

**Chapter summary – *The Teacher at this point realizes just how finite and vulnerable he is in this fallen, dangerous and uncertain world. He realizes that the only sovereign power and authority over all circumstances and situations is God, who is infinite. God is the only one in complete control here. Man then, being as vulnerable as he is, would be wise to not only acknowledge God, but to submit to Him as well. Man should have a healthy respect for the Creator who holds his life in His hands. It is folly to do otherwise.***

***“It is folly to merely go through the motions of religion if God is real (5:1–7). It is also folly to love money, which is more likely to harm than help and surely cannot provide life with meaning (vv. 8–17). One may as well enjoy life and avoid reflecting on its meaning as long as possible (vv. 18–20).”<sup>1</sup>***

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III. In Solomon’s search for an answer to his question, he reflects upon his observations, (Ch. 3:1-6:12)

**4. SOLOMON ADDRESSES MAN’S MISUSE OF HIS POSSESSIONS AND ABILITIES, (4:1-5:20)**

The writer moves from the realm of the secular, where he seems to spend most of his time, to the world of the religious...

Solomon is writing to people who are about to attend the place of worship. He warns, "As you are on your way to the place of worship, guard your steps. Walk gingerly. Stay alert!" It's the idea of not being dull or insensitive. Even though you may be very familiar with your surroundings, stay alert!" In spite of the fact that you may have heard the things being said numerous times in your life, "guard or steps!" Fools are characterized by mental thickness. They hear words and turn them off.

This [may remind you] of a familiar scene at most busy airports. There are lots of different people moving all around, but one thing is monotonously the same... It is a recording that comes over loud and clear as travelers stand at the curb waiting for their drivers to pick them up or the bus to come by. It says, "The white zone is for loading and unloading only. No parking." It is a recording that continues day and night. And guess what? The curb area is loaded with people who have parked their cars alongside "the white zone." Each white zone is crawling with policemen, and they are giving out tickets as fast as they can write them.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, (Online Bible).

[What if we had] a loudspeaker system [that said] outside every

worship gathering, "The pew zone is for learning and listening and changing only. *No parking.* " God is saying. "Guard your steps! You're about to take a risk. Watch out! Be alert! Listen carefully. Truth will be deposited in your head that is designed to change your life." But chances are good that even though a loudspeaker made such an announcement, the same thing would occur—folks would still "park" and turn a deaf ear to the recording.

You see why that's important? Because our favorite place to park is in a pew. just come, sit ("Whew! Finally got a seat!"), listen, and leave. This passage says, "Don't do that." It says, "As you go to the place of worship, be ready. Be alert. Sleep later. Pay attention now."<sup>2</sup>

What does our God and Creator desire most and our nation need most? True, faithful, passionate worshipers who worship our Divine Creator and Father in spirit and truth.

## **2) After addressing man's mishandling of power Solomon focuses on our misuse of worship, (5:1-7)**

### **(1) Concerning being a good listener, (1)**

#### **INTERPRETATION:**

<sup>1</sup> **Walk prudently** (watch you step, be careful, stay alert), **when you go to the house of God; and** (always), **draw near** (for the reason), **to hear** (listen with attention or interest—the idea being that you listen in such a way that you don't want to miss anything you might need to understand, stop or do [e.g., Listen in the way that some seem prone to do when overhearing some piece of gossip]), **rather than to give** (or to offer), **the** (empty, superficial, lethargic, mechanical, obligatory, ritualistic), **sacrifice of fools, for** (the reason being), **they do not** (even), **know that they do evil**, (they think they are doing themselves and God a good service, but they are worshiping like heathen [it's empty, valueless, even offensive], and they don't even know it [cp., Psa. 51:17]).

#### **F APPLICATION:**

God would not accept the sacrifices of wounded, lame or sick animals in the Old Testament. It was foolish to bring such an animal knowing it would not be accepted, but it was even more foolish to do so because it left no question as to the condition of the relationship between the worshiper and God. What do you think about during a worship service. In what way or ways are you participating? What kinds of sacrifices of praise, repentance and/or thanksgiving do you offer God? The type of sacrifices we bring to our place of worship, and the regard in which we offer them is so critically important. God is telling us not to be a fool in our worship of Him. King David de

#### **NOTES:**

<sup>2</sup> Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 148-150

scribes the kind of worship God desires in Psalm 51. He says “*You do not desire (mere), sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God (that He delights in), are a broken (humble), spirit, A broken and a contrite (repentant and respectful), heart— These, O God, You will not despise.*” Psalm 51:16-17 Do you go to God’s house of worship with this kind of understanding and attitude?

