

Ecclesiastes 2 Commentary

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THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES					
The Search for Significance					
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Decades of Searching
(in the days of King Solomon)
circa 936BC

King Solomon
Author

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:1 επον γ ν καρδ μου δερο δ πειρ σω σε ν ε φροσ ν κα δ ν γαθ κα δο κα γε το το μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth, and behold thou good: and, behold, this is also vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought to myself, "Come now, I will try self-indulgent pleasure to see if it is worthwhile." But I found that it also is futile.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile.

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

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come on, let's try pleasure. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, 'Pray, come, I try thee with mirth, and look thou on gladness;' and lo, even it is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought to myself, 'Very well, I will try pleasure and see what enjoyment has to offer.' And this was futile too.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But again, this also was vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come, now, let me try you with pleasure and the enjoyment of good things." But behold, this too was vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought to myself, "Now I want to experiment with pleasure and enjoy myself." But even this was pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, I will give you joy for a test; so take your pleasure -- but it was to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

- **said:** Ec 2:15 1:16,17 3:17,18 Ps 10:6 14:1 27:8 30:6,7 Lu 12:19
- **Come now:** Ge 11:3,4,7 2Ki 5:5 Isa 5:5 Jas 4:13 5:1
- **I will test you :** Ec 8:15 11:9 Isa 50:5,11 Lu 16:19,23 Jas 5:5 Tit 3:3 Rev 18:7,8

SOLOMON SELF-REFLECTS ON VALUE OF PLEASURE TO SATISFY THE SOUL

I said to myself is literally to my heart = [leb](#), his "control center" so to speak. He is inviting his "heart" to try self-indulgent pleasure!

NET NOTE - Heb "I said, I, in my heart" (אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי, 'amarti 'ani bélibbi). The term "heart" (לֵב, lev) is a synecdoche of part ("heart") for the whole (the whole person), and thus means "I said to myself" (see E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 648 - [SYNECDOCHE OF THE WHOLE](#)).

"Come now, I will test you with pleasure (simchah; Lxx - euphosune - gladness). So enjoy yourself." - **Red** = commands. NET = "Come now, I will try self-indulgent pleasure to see if it is worthwhile." This experiment with hedonism is to determine if pleasures give significance to life under the sun.

NET NOTE - The Hebrew verb לָחַה (lékhah, **"Come!"**) is a weakened imperative, used merely as an introductory word, e.g., Gen 19:32; 31:44; Judg 19:11; 1 Sam 9:9–10; 11:14; 2 Kgs 3:7; Ps 66:5; Song 7:12; Isa 1:18; 2:3; Mic 4:2 (HALOT 246 s.v. 2 לָחַה; BDB 234 s.v. לָחַה l.5.f.2). Whenever לָחַה introduces an exhortation, it functions as an invitation to the addressee to adopt a course of action that will be beneficial to the addressee or mutually beneficial to both the speaker and the addressee. Here, Qoheleth personifies his **"heart"** (לִבִּי, libbi) and addresses himself. **The examination of self-indulgent pleasure is designed to be beneficial to Qoheleth.**

*it is not so much Qoheleth who is put to the test with pleasure,
but rather that pleasure is put to the test by Qoheleth*

NET NOTE - Or "test." The cohortative אָנַסְכֶּחַ ('anassékhhah) emphasizes the resolve of the speaker. The term נָסַח (nasah, "to test") means "to conduct a test," that is, to conduct an experiment (Judg 6:39; Eccl 2:1; 7:23; Dan 1:12, 14; see HALOT 702 s.v. נָסַח 3; BDB 650 s.v. 1 נָסַח). The verb נָסַח is often used as a synonym with בָּחַן (bakhan, "to examine"; BDB 103 s.v. בָּחַן and 650 s.v. 1 נָסַח) and לָדַעַת (lada'at, "to ascertain"; Deut 8:2). Heb **"I will test you with pleasure."** The term שִׂמְחָה (simchah, "pleasure") has a two-fold range of meanings: (1) it can refer to the legitimate enjoyment of life that Qoheleth affirms is good (Eccl 5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:8, 9) and that God gives to those who please him (Eccl 2:26; 5:19); or (2) it can refer to foolish pleasure, self-indulgent, frivolous merrymaking (Eccl 2:1, 2; 7:4). The parallelism in Eccl 2:2 between שִׂמְחָה and שִׂחֻק (sékhohq, "laughter, frivolous merrymaking"), which always appears in the context of banqueting, drinking, and merrymaking, suggests that the **pejorative sense is in view in this context**. The statement **I will try self-indulgent pleasure** is a figurative expression known as metonymy of association. As Eccl 2:1–3 makes clear, it is not so much Qoheleth who is put to the test with pleasure, but rather that pleasure is put to the test by Qoheleth.

