One end would have a point on it to encourage the ox to do what and go where he was supposed to. The other end would have a chisel like feature that would be used to pry rocks loose and to chop roots free with, or to break up dirt clods.

Ac 26:14—And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

⁹ Ac 2:36-37—[After receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter preached his first sermon about the people crucifying Christ their Savior.] “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” [He was the anointed One! He was the awaited One! He was the Messiah! And you crucified Him!] Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

3. SOLOMON WARNS ABOUT IMPROPER STUDY, (12)

¹² **And further** (in addition), **my son, be admonished** (i.e., taught or changed), **by these**, (words of the wise Shepherd that goad you. Now the caution:) **Of making many books** (that men and women compile concerning God's Word—this is obvious every time you go to a book store [v. 9]), **there is no end** (there are no limits), **and much study** (referring here to pure intellectualism here—simply seeking out knowledge for your own satisfaction or curiosity sake like the Greeks on Mars Hill¹⁰), **is wearisome to the flesh**, (Do you know why? It will tire you out because you are not studying in order to minister to your soul and spirit, but rather are only seeking to fill the mind with information. Are your devotions wearisome to you?)

NOTES:

F APPLICATION:

The purpose for studying is to come to personally know God better and to learn and do His will.

Dt 29:29—"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

2 Tim 3:16-17—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [our Shepherd], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Tim 2:15—Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Php 4:9—The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Our study of God's Word, ought to be with the attitude and prayer that we continually become the Word. Meaning not that we become God, but that our study goes beyond just knowledge or information and becomes the natural, habitual actions of our daily life. We become the Word when it is so much a part of us that we reflect it without even thinking much about it.

Have you ever met someone that you had a strong sense was a Christian? What you are actually seeing is Christ in them. They are successfully becoming the Word in the sense that Christ shines through.

¹⁰ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Ac 17:21

Ro 8:29—For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Ro 13:14—Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Ro 12:2—Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Col 2:6—As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

4. SOLOMON SUMS UP HIS ENTIRE RESEARCH IN TWO SENTENCES, (12:13-14)

We don't own our lives, because life is the gift of God (Acts 17:24–28).¹¹ We are stewards of our lives, and one day we must give an account to God of what we have done with His gift. Some people are only spending their lives; others are wasting their lives; a few are investing their lives. Corrie ten Boom said, “The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration but its donation.” If our lives are to count [if we are going to make a big donation to our Creator and fellow man with our life], we must fulfill three obligations.¹²

1) Fear God, (13a)

¹³ **Let us hear the conclusion** (the crux), **of the whole matter** (as to how a man is to best benefit from life here under the sun [1:3]): **Fear God**, (be afraid of Him in the sense that your awe, respect, reverence for God is so intense that it overwhelms all of your other desires and affections in life. How do you determine if you are there or not? God will determine what you do and do not do if you are there. This fear revolves around knowing who God is [His character traits], what our relationship is to Him and what He expects of us.)

F APPLICATION:

We will not get very far in our relationship with God unless we understand that He is to be feared.

In The Chronicles of Narnia, an allegory by C.S. Lewis, the author has two girls, Susan and Lucy, getting ready to meet Aslan the lion, who represents Christ. Two talking animals, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, prepare the children for the encounter.

¹¹ Ac 17:24-28—God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

¹² Wiersbe, Be Satisfied, Ec 12:13.

"Ooh," said Susan, "I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion?"

"That you will, dearie," said Mrs. Beaver. "And make no mistake, if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then isn't he safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe," said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Of course, he isn't safe, but he's good. He's the king, I tell you!"

The psalmist understood this awesome wonder when he wrote, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" and then urged God's saints to fear Him (Ps. 34:8-9). We need not cringe in terror, but we must live before Him with reverence and awe. Our holy God isn't "safe," but He is good.

God isn't standing over the believer with a baseball bat ready to clobber him if he sins. God is though, righteous, just and holy as well as loving, gracious and merciful. God is perfect in all of these character traits and a proper balance of them all must be kept in mind. The believer's past, present, and future sin is forgiven judicially and therefore he will never have to face God as his Judge and be condemned to Hell for his sin. The believer does however, have to face God as his Heavenly Father every day. God is even more interested in what we have been up to, than we are our own kids. As our Father, God expects us to avoid sinful actions, attitudes and thoughts in order to become holy in our daily practices as He is holy and to also put Him on display in our daily lives. God as well, wants His children to experience the joys of living a fulfilling, meaningful, more abundant life by avoiding the pitfalls of sin. When we do sin, God expects us to confess AND repent of it, because of who He is and because of what He wants us to experience. If we persist in our sin, God says that He will discipline those He loves, (Heb. 12:6-9). God is long-suffering, but as a loving Father, He will not turn a blind eye to His children's obstinate disrespect or unrepentance. God will discipline the believer if necessary.

So you see, there is good reason to fear God, but our reasons to fear Him do not revolve around Him being an angry and mean God that the believer must seek to appease. That would be demon worship! God's children fear Him because of who He is and because God's love is real. God therefore, will do whatever is necessary and best for the spiritual health and general wellbeing of His children.

- God doesn't want to see His children think so trivially of Him that they disrespect Him and miss out on a proper and intimate relationship with Him.
- God doesn't want to see His children suffer the natural consequences of sin, some of which can even bring physical death.
- God doesn't want to see His children lose out on the joy that obeying Him and His Word will bring.

- God doesn't want to see His children lose out on the blessings He desires to bestow upon His children.
- God doesn't want to see His children lose out on the rewards that He will present to His children for faithful service.
- God doesn't want to see His children become easy prey to the devil and his cohorts schemes.