“...Believers today offer up spiritual sacrifices through Him: our bodies (Rom. 12:1–2); people won to the Saviour (Rom. 15:16); money (Phil. 4:18); praise and good works (Heb. 13:15–16); a broken heart (Ps. 51:17); and our prayers of faith (Ps. 141:1–2).<sup>3</sup>

Concerning listening carefully, **an article by an unknown author helps us get something out of any worship service. The writer said, "At least one time in every [worship service] God breaks through the words of the preacher [or worship leader] and speaks directly to the people. It may be in a single sentence or in just one phrase. We can well afford to listen to the entire [service] with care, lest we miss that one illuminated and searching sentence in which God speaks to us--a sentence that brings conviction, [repentance], hope, strength, or renewed faith! So many of us miss that one special word from God because we are comparing the preacher's [or worship leader's] manner with someone else we have heard recently [or by just letting our minds drift]. From now on, just listen intently for that one portion God intends to be applied specifically to your heart!"**

## (2) Concerning being a good communicator, (2-6)

### INTERPRETATION:

<sup>2</sup> **Do not be rash** (speak carelessly, thoughtlessly), **with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily** (irreverent), **before God. For** (the reason being), **God is in heaven** (high, mighty, powerful and lifted up reigning in glory, in the company of innumerable holy angels [Isaiah said “Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips.”]), **and you on earth** (the footstool of God’s throne, low, small, frail and fallen—God is the Creator and you are the creature—God is the Judge, I am the judged); **Therefore let your words be few**, (as God is listening and weighing what we say and think during worship).

### F APPLICATION:

**A tourist that was staying overnight in a little Vermont town, joined a small group of men sitting on the porch of the general store and attempted to strike up a conversation. Getting no response, he asked, "Is there a law against talking in this town?" "Nope," replied one seasoned old Vermonter. "Ain't no law against it. We just like to make sure it's an improvement over silence."**

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, Be Satisfied, Online

Matthew Henry has a powerful comment on this verse. He says, “Don’t be rash in making foolish prayers, protests, or promises to God... *God is in heaven*, where he reigns in glory over us and all the children of men, where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels and is *far exalted above all our blessing and praise*. *We are on earth*, the footstool of his throne; we are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him or to have any communion with him. Therefore we must be very grave, humble, and serious, and be reverent in speaking to him, as we are when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and, in token of this, *let our words be few*, that they may be *well chosen*, **Job 9:14.**”<sup>4</sup>

The author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan, wrote: “In prayer, it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.”<sup>5</sup>

Here is another illustration of this verse. “[At] a church prayer meeting during... a young man prayed eloquently and at great length, but nobody sensed the power of God at work. When an uneducated immigrant stood up and stammered out her brief prayer in broken English, we all said a fervent “Amen!” We sensed that God had heard her requests. Spurgeon said, “It is not the length of our prayers, but the strength of our prayers, that makes the difference.”<sup>6</sup>

- Has not God allowed bitter, fearful, sad, disappointing, devastating experiences to enter our lives?
- Does God not have a purpose for them?
- Do they not grieve Him as well as us?
- Will God not though, use them for good if we will let Him?
- Do you not always have a hope and a future with God?

We must then listen carefully and prayerfully for God’s still, small, quiet fatherly, compassionate voice.

<sup>3</sup> **For** (as), **a dream comes through much activity** (showing that a person’s life is his work in that his work is even in his sub-conscience), **And** (in the same sense), **a fool’s voice is known by his many words**, (the person identifies himself as a fool by what he says).

#### F **APPLICATION:**

God is telling us that he identifies the kind of worshiper we are by what we say and think during our worship of Him. What kind of a worshiper are you?

I don’t want to downplay the beautiful place that heaven is, but it does not impact me the same way that it use to. The physical characteristics don’t carry the same weight they once did in my life.

<sup>4</sup> Henry, Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, Online

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, Be Satisfied, Online

<sup>6</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Satisfied (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1990).

What matters most to me now about heaven, is the relationships I will have there. I will be there with my Lord and Savior as well as the people I know and love. These relationships have a far greater attraction to me now. You and I would give anything, time; money; work; whatever, just to have ten minutes with a loved one. Relationships ought to mean the most to us now, here on earth. We ought to be willing to do anything to protect and strengthen each of them.

The second issue that matters most to be about heaven is that my fighting with temptation will be over. By far, most nights I go to bed exhausted after a day of fighting the sin force within me, the worlds philosophies around me, and the devil against me. My clothes are not torn and bloody. My face is not smeared with sweat and grime. My feet are not raw from broken blisters. But, often times my soul and spirit feels close to death. Yet incredibly God gives the grace necessary for the next day.