*This is the key phrase in this section of Ecclesiastes.
Qoheleth sought to discover (רָאָה) whether merry-making offered any value (טוֹב) to mankind.*

NET NOTE - Heb **"See what is good!"** The volitive sequence of the cohortative (אָנַסְכֶּחַ, 'anassékhhah, "I will test you") followed by vav + imperative (וּרְאֵה, uré'eh, "and see!") denotes purpose/result: **"I will test you ... in order to see...."** The verb רָאָה (ra'ah, "to see") has a broad range of meanings (e.g., in the Qal stem 16 categories are listed in HALOT 1157–1160 s.v.). In this context it means "to discover; to perceive; to discern; to understand" (HALOT 1159 s.v. 13 רָאָה; BDB 907 s.v. 5 רָאָה). The phrase **"to see what is good"** (רָאָה, ra'ah, "to see" + טוֹב, tov, "good") is repeated twice in Eccl 2:1–3. This is the key phrase in this section of Ecclesiastes. Qoheleth sought to discover (רָאָה) whether merry-making offered any value (טוֹב) to mankind.

Temper Longman III - The relevance of the book of Ecclesiastes may be seen in that even today many people live for pleasure. The booming entertainment industry is testimony to the draw of pleasures of all types. Modern pleasure seekers need to listen closely as the Teacher announces his intention to investigate pleasure for possible meaning and then tells us his sad conclusion: the "good things" in life turned out to be meaningless. In the final analysis, they are useless. While there may be a momentary thrill in pleasure, there is no lasting significance. Therefore, pleasure is not ultimately satisfying. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#))

And behold (hinneh; Lxx - idou), it too was futility (hebel; Lxx - mataiotes - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) - First note Solomon uses **behold** because he wants to grab our attention so we don't miss his conclusion. His conclusion after testing pleasure is it was futile and empty. Solomon's conclusion reminds me of the wise words of the writer of Hebrews in his description of Moses in Heb 11:25+ for he choose "rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." Yes, sin brings "pleasures" but (1) it is passing and (2) it brings pain! You can choose your pleasure, but you cannot choose your pain (your consequences)!

NET NOTE on **futility** - This use of הֶבֶל (hebel) denotes "futile, worthless, fruitless, pointless" (HALOT 237 s.v. 1 הֶבֶל; BDB 210–11 s.v. 1 הֶבֶל). It is a synonym to מְהוּלָל (méholal, "folly") in 2:2a and an antonym to טוֹב (tov, "worthwhile, beneficial") in 2:1b and 2:3c

Ryrie summarizes this first section - Solomon's pursuit of fulfillment through indulgence (Ec 2:1-3), achievements (Ec 2:4-6), possessions and wealth (Ec 2:7-8), and great fame (Ec 2:9) all failed to bring enduring satisfaction (cf. 1Ki 4:21-28; 2Chr 9:13-28).

