

**PP Ecclesiastes: *The Great Experiment***

**Ecclesiastes 1:13-2, Part 2 (p. 553 Pew Bible)**

**9/15-16/2018**

**PP** *“We were made for You, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”*

Augustine

Last week, we saw that Solomon declared there is no gain with anything under the sun  
Everything in this world that has no relational connection to God, is vanity, it is brief, thin and  
lacks any ability to satisfy our souls

***“It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.”*** 13

God has placed a curse on all under the sun, and no earthly power or effort is an antidote

***“What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.”*** 1:15

But our educators, and politicians disagree, and Solomon himself wanted to know if it’s true

**PP** *Is it really not possible to find gainful satisfaction and happiness with what is under the sun?*

Solomon then, ***“applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.”*** 1:17

He began a series of life experiences to see if this crooked life can be made straight, if he could  
find gain somewhere, somehow, under the sun

He’ll conduct them *‘by wisdom’* (1:13), *‘my heart still guiding me with wisdom’* (2:3), and *‘my  
wisdom remained with me’* (2:9)

He will not abandon God, but he must know... **PP** *Can anything under the sun fill my soul?*

**PP The Experiment with Pleasure**

***“I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this  
also was vanity.”*** 2:1

He’s going to test his heart to see if pleasure can bring gain, lasting satisfaction and happiness

***“I said of laughter, ‘It is mad,’ and of pleasure, ‘What use is it?’”*** 2:2

**PP a. Laughter**

This seems a good attempt, for researchers tell us that there is a great deal of benefit in laughter  
Endocrinologists tell us laughter boosts immunity, lowers stress hormones, decreases pain  
Psychologists tell us laughter adds joy to life, eases anxiety, relieves stress, improves our mood  
Sociologists tells us it strengthens relationships, attracts others to us and helps diffuse conflict

**PP** ***“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”*** Proverbs 17:22

So he hits the comedy clubs, watches Scott Sterling videos and Bad Lip reading in the NFL, but

**PP** ***“Even in laughter the heart may ache”*** Proverbs 14:13a

Not even funnyman Robin Williams could outrun his grief and sadness

That movie will end, the club comedian takes a bow, then it’s back to real life, where **PP** ***“the  
end of joy is grief”*** Proverbs 14:13b

It was fun, made me forget for a while, but it was temporary, brief, nothing in my life changed

That pleasure failed, so he turns to his next pleasure... **PP b. Drinking**

***“I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with  
wisdom—”*** 2:3

He isn’t tumbling headlong into mindless hedonism, he is testing to see if alcohol can satisfy  
But the party scene, the craft beer festivals, the drinking binges, none of them fill the void, in  
fact, it deepens the pit...after the hangover life’s struggles still hang over your head

So he quickly files drinking under a *‘vanity and a striving after wind’ (2:11)*  
The kegerator helped you forget for a few hours, but it was brief and emptiness was still there

### **PP c. Money and Possessions**

*“I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces.” 2:7-8a*

His work force was massive, his wealth greater than any other king in Israel, he made silver as common as stone (**2 Chron 9:27**)

His gold earnings alone, based on prices from this past week, was 965 million US dollars, annual

He had a fleet of ships, possessing exotic animals and precious artifacts

Solomon can tell Jeff Bezos, your money cannot fill your soul

You will die, and you *‘must leave it to the man who will come after [you].’*

And it’s the same for each of us

### **PP d. Music**

*‘I got singers, both men and women’ Ecclesiastes 2:8*

Solomon bought his own band, and unlike most music groups of his day, his had women as well  
He thought that music might soothe his soul, so every chariot ride he had Spotify churning out the latest beats and rhymes

He walked around his palace with home theater system dialed into 99.9 The Hawk

He ran on the treadmill with his Beats Headphones piping in NF’s latest hit song

He had Dobie Gray’s mega hit, Drift Away on repeat, those poignant lyrics echoing in his head:

*Beginning to think that I’m wastin’ time; I don’t understand the things I do; The world outside looks so unkind; So I’m countin’ on you to carry me through; Oh, give me the beat boys, and free my soul; I want to get lost in your rock and roll and drift away*

But there was a problem...music couldn’t set his soul free

He kept finding himself humming to *My Way* by Sinatra, and realized he’s enslaved...to himself

### **PP e. Sex**

*‘and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.’ 2:8*

Wilt Chamberlain, Ernest Hemingway, Aldous Huxley and thousands thought this was it!