Be that as it may, I am so looking forward to the time when life's battles will be over. I am looking forward to the time when my every word, thought, attitude, motivation, and action will be godly. I am looking forward to the time I will never have to ask for forgiveness again nor offer forgiveness to another.

The final issue, but certainly not the least, that now matters the most to me about heaven, is my worship of God. My worship of my Creator and Savior will finally be absolutely unrestricted. No one nor will anything, be able to distract me. I will worship in complete understanding rather than limited understanding. I will worship my God and Lord face to face, rather than in faith. I will worship with those whom I presently miss worshipping with. I will worship with my whole being rather than with only a part of it.

In light of these matters, I need to:

1. Make my Savior and those I love proud of me.
2. Be sure to have something to give my Savior when I see Him, (faithful service, not having wearied in well doing).
3. Believe in the enabling God has promised me to have victory, strength, joy, etc. in this life.
4. Stay focused on my real home waiting for me in heaven.

<sup>4</sup> **When you make a vow** (a promise), **to God** (whether hastily or thoughtfully, whether a child or an adult, whether a good one or a bad one), **do not delay to pay it** (to fulfill it); **For He has no pleasure in fools**, (those who do not keep their word, so). **Pay what you have vowed**—

#### F APPLICATION:

**A young man who went to his neighborhood jewelry store said to the jeweler: "Please engrave this engagement ring, `From Tim to Cindy."**

**To which the jeweler replied: "Take some advice, son, and just have, `From Tim."**

**That jeweler understood just how fickle we are with our vows.**

#### NOTES:

SOME HASTY VOWS

- **Jephthah**— Judges 11:30-31—*And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”* Jephthah was well meaning, but he was also very foolish.
- **Herod**—Matthew 14:7-9—... *he promised with an oath to give [Herodias’ daughter] whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, “Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.” And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her.* Herod did not mean well and he was a fool.

SOME WELL THOUGHTOUT VOWS

- **Hannah**—1 Samuel 1:11—*Then [Hannah] made a vow and said, “O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”* God blessed Hannah.
- **Job**—Job 31:1—*“I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?”* God blessed Job.

God says that it is:

<sup>5</sup> **Better not to vow** (at all), **than to vow and not pay.**

F APPLICATION:

**THIS IS A TRUE STORY.** In the 1840's, an earnest young man found employment in a pawnshop. Although he disliked the work, he did it faithfully "as unto the Lord" until a more desirable opportunity opened for him. To prepare himself for a life of Christian service, he wrote on a scrap of paper the following resolutions: "I do promise God that I will rise early every morning to have a few minutes--not less than five--in private prayer. I will endeavor to conduct myself as a humble, meek, and zealous follower of Jesus, and by serious witness and warning I will try to lead others to think of the needs of their immortal souls. I hereby vow to read no less than four chapters in God's Word every day. I will cultivate a spirit of self-denial and will yield myself a prisoner of love to the Redeemer of the world." That young man was William Booth who later led hundreds to Christ. The Salvation Army which he founded stands as a monument to the faithfulness of this one who prepared himself for service by meditation and prayer.

In verse five are some of the most overlooked words in all of Scripture and especially so in a day of shallow roots and superficial commitments. We'd much rather bail out than follow through. As a result, a promise is little more than a casual hope. A vow is a nice idea,

but a hard-and-fast covenant? A permanent commitment you can count on? Hardly. Whether it's a commitment to pay back fifty dollars or a commitment to stay faithful in marriage, [or to train that child up in the way he should go] the idea of sticking with a *vow regardless* is almost unheard of.

Not so in God's eyes! Again, His truth penetrates. He says, "You vowed it . . . you keep it."<sup>7</sup>

We use vows in a lot of matters such as marriage, child dedication, church membership and when joining other organizations.

<sup>6</sup> **Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin** (i.e., Don't promise God something that your weak flesh will cause you to break. Don't say foolish things. You can never take back your words.), **nor say before the messenger** (a shepherd), **of God that it was an error**, (it was a mistake, when he holds you accountable to your vow). **Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?** (Why should you invite God's displeasure and chastisement on your life? Why would you want to bring all of your hard labor into jeopardy. [cp., Jonah 2:9])

### (3) Concerning fearing God, (7)

<sup>7</sup> **For in the multitude of** (day-), **dreams and many** (fancy), **words** (worshipful doodling), **there is also vanity**, (emptiness, futility). **But** (you must get above the sun), **fear God**, (simply give God what He is due and wants).