Yes, our fear of God is directly related to knowing who God is [His character traits—being just and holy as well as gracious and merciful], what our relationship is to Him [God wants us to respect Him, not disrespect Him. He also wants us to have a close and real relationship with Him—one that recognizes all his traits], and what He expects of us [to avoid sin and put Him on display as well as to squeeze every drop of joy and fulfillment we can out of life], but these are all issues of God's love for the believer. The Lord has appeared of old to me (Jeremiah says), saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you." (Je 31:3) In Jeremiah 29:11 God tells His children, For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." These verses have to be balanced with what God says in Jeremiah 5:22, Do you not fear Me?' says the Lord. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. Having a proper understanding of godly fear will draw us to God, not drive us away from Him or even cause us to want to ignore Him. Job is a good example of this as he greatly expressed his fear of God at the conclusion of the book, but it drew him closer to God. It didn't drive him away.

"Those of us who have been entrusted with the terrifying, frightening good news have become obsessed with making Christianity safe. We have defanged the tiger of Truth. We have tamed the Lion, and now Christianity is so sensible, so accepted, so palatable. Our world is tired of people whose God is tame. It is longing to see people whose God is big and holy and frightening and gentle and tender...and ours; a God whose love frightens us into His strong and powerful arms where He longs to whisper those terrifying words, 'I love you.'"

**--Mike Yaconelli
(quoted in Servant,
Spr 1998, page 9)**

Do you see the need for balance?! Going to either extreme is equally wrong and destructive.

The unbeliever ought to fear God because they are not His children, but His enemies, (Eph. 2:1-3, 11-12; James 4.4; 1 Cor. 15:24-25). Unbelievers will experience God's wrath if they persist in rejecting Jesus Christ and His work alone, by faith, for salvation.

“The remarkable thing about fearing God,” wrote Oswald Chambers, “is that, when you fear God, you fear nothing else; whereas, if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.”¹³ The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps 27:1) But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! (Lk 12:5)

2) Obey God, (13b)

and keep His commandments (faithfully learn and follow God’s Word), **For this is man’s all**, (This is the ideal of the entire human race. This sums up the entire business of anyone’s day, all day and everyday).

F APPLICATION:

The person who does not fear God, will not obey Him, but will instead obey his personal cravings. This person’s professed fear of God is really nothing but words; there is no history of corresponding actions to back them up, as he or she consistently lives for him or herself.

It only makes sense that the person who can best tell you how to operate and benefit the most from any product is the person who created it. God created the human race and therefore not only possesses all legal rights to us, but God also knows how we are to operate and how we can benefit the most in this life as well as how to best prepare for life in eternity. The ideal of man is to fear God and obey Him.

3) Prepare to meet God, (14)

¹⁴ **For** (fear and obey God because), **God will bring every work** (every human deed), **into judgment, including every secret thing** (every human thought, attitude and motivation), **Whether good or evil**, (whether right or wrong, whether proper or improper. Every individual who has ever walked upon the face of the earth will have to give an account for everything he ever thought, said or did, [3:17; 11:9]).

F APPLICATION:

Some of you may be yet wondering if you really are going to be responsible for your actions. Feodor Dostoevsky has put together a very simple test (in addition to God’s Word simply telling us), to see if you indeed are responsible. Here it is: **If you can put the question "Am I or am I not responsible for my acts?" then you are responsible.** Feodor Dostoevsky

¹³ Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, Ec 12:13.

Even though all individuals will have to give a final account to God, the believers judgment differs from the unbelievers.

The believer will stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, (1 Cor. 3:10-13; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10). Here the believer will not be judged for his sin. The sinner was judged for his sin at the cross through the person of Jesus Christ who suffered our judgment for us, (Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 2:21). The believer's life thoughts, words and deeds will be assessed and all that was evil will be consumed by fire (1 Cor. 3:12-15), but all that is good the person will receive a reward for. This reward the believer in turn will lay at Christ's feet in honor of all that He has done for him. The believer will suffer loss of reward, but he will not suffer eternal damnation in Hell.

The unbeliever on the other hand, will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment, (Rev. 20:11-15). The unbeliever will be judged by his works and condemned to an eternity in Hell for not accepting Christ for the forgiveness of his sinful works. Therefore he will have to suffer the judgment of his sin himself because he would not recognize Christ's willingness to do it for him. None who die in their sin will escape this end, (Jn. 2:25; Rev. 19: 11; Gen. 18:25; Mat. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:10, 11).

Six times in his discourse, Solomon told us to enjoy life while we can; but at no time did he advise us to enjoy sin. The joys of the present depend on the security of the future. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then your sins have already been judged on the cross; and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1 and see John 5:24). But if you die having never trusted Christ, you will face judgment at His throne and be lost forever (Rev. 20:11-15).¹⁴

Solomon sought to understand life, under the sun in order to find fulfillment and meaning in life. What he found was that no one is going to ever going to be able to make sense of it, outside of God Himself. Every situation is different from the one before it and will be different from the one after it. Sometimes good prevails, and sometimes evil prevails. Sometimes events happen as they should, and sometimes they don't. He found that what works today, may not work at all tomorrow. He found that what you gain or possess today may be taken from you tomorrow. In looking for certainties about life under the sun, Solomon only found one certainty and that is that life under the sun is only filled with uncertainties. Solomon did ultimately find what he was looking for though. He simply found he was looking in all the wrong places for it. Fulfillment and meaning in life can only be found by looking above the sun. It is found by following three simple principles: fear God, obey God, and prepare to meet God. This is the highest ideal of all mankind. If we will live by those three simple principles, we will live a meaningful and fulfilling life and will have no fear of eternity.

¹⁴ Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, Ec 12:13.

 **INTERPRETATION:**

F **APPLICATION:**

 **COMMENTARY:**