Test (tempt) (05254) [nacah/nasah](#) Lxx = [peirazo](#) in most OT uses has idea of testing or proving quality of someone or something and doing so often through adversity or hardship. As the following context makes clear (note "to see," lit., "to know," in 3:4), the purpose of this divine test was to determine if Israel was truly loyal. An examination of parallel passages shows that such divine tests were designed to reveal otherwise hidden character qualities. Testing which shows what someone is really like generally involves difficulty or hardship. **Swanson** sums up **Nacah** - 1. (piel) test, try, i.e., attempt to learn the true nature of something ([1Ki 10:1](#)); 2. (piel) attempt, try, i.e., exert oneself to do something (Dt 4:34); 3. (piel) test, try, i.e., cause or allow hardship or trouble in a circumstance, often with choices within the situation, implying a different outcome is possible (Jdg 2:22). Only used once in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Pleasure (joy, gladness, pleasure, delight) (08057) [simchah](#) from *samach* = to rejoice, be glad) is a feminine noun which means joy, gladness (with one's entire being as indicated by its association with the heart cf. Ex 4:14; Ps 19:8; 104:15; 105:3, soul Ps 86:4, cp verb *samach* in Pr 15:30 = "bright eyes gladden the heart") and refers to both the emotion and the manifestation of the emotion (Ezra 3:12, 13). *Simchah* refers to the reality, the experience and manifestation of joy and gladness. Joy is happiness over an unanticipated or present good. Delight or gladness in our heart comes from God (Psalm 4:7, cp 2Chr 20:27, 30:21). David prays "make me know joy and gladness (*simchah*)." (Ps 51:8) God desires that we serve Him with joy (Dt 28:47). Jdg 16:23 describes pagan (Philistines) rejoicing upon conquering their enemy (Israel). We see joy associated with music and/or singing (1Sa 18:6, 1Ki 1:40, 1Chr 15:16, 2Chr 23:18, 29:30). We see joy associated with willing offering from a whole heart (1Chr 29:9, 17). Joy was associated with celebration of the feast (2Chr 30:21, 23, 26, Ezra 6:22) In God's "presence is fullness of joy" (Ps 16:11). God gives a person "gladness of heart" in the labor and toil of this earthly life (Eccl. 5:20). One's wedding day is a day of rejoicing (Song 3:11). The "joy of the godless" is momentary (Job 20:5) because it depends on joy producing circumstances. Even as God can give joy, He can also take it away (Isa 16:10, Jer 7:34, Joel 1:16).

Behold (02009) [hinneh](#) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) *Hinneh* generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! (See [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament page 220](#))

Spurgeon reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

NET NOTE - The particle הִנֵּה (*véhinneh*, literally "Behold!") occurs after verbs of perception to introduce what was seen, understood or discovered (HALOT 252 s.v. 8 הִנֵּה). It is used to make the narrative graphic and vivid, enabling the reader to enter into the surprise of the speaker (BDB 244 s.v. הִנֵּה c). This is an example of the [heterosis](#) of the deictic particle ("Behold!") for a verb of perception ("I found"). See online [E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 510–34](#).

Hinneh is translated in the **Septuagint** with the interjection [idou](#) (strictly speaking a command in the second person [aorist imperative, middle voice](#)) a demonstrative particle (used 1377 times in the Septuagint and NT) which is found especially in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke "and giving a peculiar vivacity to the style by bidding the reader or hearer to attend to what is said: "**Behold! See! Lo!**" (Thayer) The command is calling for urgent attention. Do this now! Don't delay! It could be loosely paraphrased "Pay attention!" or "Listen up!" to arouse attention and introduce a new and extraordinary fact of considerable importance.

Vanity (futility, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness) (01892) [hebel](#) means breath, vapor, vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness; idols. *Hebel* commonly has the figurative use of that which is evanescent and unstable. The first OT use refers to idols (Dt 32:21, cf 1 Ki 16:13, 26, Jer 8:19; Jeremiah 10:8, 15; Jer 14:22 Jer 51:18; Jonah 2:9; Ps 31:6), a fitting word picture for the worthlessness of idols! **Hebel** refers to breath because of its transitory fleeting character, as in Job's figurative use "my days are but a **breath**." (Job 7:16, cf similar idea Ps 39:5, 6, 11; Ps 62:9; Ps 78:33 where *hebel* parallels *behālâ* from root *bāhal* "to hasten": Ps 94:11; Ps 144:4) **Hebel** "generally appears in contexts where it is used as a simile emphasizing the transitory state of an object, never as descriptive of the biological function. A prime example would be "Humanity is like a breath (Ps. 144:4). Not only is breath ethereal and of short duration, but all things which breathe will die." (Gilbrant)