#### F APPLICATION:

The fool's worship is not serious, so their words are not meaningful or dependable. They enjoy the "good feelings" that come when they make their promises to God, but they do themselves more harm than good. They like to "dream" about fulfilling their vows, but they never get around to doing it. They practice a make-believe religion that neither glorifies God nor builds Christian character.

The psalmist says, ***"I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble"*** (Ps. 66:13–14). When we rob the Lord of the worship and honor due to Him, we are also robbing ourselves of the spiritual blessings He bestows on those who ***"worship Him in spirit and in truth"*** (John 4:24).<sup>8</sup>

"A statement from Psalm 46 also comes to mind. That great psalm of worship begins by portraying God as ***"our refuge and strength"*** and concludes with the reassurance that He is our stronghold. And in the central core of the psalm (v. 10) there is a command that is familiar to

<sup>7</sup> Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 153

<sup>8</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1990).

all of us. **"Be still and know that I am God."** Actually, it's a single word in the Hebrew text-"cease" or "stop." Some marginal references suggest "relax . . . let go." It's saying, "Stop striving!"

The verb stem in the original Hebrew text conveys the idea that we are to cause something to drop off, to abandon something. What is it we are to abandon? I think the editors are correct in adding words like "striving, anxiety, preoccupation with the cares of this age." Let all that go!

We can be so preoccupied that we simply go through empty, meaningless motions of worship without really hearing. We don't respond well because we're not taking it all in. The writer is saying, "Be still." Why? "So you'll know that I am God."

That brings us back to Solomon's words and the reason for this second command: "For God is in heaven and you are on the earth." What picture do you have in your mind when you read that God is in heaven and we are on the earth? I would hazard the guess that most of you would say, "He is way out there, or way up there in heaven, and we are way down here on earth. So we'd better listen well."

In actuality, this is a statement of perspective, not distance. God is in the realm of the infinite [He is everywhere]. He alone hears the inaudible [He listens to our thoughts]. He alone sees the invisible [what we do in secret and what is in our heart which is deceitful wicked]. That's the reason we're to be calm and quiet. God penetrates deeply into that which is inaudible to human ears, and He peers intently into that which is invisible to human eyes. Knowing that is true, take a close look at Him and listen to what He's saying.

John White, in his book *The Fight*, offers this insight:

It is God who wishes to establish communication. He is more anxious to speak to us than we are to hear Him. He is incredibly persistent in trying to get through. Our real problem is that we tend to avoid bearing Him. Truth liberates. It not only reveals a standard, but will set you free to keep it. This is what makes Scripture so different from other ethical systems which are powerless to help the struggler.

We come as fellow strugglers to hear God's basic and simple answers to life in all of its complexity. But if we're not careful, we drag into the scene all the tumult and turmoil of our problems. And we are quick to dump them out, rather than to bear Him out. He says, "Be still."<sup>9</sup>

[A man who understood this passage said] "Babbling, rambling, wild words may be all right in dreams, but they do not belong in worship. Our relationship to God is one of sober, respectful, reverent awe. . . .

. . . False worship is as much an affront to him as obscene insults are to a wife or husband. Better to bribe a judge than to ply God

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<sup>9</sup> Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 152, 153

with hollow words; better to slap a policeman than to seek God's influence by meaningless gestures; better to perjure yourself in court than to [disturb] God with promises you cannot keep. The full adorations of our spirit, the true obedience of our heart—these are his demands and his delights.”<sup>10</sup>

Matthew Henry comments, “Keep your thoughts from roving and wandering from the work; keep your affections from running out towards wrong objects, for in the business of God’s house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed.”<sup>11</sup>

*Thank the LORD because he is good. His love continues forever, our God who lives above tells us, who live below in Psalm 106:1.*

Worship is when you are aware that what you have been given is far greater than what you can give. Worship is the awareness that were it not for his touch, you'd still be hobbling and hurting, bitter and broken. Worship is the half-glazed expression on the parched face of a desert pilgrim as he discovers that the oasis is not a mirage.

Worship is the "thank you" that refuses to be silenced.

We have tried to make a science out of worship. We can't do that. We can't do that any more than we can “sell love” or “negotiate peace.”

