

## Daily Bible Study

### “More Words of Wisdom”

*Ecclesiastes 7:13-29*

*June 30 – July 6, 2013*

**MONDAY** – This week our study takes us further into **Ecclesiastes** as we look at **7:13-29**. We continue listening to Solomon as he gives us some **“More Words of Wisdom”**. As we saw last time, this passage contains wise words of advice from a man who had learned from his observations of life. He continues the call for us to make some comparisons, heed warnings, and make considerations. As we know but need to be reminded, Jesus is both the power and wisdom of God (**1 Corinthians 1:24**). We should seek Jesus more than we seek other things and it is actually to Jesus that Solomon and the whole of Scripture point us. Another practical thing Solomon teaches us is the best way to save ourselves from the vexation and vanity that the world and loving it creates is to make use of true wisdom, and keep exercising strict self-control and governing of our passions. Read our text: **Ecclesiastes 7:13-29**: *“Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him. I have seen everything in my days of vanity: there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness. Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; for he who fears God will escape them all. Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city. For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others. All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, “I will be wise”; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out? I applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness. And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her. “Here is what I have found,” says the Preacher, “Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found. Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”*

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me to desire and seek Jesus more than I desire and seek the things of this world which are passing away (1 John 2:15-17).*

**TUESDAY** – **Ecclesiastes 7:13-14**: *“Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.”* Right away we see the command given us to *Consider the work of God...* As we consider such a thing as *the work of God*, we soon become aware that it is not always as straightforward as we might expect. We are not called to “straighten out” all the things that we can’t understand concerning God’s Sovereign providence but we are called to learn how to live in light of them. **Verse 13** looks back and reminds us of the problem of **1:15** (*What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered*). Here, the point is that God is in control of the times, and nothing can be done to resist his will. **Verse 14** makes it clear to us that this is to be understood in an economic context. God brings both prosperity and recession. When times are good, we should enjoy the prosperity and when times are bad, we should remember that this also is from God’s hand. God doesn’t allow us to know whether tomorrow is going to be economically bountiful or lean (**Lamentations 3:38**), but we find peace and contentment if we accept it all as from God and be thankful to Him. In 1934, Reinhold Niebuhr wrote the “Serenity Prayer”. It has been used by many support groups and such but the simple truth expressed fits Solomon’s words to us here in **verse 13**: “O God, give us Serenity to accept what cannot be changed, Courage to change what should be changed, And wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.” Wisdom teaches us not to be discouraged when things are difficult or prideful and arrogant when things are going well. It takes spiritual maturity to be able to “learn” to accept prosperity as well as adversity (**Philippians 4:10–13**), for often it is the prosperity that does the greater damage. Job reminded his wife of this: *“What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”* (**2:10**) Job also said, *“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”* (**1:21**). God knows what’s best to keep us humble, balanced, and thankful. Just about the time we think we have an explanation and have it all “figured out”, God changes the situations. Walk by faith Beloved, not by sight (**2 Corinthians 5:7, Habakkuk 2:4, Hebrews 10:38**).

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me be humble & trusting of Your Sovereign providence and all that You do for Your glory and my good. Keep me balanced & thankful; looking to You in and for all things. Give me increased faith & humility as I walk through this life with You.*

**WEDNESDAY** – **Ecclesiastes 7:15-18**: *“I have seen everything in my days of vanity: there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness. Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; for he who fears God will escape them all.”* There is a call here for balance in perspective. Solomon is dealing with these issues and questions in this portion. To begin, he looks at the problem of the wicked prospering and the righteous man perishing. Why do the “good die young?” The *just man perishing* while the wicked