Michael Eaton adds **Hebel** means (i) brevity and unsubstantiality, emptiness (NEB), spelt out in Job 7 where the 'vanity' (Job 7:16, Heb.) of man's life is a 'breath' (Job 7:7), an evaporating cloud (Job 7:9), soon to be ended (Job 7:8) and return no more (Job 7:9f.); (ii) unreliability, frailty, found also in Psalm 62 where God, a 'Rock' and a 'high tower' (Ps 62:6), is compared with man who is 'vanity' (Ps 62:9), a 'leaning wall' and a

'tottering fence' (Ps 62:3); (iii) futility, as in Job 9:29 (Heb.), where 'in vanity' means 'to no effect'; (iv) deceit (cf. Jer. 16:19; Zech. 10:2). Ecclesiastes includes each of these emphases. All is untrustworthy, unsubstantial; no endeavour will in itself bring permanent satisfaction; the greatest joys are fleeting. Between Eccl 1:2 and Eccl 12:8 the Preacher will echo this key statement about thirty times, showing that his book is in fact its exposition. Vanity characterizes all human activity (Eccl 1:14; 2:11): joy (Eccl 2:1) and frustration (Eccl 4:4, 7-8; 5:10) alike, life (Eccl 2:17; 6:12; 9:9), youth (Eccl 11:10) and death (Eccl 3:19; 11:8), the destinies of wise and foolish (Eccl 2:15, 19), diligent and idle (Eccl 2:21, 23, 26). (Borrow [Ecclesiastes : an introduction and commentary page 56](#))

Vine's summary of **hebel** - **First**, the word represents human "breath" as a transitory thing: "I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity [literally, but a breath] (Job 7:16). **Second**, hebel means something meaningless and purposeless: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). **Third**, this word signifies an "idol," which is unsubstantial, worthless, and vain: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities ..." (Dt. 32:21, the first occurrence). See SPIRIT usage notes.

Warren Baker adds that **hebel** "refers to the vanity and ultimate emptiness and meaninglessness of all things in this life, whether they seem good or bad (Eccl. 1:2, 14; 2:11, 15, 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8; 5:7; 6:2, 4, 9; 7:6, 15; 8:10; 9:9; 11:8). Combined with itself in the plural, it means **absolute meaninglessness** (Eccl. 1:2). Idols and the vain religious customs associated with them are all delusions (Jer. 10:3, 15). It denotes an empty, vain life (Eccl. 6:12). Used with the verb *hāḇal*, it means to carry out vain talk or action or what is empty (Job 27:12). As an adverb, it means to talk in vain, emptily (Job 35:16). To walk after *hebel* means to go after or follow vanity (2 Ki. 17:15; Jer. 2:5). Anything obtained through evil is vain, such as wealth (Prov. 13:11)." (Borrow Complete Word Study Dictionary— Old Testament)

Victor Hamilton (See [TWOT](#)) on "the cluster of references (of [hebel](#)) found in Ecclesiastes (thirty-six). These may be grouped into several subdivisions. First are those passages in which the author states his inability to find fulfillment in work, both in his failure to be creative and in his lack of control over the privilege of free disposition of his possessions; this is "vanity": Eccl 2:11, 19, 21, 23; Eccles. 4:4, 8; Eccles. 6:2. Second are those verses in which the author struggles with the idea that the connection between sin and judgment, righteousness and final deliverance is not always direct or obvious. This is an anomaly about life and it is vanity": Eccles. 2:15; Eccles. 6:7-9; Eccles. 8:10-14. The meaning of hebel here would be "senseless." Thirdly are those verses in which the author laments the shortness of life; this is vanity": Eccles. 3:19; Eccles. 6:12; Eccles. 11:8, 10. Life, in its quality, is "empty" or "vacuous" (and thus unsubstantial), and in its quantity is "transitory." Rather than the above observations being final conclusions about life by the author of Ecclesiastes, perhaps they reveal something of his method and his concealed premise. He may be attempting to demonstrate man's inability to find meaning to life unaided by divine revelation and interruption. This solo quest will always end in futility.