Worship is a voluntary act of gratitude offered by the saved to the Savior, by the healed to the Healer, and by the delivered to the Deliverer. (Max Lucado—*In the Eye of the Storm*)

We celebrate Thanksgiving once a year, but don't let your “Thank yous,” be silent for the rest of the year. Some of us have had an exceptionally difficult year. On September 11, 2002, our nation suffered one of its greatest tragedies and challenges. Some of you celebrated this Thanksgiving without a love one for the first time this past year. But, with the God that we love and serve in heaven, we who live on earth, always have a bounty of thanksgiving to enjoy and offer because of our Heavenly Father's love, power, grace and mercy.

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<sup>10</sup> Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 157

<sup>11</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Logos Online Bible).

**3) After addressing man's mishandling of power and worship Solomon focuses on our misuse of riches, (5:8-6:12)**

**(1) Concerning the havoc of riches, (5:8-17)**

**a. The tendency for the rich to oppress the poor, (5:8-9)**

<sup>8</sup> **If you see the oppression** (extortion) **of the poor** (i.e., another individual or a group of individuals, taking unfair advantage of an individual or a group less fortunate than themselves), **and the violent perversion** (meaning the complete removal, or severely limited, or even the gross misrepresentation), **of justice** (meaning the personal protection and the free exercise of ones rights and privileges), **and righteousness** (calling right wrong and wrong right), **in a province** (as a citizen), (hold on to your seat now, God tells us), **do not marvel** (be astounded, stunned, amazed, shocked), **at the matter; for** (the reason being—under the sun), **high official watches over high official** (those in positions of power and authority watch out for each other, not those those under them; especially the poor and needy), **and** (not only that, but), **higher officials are over them**, (the oppression of the disadvantaged occurs because of justice and righteousness getting lost in the politics and red tape of bureaucracy).

<sup>9</sup> **Moreover** (here means the real excellency or advantage of something—which in this case is that), **the profit** (or fruits), **of the land is for all** (every human being no matter what his status is in this life is); **even the king is served from the field**, (even the king needs the food that is provided by those under his position—he needs these servants for his own sustenance, yet ironically he takes full advantage of them—destroying them in a purposeful and systematic fashion, one by one. The kings servants are an investment to him and his kingdom, but instead of working hard at figuring out ways that he can protect and promote his investment, he does just the opposite!

**F APPLICATION:**

Charles Swindoll I think has the best commentary on these two verses. He says.

This first proverb, or principle, has to do with the influence and control the rich have over the poor. The rich, simply because they have money, tend to take charge of territory, of a province, of a nation, even of a continent. The rich tend to be leaders. They are often the best educated, the most influential, and because they run with the rich, they gain control—control of the money, the land, the gross national product, the political arena. They usually become the lawmakers. They become the officials who run the government, both state and national. They become those who establish the "red tape" procedures, those who place in office more officials who "watch over another official," as Solomon puts it.

And by and by, the red tape gets so thick and complex that the poor can no longer gain entrance and be heard by the rich. Those with wealth tend to take charge and the poor become intimidated.

One man drew a scene from the first century when he wrote:

The glimpse of that vista of officials suggests possibilities of evasiveness to baffle the citizen who presses for his rights. He can be endlessly obstructed and deflected. As for moral responsibility, it can be sidestepped with equal facility. Every officer can blame the system, while the ultimate authorities hold sway at an infinite distance from the lives they affect.

Those... who have served our country in the military smile with understanding as we read those words. [Many outfits] ...called it "the system." How often... [have you] agreed, "You can't beat the system." You can reach just so far, and you don't go any further because one officer watches over another officer. There's a name for a guy in the military who tries to beat the system—"victim." The major problem is that woven into the fabric of that tightly controlled system is unaccountability and insensitivity. I am certainly not advocating anarchy. Someone must be in charge. A certain amount of the "system" has to be in place. But my concern—Solomon's concern—is the un-touchable and often corrupt power that occurs when those with money gain total control.

Does this mean that there is never a need for any kind of leadership? I repeat, leadership is essential, biblical, in fact... There still needs to be leadership. And some governments still advocate a monarchy. But wealthy kings must guard against being oppressive because money has a way of dulling the senses of a powerful leader.<sup>12</sup>

Oppression is a terrible sin against which God, in stern and in no uncertain terms, has warned us against. God tells us that we are to love our neighbor as our own self, (Mat. 19:16). It is absolutely ludicrous for a poor man to oppress another poor person. "***A poor man who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain which leaves no food,***" God says. (Prov. 28:3; cp., Ex. 2:11-13). It's a double whammy. You are knocked down by your superiors, which is bad enough at times and it all but destroy you. But then, to have your peer take what little is left is absolutely ludicrous! Husbands and wives do this to each other, as do coworkers, siblings, friends, classmates, etc.. It's wrong. It's preposterous!