The is pleasure above all pleasures...it will my soul and elevate to heights of happiness

The porn industry wants you to think it can, as it earns 97 billion annually

64% of young people, ages 13–24 are actively looking at porn weekly, often daily

In 2016, 4.6 Billion hours of porn were viewed on the world’s largest porn site

If anyone would know if sexual pleasure is gain under the sun, Solomon would

**PP** *“He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.” 1 Kings 11:3*

Sexual pleasure ruined his life, turned him away from God, and left him with a failed experiment

## PP f. *Fame*

***“So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem.” 2:9***

My youngest son asked me last week if I’ve met any famous people, and I couldn’t remember  
 We think if our name was on the marquee, on the best-selling book, on a jersey, we’d be happy  
 But the world’s kings and queens visited Solomon to hear his wisdom and see what he had done,  
 and still, he called his fame *‘a vanity and a striving after the wind’*

## PP The Experiment with Morality

***“So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly.” 2:12***

The wisdom here is not the deep, spiritual understanding that comes from the fear of the Lord  
 It is moral, practical advice, the kind you get from Dr. Phil, Mark Twain and Erma Bombeck  
 He contrasted it with madness and folly, and drew two conclusions: it is better to live a morally  
     positive life than it is a foolish one; but secondly, an event is coming for them both, death  
 Solomon has meditated deeply on life, sought to harness his desires for good, contemplated the  
     mysteries of life, all in the hopes to bring himself gain and happiness and satisfaction  
 But his conclusion from this experiment is that if one lives life under the sun, looking to find  
     gain in this life only, what does it matter if you live foolishly or wise, there will be no  
     remembrance of either

Sheri Yeisley lost her first husband to death when their son Douglas was 5 years old  
 It was 2 years later that Douglas came up to her and said, *‘Mommy, daddy is fading’*  
 We will all experience death, the moral as well as immoral, it is the great leveler of all people  
***“Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I  
     been so very wise?...For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance,  
     seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just  
     like the fool!” 2:15-16***

Keeping the day of death in mind is not morbid, it is freeing, it can be life-changing  
 All the wisdom in the world is useless if you do not learn that life under the sun is not all there is

## PP The Experiment with Work

Ecclesiastes is organized not so much sequentially with one thought leading to the other  
 It uses an approach called spiraling as it will often return again to a previous thought  
***“I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens  
     and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which  
     to water the forest of growing trees.” 2:4-6***

He designed public works, his name was on bridges and national parks and forests  
 How about you, with your 70 hour work weeks?

You bring work home with you, take your laptop on vacation, you’re climbing the ladder, getting  
 promotions...for what?

If it is gain for your soul you are seeking, the ladder will top out before you find it

Solomon found pleasure in his work, verse 10, until he considered what death would do to him  
***“I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,” 2:18***

How can work be enjoyable knowing that I am going to die, no one will remember me, and I’m going to be replaced by the next person in line or give my effort to another?

Are you seeing the thread of vanity that weaves through the quest for meaning and happiness?  
 All your strength and money and effort spent on pleasure, moral living and work, for what??  
 You are going to die, and not any of it will go with you, or benefit you...unless...  
 And with that word, the rheostat dial on hope turns, and some brightness enters our hearts

### **PP The Answer!**

***“There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?” 2:24-25***

God wants us happy, here, under the sun, and He’s made a way for us to find happiness now  
 It is possible only in a relationship with God, for ***‘apart from Him...who can have enjoyment?’***  
 The heart of an unbelieving sinner is not capable of housing God’s gifts  
 That soul is not only too small, it is hardware built for a different software  
 A person must be a new creation, equipped to experience pleasure without worshipping it  
 That recreating power is the death and resurrection of Jesus  
 The cross and resurrection removes the barrier of sin between us and God, took away the curse  
 that was laid on us, and makes us alive with power and hope and joy  
 For the Christian then, Life under the Sun explodes with meaning and satisfaction  
 The soul lungs of a child of God choke on the air under the sun, its pleasures and pursuits  
 God gives His children the ability to experience joy in work, true satisfaction in pleasure, joy in  
 suffering, calm in storms

Recently I received a cutting, divisive email, which immediately set my insides to agitation  
 After a few minutes of angst, the Spirit began to exert His will, reminding to recall that God is in  
 control, I am called to love, and to ask for peace which surpasses all understanding  
 Immediately, calm flowed like warmth through my heart, I slept great, and woke up in peace,  
 content with whatever comes

You find out your job is changed and you get angry, feeling the injustice of it, so what do you do  
 Christian...pray, and receive from God joy, and pleasure, for your Heavenly Father  
 knows it all and He is going to be with you through it all

Your death is approaching, and the statistic that the number one emotion in dying people is  
 regret will not be true of you...for you stopped living for what is under the sun years  
 before

You gave up trying to find meaning under the sun, turned to God and when you see Him face to  
 face, you’ll be where you were always meant to be, home

This is the power of this book...so let it do its work in your life and turn your eyes above the sun,  
 to the One Who has laid claim on you and given you the power to enjoy life

Amen?

Pray