HEBEL - 67X/64V - breath(5), delusion(2), emptily(1), emptiness(2), fleeting(2), fraud(1), futile(1), futility(13), idols(7), mere breath(2), nothing(1), useless(1), vain(3), vainly(1), vanity(19), vanity of vanities(3), vapor(1), worthless(2). Deut. 32:21; 1 Ki. 16:13; 1 Ki. 16:26; 2 Ki. 17:15; Job 7:16; Job 9:29; Job 21:34; Job 27:12; Job 35:16; Ps. 31:6; Ps. 39:5; Ps. 39:6; Ps. 39:11; Ps. 62:9; Ps. 78:33; Ps. 94:11; Ps. 144:4; Prov. 13:11; Prov. 21:6; Prov. 31:30;

Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:1; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:21; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 5:10; Eccl. 6:2; Eccl. 6:4; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 8:10; Eccl. 8:14; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 11:8; Eccl. 11:10; Eccl. 12:8;

Isa. 30:7; Isa. 49:4; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 2:5; Jer. 8:19; Jer. 10:3; Jer. 10:8; Jer. 10:15; Jer. 14:22; Jer. 16:19; Jer. 51:18; Lam. 4:17; Jon. 2:8; Zech. 10:2

Deuteronomy 32:21± 'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their **IDOLS** (no god = ESV, so-called gods = CSB, false gods

= NET)(hebel; Lxx - [eidolon](#)). So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:2 τ γ λωπ ε πα περιφορ ν κα τ ε φροσ ν τ το το ποιε ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said to laughter, Madness: and to mirth, Why doest thou this:

NET Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of partying, "It is folly," and of self-indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said about laughter, "It is madness," and about pleasure, "What does this accomplish?"

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:2 "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:2 So I said, "Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?"

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:2 Of laughter I said, 'Foolish!' and of mirth, 'What is this it is doing?'

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:2 This laughter, I reflected, is a madness, this pleasure no use at all.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:2 Of laughter I said: "Mad!" and of mirth: "What good does this do?"

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:2 I thought, "Laughter doesn't make any sense. What does pleasure accomplish?"

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:2 Of laughing I said, It is foolish; and of joy -- What use is it?

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter-- "Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"

- **I said:** Solomon is not speaking here of sober enjoyment of the things of the world, but of intemperate pleasure, whose two attendants, laughter and mirth, are introduced by a beautiful prosopopoeia, as two persons, whom he treats with the utmost contempt.
- **It is:** Ec 7:2-6 Pr 14:13 Isa 22:12,13 Am 6:3-6 1Pe 4:2-4

I said of laughter, "It is madness," - NET - "I said of partying, "It is folly," He is saying laughter is insanity, folly, silly. Of course Solomon is not saying we should never laugh, but just that laughter would not provide a solution to the problems of life under the sun.

Wright - We notice that this description of Solomon omits mention of immorality but is concerned with the joys of luxury. No serious thinker supposes that a Casanova is on the way to discover the purpose of living (cf. Ec 7:26). The Teacher set his sights on those pleasures that many people considered worthwhile in themselves. He surrounded himself with happy people who kept him amused, but even the jokes and laughter grew stale (cf. Ec 7:1–6). (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Page 241](#))

The connotation of "frivolous merrymaking" fits this context best.

NET NOTE Heb "laughter." The term רִיחֵן (*sékhoq*, "laughter") has a fourfold range of meanings: (1) "joyful laughter" (Ps 126:2; Prov 14:13; Job 8:21); (2) "frivolous laughter, merrymaking" (Eccl 2:2; 7:3, 6); (3) "pleasure, sport" (Prov 10:23; Eccl 10:19); and (4) "derision, mockery, laughingstock" (Jer 20:7; 48:26, 27, 39; Job 12:4; Lam 3:14). See HALOT 1315 s.v. רִיחֵן ; BDB 966 s.v. רִיחֵן . In Ecclesiastes, רִיחֵן is always used in contexts of self-indulgent banqueting, drinking, frivolous partying and merrymaking (Eccl 2:2; 7:3, 6; 10:19). It is distinct from "healthy" joy and laughter (Ps 126:2; Job 8:21). The connotation of "frivolous merrymaking" fits this context best.