(Put on put off principle—you can't just stop at not oppressing the poor. You have to start serving them as well.)

The same principle applies to the person who has been given a very gracious measure of wealth, influence and/or power, as to the person who has been given a very gracious measure of forgiveness, (Mat. 18:23-35). The man who was forgiven much was expected by God to treat others favorably by forgiving them. God (who is the maker of the rich and influential as well as the poor and needy), also expects the person who has been blessed in the way of wealth, influence

<sup>12</sup> Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 161, 162

and/or power to utilize it favorably with others. The Scriptures plainly tells us, “***He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker / But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him***” (Prov 14:31, NASB).

**b. After seeing the oppression of the poor by the rich, God describes the discontentment the rich will find in their money, (5:10-17)**

To live to be rich or at least have a lot of earthly possessions will leave you wanting for several reasons:

**a) Money and possessions cannot satisfy the soul, (10)**

<sup>10</sup> **He who** (not necessarily possesses money/riches but), **loves silver** (has a passion, or strong affection for it), **will not be satisfied** (find fulfillment, contentment), **with silver**; (whether he has it or not—It will not replace the void that God has placed in all of our souls that can only be satisfied by God Himself.) **Nor he who loves abundance** (has a passion to possess lots of material things—he will not be satisfied), **with increase** (with whatever material things he acquires—thus). **This also is vanity**, (it is as temporary and meaningless as a puff of wind—this ambition is self-induced and self-defeating).

Money and possessions cannot satisfy the innate spiritual cravings of the soul.

Some people treat money as though it were a god. They love it, make sacrifices for it, and think that it can do anything. Their minds are filled with thoughts about it; their lives are controlled by getting it and guarding it; and when they have it, they experience a great sense of security...How often we hear people say, “Well, money may not be the number one thing in life, but it’s way ahead of whatever is number two!”

The person who loves money cannot be satisfied no matter how much is in the bank account—because the human heart was made to be satisfied only by God (3:11). “***Take heed and beware of covetousness,***” warned Jesus, “***for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses***” (Luke 12:15, NKJV--[bold and italics, mine]). First the person loves money, and then he loves *more* money, and the disappointing pursuit has begun that can lead to all sorts of problems. “***For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil***” (1 Tim. 6:10, NKJV--[bold and italics, mine]).<sup>13</sup>

Money can buy tons of comfort, but not an ounce of contentment. Profits, dividends, investments, interest, benefits, and capital gains only whet the appetite for more... We tell ourselves that we’ll be content,

**NOTES:**

<sup>13</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. Be Satisfied, Ec 5:10.

If only. . . . But we're not. Wise was the man who said, "How much does it take to satisfy us? A little bit more than we have!"<sup>14</sup>

### b) Money and possessions bring their own inherent problems, (11-13)

<sup>11</sup> **When** (ones personal), **goods** (wealth), **increase** (multiply—it is inevitable that), **They** (friends, relatives, neighbors, strangers, tax-collectors and tax advisers, lawyers, you name it), **increase** (show up out of nowhere), **who** (desire to help you), **eat** (or devour), **them** (your wealth); **So** (then), **what profit have the owners** (of their riches), **except to see them with their eyes**, (as they are consumed by one and all)? (Proverbs 14:20—*The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, But the rich has many friends.*)

The late Joe Louis, world heavyweight boxing champion, used to say, "I don't like money actually, but it quiets my nerves."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> **The sleep of a laboring man** (on the other hand, a man who works hard everyday just in order to put food on his table and to keep up with his bills), **is sweet** (it is pleasant, to be desired—and it doesn't matter), **whether he eats little or much;**<sup>16</sup> **but the abundance of the rich** (on the other hand), **will not permit him to sleep**, (his mind finds it difficult to shut down and his body tosses and turns).

<sup>14</sup> Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 163

<sup>15</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Satisfied*, Ec 5:10. Logos Online.

<sup>16</sup> When I worked at LAPP, I'd punch the clock at 7 am and I'd punch out at 3:30 pm a lot of those years; 5 days a week. Before Leeanna was born, I'd get home with Isaac at about 3:50. The rest of the day was ours. We would have a little snack together and then go out into the yard and rumble! We would all sit down to a dinner together and afterwards maybe go on a bike ride. Lots of times Isaac and I would go down to the creek and play or we would go out and watch for airplanes. Then Leeanna was born and as the kids grew up we went to T-ball, then baseball, soccer, Tai-Qan-Do, gymnastics and the list goes on. After a game we would often times stop and get a ice cream cone on the way home. We were hard-working, easy-going, fun-loving, people. Anne and I would get the kids to bed, spend a little time together and then call it a night and hit the sack. I'd be asleep within minutes. That was our life and we loved it. There is some anxiety that comes with every lifestyle, but it was not overwhelming at all. There wasn't many people or issues that we had a serious hassle over.