man *prolongs life in his wickedness* seems contrary to the justice of God and the His Word. Didn't God say that the obedient would live long (**Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 4:40**) and the disobedient would perish? (**Deuteronomy 4:25–26, Psalm 55:23**) Yes, He did. But we must remember that we need God's perspective to distinguish the blessing from the "bad". The Sermon on the Mount helps us refocus: "*Blessed are the rich as we perceive them...? NO, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit'*" (**Matthew 5:3ff**). Don't take the short-sighted view Beloved. The wicked only appear to prosper and in a limited physical sense they may in fact do so. But it is fleeting and temporary and their loss will be eternal. Asaph deals with this issue in **Psalm 73**. Jesus summed it up well in **Matthew 6:2, 5, and 16** where He says, "*They have their reward*". Jesus also told us they may *gain the whole world*, but they will *lose their own souls*. This is the fate of all who follow their example and sacrifice the eternal for the temporal. As Solomon continues he isn't saying be moderate, play it safe, "not too righteous and not to sinful". Solomon wants us to think here and not become proud but instead be humble before God and others. He is saying don't claim to be wise and righteous and think you have arrived and know it all. **Verse 20** will make it clear there are no righteous people, so he cannot be referring to true righteousness. He is condemning the self-righteousness of the hypocrite and the false wisdom of the proud, and he warned that these sins led to destruction and death. He is not counseling that sin in moderation is acceptable but rather he is saying that while some sin is inevitable in everyone's life, those who embrace it will be destroyed by it (*Why should you die before your time?*) **Verse 18** sums up the warning and gives us wise counsel. Although there is some difficulty and question concerning the original language of **verse 18** the obvious clear point is, "...fears God..." Fear God and enjoy His blessings and He will deliver you from the excesses of both self-righteousness in thinking and foolish sinful wickedness. We are to take hold of true righteousness and not withdraw from true wisdom, and the way we do this is walk in the fear of God. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (**Proverbs 9:10**) and Jesus Christ is to us as believers "*wisdom and righteousness*" (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). So, walk in and with Jesus and be wise, truly prosperous, and blessed.

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, save me from so many "why" questions which show my pride and lack of trust in You. Give me an eternal perspective and teach me to walk understanding that just to be in and with you Jesus is blessing enough and all I will ever truly need.*

**THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 7:19-22:** "*Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city. For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others. All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise"; but it was far from me.*" Solomon points out that wisdom *strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city*. We are made strong for life's situations through wisdom (Jesus). A man of wisdom fears the Lord and knows Him and therefore can live without fearing everything else. There are real problems in life which cause fear and the number one

which we should not dismiss is sin. **Verse 20** tells us all of us have this issue to deal with. We are guilty and need Jesus to overcome sins penalty (death) and power (wickedness in practice). We must repent and believe in Jesus perfect sinless life and sacrificial death for us on the cross if we are to be delivered from sins penalty. Faith alone in Him and His work in our behalf is what delivers us. Then as we continue to trust in Jesus by His wisdom and power in us we can live victoriously over sins power. Another problem which hinders our perception and living wisely is found in these verses; it is oversensitivity about what people say about us. Spurgeon told his pastoral students that the minister ought to have one blind eye and one deaf ear. "You cannot stop people's tongues and therefore the best thing to do is to stop your own ears and never mind what is spoken. There is a world of idle chitchat abroad, and he who takes note of it will have enough to do". We all need this advice and also we need to remember that our tongues are on the other end as well; offering sinful, destructive slander and gossip (*you have cursed others*). Build others up with what you say or don't say it (**Colossians 4:6, Ephesians 4:29**). We would be ashamed if others knew of the things we said about them when they were not there. There are NO excuses; we must beware of the power of the tongue (**James 3**).

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for Jesus perfect life. Thank You for punishing Him & forgiving me. Help me repent of being oversensitive and destructive with my tongue.*

**FRIDAY – Ecclesiastes 6:23-29:** "*All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise"; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out? I applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness. And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her. "Here is what I have found," says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found. Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.*" These verses illustrate the condition of fallen, sinful humanity. Solomon attempted to understand and even with God given wisdom found out something's are beyond the reach of human thinking; we must have faith in God. Solomon then speaks of the *sinful woman* of which he had profound experience and intimacy and he points the way to deliverance from her powerful seduction; *He who pleases God shall escape from her*. He has approached his attempts to understand almost mathematically, trying to "add it all up". He has scarcely found a wise man—and has yet to find a wise woman. He is not a hater of women (**9:9, Proverbs 12:4, 14:1**), but he warns of the snares of unbridled lust. The one observation he's sure of is the perversity of the human heart which go along with God's declaration (**Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:12, 23, 1 John 1:8**). "*God made man (God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.*" A more summarized and complete statement of "total depravity" could not be given.

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, thank You for Your true wisdom and salvation; Jesus Christ.*