And of pleasure ([simchah](#); Lxx - [euprosune](#) - gladness), "What does it accomplish?" - Rhetorical question calling for a negative response so that NET renders it "of self-indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"

NET NOTE on **pleasure** - The term סִמְחָה (*simkhah*, "pleasure") has a two-fold range of meanings in Ecclesiastes: (1) it can refer to

the enjoyment of life that Qoheleth affirms is good (Eccl 5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:8, 9) and that God gives to those who are pleasing to him (Eccl 2:26; 5:19); and (2) it can refer to foolish pleasure, that is, frivolous merrymaking (Eccl 2:1, 2; 7:4). The parallelism between הִנְחִישׁ and קִינִישׁ (sékhoq, "laughter, frivolous merrymaking") in Eccl 2:2 suggests that the pejorative sense is in view here.

Duane Garrett adds that "Throughout the book the Teacher will recommend enjoying life, but here he warns that partaking of pleasure does not of itself give meaning to existence." (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 290](#))

NET NOTE on "What does it accomplish?" The rhetorical question "What does it accomplish?" expects a negative answer: "It accomplishes nothing!" (see E. W. Bullinger's discussion of "[Affirmative Negation](#)" [Figures of Speech, 949–51](#)). See, e.g., Ge 1:19; 18:14, 17; Dt 7:17; 1Sa 2:25; Job 40:2; Pss 56:7; 90:11; 94:16; 106:2; Eccl 3:21.

Worldly pleasure is anything that crowds Christ Out of your life.

Earthly pleasures vainly call me,
I would be like Jesus;
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me,
I would be like Jesus.
—Rowe

Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:3 κατεσκεψ̄ μ̄ην ν̄ καρδ̄ μου το̄ λκ̄σαι ε̄ς ο̄νον τ̄ν σ̄ρκ̄α μου κᾱ καρδ̄ ᾱμου ὀ̄γησεν ν̄ σοφ̄ κᾱ το̄ κρατ̄σαι π̄ φροσ̄ν̄ ως ο̄ ὄ̄ω πο̄ον τ̄ γαθ̄ν το̄ς ῡο̄ς το̄ ν̄θρ̄ ποῡ ποῑουσι ν̄ π̄ τ̄ν λιον̄ ριθ̄μ̄ν̄ μερ̄ν̄ ζω̄ς ᾱτ̄ν̄

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:3 And I examined whether my heart would excite my flesh as with wine, (though my heart guided me in wisdom,) and I desired to lay hold of mirth, until I should see of what kind is the good to the sons of men, which they should do under the sun all the days of their life.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:3 I thought deeply about the effects of indulging myself with wine (all the while my mind was guiding me with wisdom) and the effects of behaving foolishly, so that I might discover what is profitable for people to do on earth during the few days of their lives.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life with wine and how to grasp folly-- my mind still guiding me with wisdom-- until I could see what is good for people to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine-- my heart still guiding me with wisdom-- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:3 After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:3 I have sought in my heart to draw out with wine my appetite, (and my heart leading in wisdom), and to take hold on folly till that I see where is this -- the good to the sons of man of that which they do under the heavens, the number of the days of their lives.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:3 I decided to hand my body over to drinking wine, my mind still guiding me in wisdom; I resolved to embrace folly, to discover the best way for people to spend their days under the sun.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine-- my mind still guiding me with wisdom-- and how to lay hold on folly, until I might see what was good for mortals to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:3 I thought of beguiling my senses with wine, though my mind was concerned with wisdom, and of taking up folly, until I should understand what is best for men to do under the heavens during the limited days of their life.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored ways to make myself feel better by drinking wine. I also explored ways to do some foolish things. During all that time, wisdom continued to control my mind. I was able to determine whether this was good for mortals to do during their brief lives under heaven.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:3 I made a search with my heart to give pleasure to my flesh with wine, still guiding my heart with wisdom, and to go after foolish things, so that I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine -- my mind still guiding me with wisdom -- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.