The wealthy man on the other hand, often times finds it hard to get to sleep God tells us. There are lots of reasons for this. "He hasn't people who love him just for who he is. And he is forever preoccupied with pursuits that have financial entanglements—problems that don't go away when he leaves the office long after dark...And when he finally drops into bed [late at night or even early in the morning hours], he tosses and turns as he wonders, 'Is that deal gonna pay off? What if I get caught short? Is he gonna rip me off? Is it too big a risk?...'. Around and around he turns . . . over and over he twists." Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 165

<sup>13</sup> **There is a severe evil** (wretched affliction), **which I have seen under the sun: Riches** (were), **kept** (horded), **for their owner** (but ultimately resulted), **to his hurt**, (riches acquired through wrong motives and utilized for selfish purposes, only serves to fill the owners life with grievous misery)

More than one preacher has mentioned John D. Rockefeller in his sermons as an example of a man whose life was almost ruined by wealth. At the age of fifty-three, Rockefeller was the world's only billionaire, earning about a million dollars a week. But he was a sick man who lived on crackers and milk and could not sleep because of worry. When he started giving his money away, his health changed radically and he lived to celebrate his ninety-eighth birthday!<sup>17</sup>

There is absolutely nothing wrong with possessing money, no matter what the amount. But, there is nothing right about possessing a love for money, no matter how little or much.

So, how much does it take to be content? God tells us in 1 Timothy 6:8-10, that ***...having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.***

### c) Money and possessions cannot be absolutely secured, (14)

When a person with experience meets a person with money, the person with experience will get the money. And the person with the money will get the experience. (*Leonard Lauder*)

<sup>14</sup> **But** (here means in addition), **those riches perish** (disappear), **through misfortune** (it may be personal or economic trouble; it may be the result of something you did or the result of circumstances beyond your control; it may be a combination of both and more, and the result is); **When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand**, (he has nothing in his possession to support or leave his son).

Gary said to his friend Jack, "My wife and I have a joint checking account."

"Isn't that confusing" Jack asked?

"No," Gary said. "I put the money in, and she takes it out."

Look at the back of a one dollar bill. On one side you see a pyramid and on the other you see an eagle with its wings spread wide. A message that we could gain from that eagle is, "Warning!, at any moment I could take wing and fly away."

<sup>17</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. Be Satisfied, Ec 5:10. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1990.

**d) Money and possessions at best are gathered only to be left behind, (15-16)**

NOTES:

<sup>15</sup> **As** (in the same way as), **he** (the person with money and possessions), **came from his mother's womb** (into this world), **naked** (implying penniless and possessionless—so), **shall he return** (at death when he leaves this world), **to go as he came** (penniless and possessionless); **and he shall take nothing** (he acquired), **from his labor which he may carry away** (into eternity with him), **in his hand**.

<sup>16</sup> **And this also is a severe evil** (a depressing, greivious, sickening state of affairs; that you can't take any fruits of your labor with you after death that you worked so hard to gain, what is the point of one's labor then!?) —**just exactly as he came** (into the world), **so shall he go**, (leave the world). **And** (so) **what profit** (advantage), **has he who has labored** (so hard), **for the wind**, (something that is impossible to hang on to)?

**The preacher was dangerously ill and couldn't have visitors. But when an agnostic called to pay his respects, the preacher asked that he be sent in anyway.**

**"I sure appreciate this," said the agnostic. "But why did you ask to see me, when you denied admission to your close friends and church members?"**

**"That's easy to explain," gasped the dying preacher. "I'm confident of seeing them in Heaven. But this is probably the last chance I'll ever have to see you.**

Someone who lives for their riches, will experience the same thing. The day is coming when they will see them for the last time. If we live above the sun though, the rewards of our labors will be waiting for us.

God tells us in Matthew 6:19-20—***"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."***

**e) Money and possessions fail to bring lasting happiness and peace, (17)**

<sup>17</sup> **All his days he also eats in darkness** (eats at the table the world offers him, rather than the one God offers), **And** (as a result), **he has much** (no end of), **sorrow** (vexation/troubles—as he schemes, hordes and fights to lay up treasures for himself in an unstable and competitive world), **and** (the result of that is), **sickness** (physical, emotional and spiritual sickness plagues him as a result of worrying about his riches being stolen, wearing out, or destroyed), **and anger**, (is also a constant companion. He becomes angry at himself for missing an opportunity to make money, or for a business transaction that loses money. He's angry

at others for the fees or taxes they charge, ect. He's angry at the world for not being more stable.)

NOTES:

**According to an old fable, a fly discovered a tantalizing strip of flypaper. It looked so appetizing to him that he decided to claim it for himself. So, after chasing away all the other insects that threatened to share his find, he landed on its very edge and happily announced, "My flypaper." Then he proceeded to partake of the tasty feast. In his desire to satisfy his appetite, he tried to walk around to get all he could, and before he knew it he was firmly attached to the sticky surface. Realizing he couldn't move his legs, he began flapping his wings, but they too became hopelessly mired in the goo. Finally he gave up, completely exhausted. It was then that the flypaper proudly exclaimed, "My fly!"**

**This fable portrays what happens in real life to those who get caught in the trap of materialism. (Who owns who?!)**

All too often we are like that fly. We work hard to grab all that we can get of money and/or possessions. We think so highly of them. We envy others who have them. We expect so much from them. We feel special to have them. We admire them. We protect them. We hoard them. Only to find that the happiness and peace that we thought they would supply is very short lived, and sometimes even results in the ruin of our personal well-being. What the fly thought would provide a better life for him, actually ended up bringing his life to a premature and abrupt end. The fly paper didn't provide more life for him, it stole every ounce of life he already possessed away from him. Don't let money and possessions do the same to you!

## **(2) Concerning the good of riches, (5:18-20)**

Being wealthy and having possessions is not sinful. These things are not evil in and of themselves. We determine their moral value by the value we place upon them.

The average American family's ambition is to make as much money as they're spending. The best advice for the average American family is, act your wage. That is exactly what God is trying to tell us now.

### **a. God determines our earnings and means for them to be an enjoyment to us, (5:18)**

<sup>18</sup> **Here is what I have seen** (concluded thus far concerning this issue of riches): ***It is good*** (antonym of "evil" in verse 16 which means a depressing, greivous, sickening state of affairs—"good" here thus means an encouraging, pleasant, heartwarming state of affairs), **and fitting** (beautiful), ***for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good*** (physical benefits and heavenly blessings), **of all** (every bit of), ***his labor in which he toils under the sun***

(upon this earth), **all the days of his life** (every single day, all day long), **which God gives** (confers upon), **him; for it is his** (the individuals God ordained), **heritage**, (or lot in life—just like a parent determines a child's allowance).

**b. God determines who enjoys His intended earthly and heavenly blessings concerning one's riches and wealth, (5:19-20)**

**a) The blessing of being satisfied with one's personal riches and wealth whether much or little, as well as enjoying the means by which they are acquired, (5:19)**

<sup>19</sup> **As for every man** (then), **to whom God has** (number one), **given riches and wealth** (money and possessions [we are not talking about the one who has acquired his riches and wealth by and for himself through his greed and possibly dishonesty]), **and** (number two, because it is God given and accepted by the person, God has), **given him** (or empowers/blesses him with the), **power to eat of it** (i.e., to receive the intended lasting good from it and to provide good for others through it as well—so), **to receive** (sincerely and gratefully accept), **his heritage** (God's ordained proportion of riches and wealth for you), **and** (to truly), **rejoice in his labor** (through which God provides one's riches and wealth)—**this is the gift of God**, (to you, which is far from vanity—it is something you can sink your teeth into and find lasting fulfillment through!)

**b) The blessing of living a full life with few regrets as God Himself, has been the joy of your heart, (5:20)**

<sup>20</sup> **For** (this reason), **he** (the one who embraces God's ordained lot for his life as a grateful and humble servant), **will not dwell unduly** (or constantly brood), **on the days** (i.e., the shortness and/or success), **of his life**, (he doesn't look back at his life with sorrow or frustration), **because God keeps him busy** (focused/absorbed), **with the joy of his heart**, (which is not the size of the gift of one's riches, but the relationship of Giver of his riches—which will obviously only increase when he goes home to glory).

Think about this for a moment more. How could it be the size of the gift, or riches, that filled the recipient's heart with joy?! If that was the case only the rich could possess this coveted fulfilling joy. You would have to reach a certain dollar level before it was possible. But God says that it is available for all. Thus the satisfying, fulfilling joy is the result of one's relationship to and with the Giver, God our Creator from Whom every good gift comes through.

David a man after God's own heart. God is after every heart of man.