- **explored:** Ec 1:17 1Sa 25:36
- **while my mind was guiding me:** Pr 20:1 31:4,5 Eph 5:18
- **how to take hold of folly:** Ec 7:18 Pr 20:1 23:29-35 Mt 6:24 2Co 6:15-17
- **until :** Ec 6:12 12:13
- **the few years:** Heb. the number of, Ge 47:9 Job 14:14 Ps 90:9-12

CONTROLLED MIND STIMULATION WITH ALCOHOL

I explored with my mind ([tur](#); Lxx- [kataskopeo](#) - Lit - *In my heart I explored*) **how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely and how to take hold of folly** - NET = "I thought deeply about the effects of indulging myself with wine (all the while my mind was guiding me with wisdom) and the effects of behaving foolishly" Remember he is doing a test to see if pleasure produces real meaning to life and here he uses wine as the test. He is speaking more like a wine connoisseur not a back alley drunk. A modern version might be does your wine cellar with 5000 bottles of the finest aged wine fulfill your life with purpose and meaning? That's rhetorical of course. Clearly No!

Wright - The Teacher turned to sensual pleasures, such as the enjoyment of drink, which so easily becomes the folly of overindulgence. Yet he still kept a hold of himself so that he could analyze his experiences and see whether they proved to be the answer to all human desires. In other words, is the true philosophy of life "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Isa 22:13)? (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Page 241](#))

Duane Garrett adds that "Throughout the book the Teacher will recommend enjoying life, but here he warns that partaking of pleasure does not of itself give meaning to existence." All will agree that a life of total dissipation and indulgence is reprehensible—we need no "Teacher" to show us that. Rather, he wanted to know if rationally controlled indulgence in pleasure gave meaning to life. He did not become a drunk. His experiment was an experiment in pleasure, not debauchery.(Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 290](#))

NET NOTE on Heb "**In my heart I explored.**" The verb תור (tur, "to seek out, to spy out, to explore") is used in the OT to describe: (1) the physical activity of "spying out" or "exploring" geographical locations (Num 13:2, 16, 17, 21, 25, 32; 14:6, 7, 34, 36, 38; Job 39:8) and (2) the mental activity of "exploring" or "examining" a course of action or the effects of an action (Eccl 1:13; 2:3; 7:25; 9:1). See BDB 1064 s.v. 2 תור; HALOT 1708 s.v. תור. It was used as a synonym with דַּרַּשׁ (darash, "to study") in 1:13: "I devoted myself to study (לְדַרֹּשׁ, lidrosh) and to explore (לְתוֹר, latur)."

NET NOTE As the repetition of the term לֵב (lev, "heart" or "mind") indicates (Ec 2:1, 3), this experiment appears to have been only an intellectual exercise or a cognitive reflection: "I said to myself (Heb "in my heart [or "mind"]," Ec 2:1); "I explored with my mind (Heb "heart," Ec 2:3a); and "my mind (Heb "heart") guiding me with wisdom" (Ec 2:3b). **Qoheleth himself did not indulge in drunkenness; but he contemplated the value of self-indulgence in his mind.**

NET NOTE Or “I sought to cheer my flesh with wine.” The term לְמִשְׁחָה (limshokh, Qal infinitive construct from מִשַּׁח, mashakh, “to draw, pull”) functions in a complementary sense with the preceding verb תִּיר (tur “to examine”): Heb “I sought to draw out my flesh with wine” or “I [mentally] explored [the effects] of drawing out my flesh with wine.” The verb מִשַּׁח means “to draw, to drag along, to lead” (BDB 604 s.v. מִשַּׁח) or “to draw out; to stretch out [to full length]; to drag; to pull; to seize; to carry off; to pull; to go” (HALOT 645–46 s.v. מִשַּׁח). BDB suggests that this use be nuanced “to draw, to attract, to gratify” the flesh, that is, “to cheer” (BDB 604 s.v. מִשַּׁח). While this meaning is not attested elsewhere in the OT, it is found in Mishnaic Hebrew: “to attract” (Qal), e.g., “it is different with heresy, because it attracts [i.e., persuades, offers inducements]” (b. Avodah Zarah 27b) and “to be attracted, carried away, seduced,” e.g., “he was drawn after them, he indulged in the luxuries of the palace” (b. Shabbat 147b). See Jastrow 853–54 s.v. מִשַּׁח. Here it denotes “to stretch; to draw out [to full length],” that is, “to revive; to restore” the body (HALOT 646 s.v. מִשַּׁח [sic] 3). The statement is a metonymy of cause (i.e., indulging the flesh with wine) for effect (i.e., the effects of self-indulgence).

NET NOTE Heb “and my heart was leading along in wisdom.” The vav + noun, וְלִבִּי (vélibbi) introduces a disjunctive, parenthetical clause designed to qualify the speaker’s remarks lest he be misunderstood: “Now my heart/mind...” **He emphasizes that he never lost control of his senses in this process. It was a purely mental, cognitive endeavor; he never actually gave himself over to wanton self-indulgence in wine or folly.**

NET NOTE on **take hold of folly** - Heb “embracing folly.” The verb אָחַז (‘akhaz, “to embrace”) is normally used to describe the physical action of taking hold of an object. Here it is used metaphorically to describe a person’s choice of lifestyle, that is, adopting a particular course of moral conduct (e.g., Job 17:9); see HALOT 31–32 s.v. אָחַז; BDB 28 s.v. אָחַז.

Until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives- **NIV** = “I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.” Note phrase **the few years of their lives** indicating Solomon is very aware that life is brief. (cf “one fate befalls them both” = Ec 2:14, “die” Ec 2:16, cf Eccl 5:17; 6:12; 9:9)

SONS OF MEN - Eccl. 1:13; Eccl. 2:3; Eccl. 3:10; Eccl. 3:18; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 8:11; Eccl. 9:3; Eccl. 9:12

NET NOTE on the few years of their lives - Heb “number of the days.” The Hebrew noun מִסְפָּר (mispar, “number, quantity”) sometimes means “few” (e.g., Gen 34:30; Num 9:20; Deut 4:27; 33:6; Isa 10:19; Jer 44:28; Ezek 12:16; Ps 105:12; Job 16:22; 1 Chr 16:19); see HALOT 607 s.v. 2 מִסְפָּר.ב; BDB 709 s.v. 1 מִסְפָּר.א. This phrase is an idiom that means, “during all their lives” (BDB 709 s.v.), “during their total [short] time of life,” that is, “as long as they live” (HALOT 608 s.v. 3 מִסְפָּר.ד). **Ecclesiastes often emphasizes the brevity of life** (e.g., Eccl 5:17; 6:12; 9:9). The LXX rendered מִסְפָּר in a woodenly literal sense: ἀριθμὸν (arithmon, “the number [of days of their lives]”). Several English translations adopt a similar approach: “all the days of their life” (ASV, Douay) and “the number of days of their lives” (YLT). However, this idiom is handled well by a number of English translations: “during the few days of their lives” (RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, Moffatt, NJPS), “during the limited days of their life” (NAB), and “throughout the brief span of their lives” (NEB).

Ecclesiastes 2:4 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself;

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:4 μεγ λυνα πο ημ μου κοδ μησ μοι ο κους φ τευσ μοι μπελ νας

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:4 I enlarged my work; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:4 I increased my possessions: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:4 I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:4 I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great my works, I builded for me houses, I planted for me vineyards.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:4 I worked on a grand scale: built myself palaces, planted vineyards;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:4 I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards;

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:4 I accomplished some great things: I built houses for myself. I planted vineyards for myself.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:4 I undertook great works, building myself houses and planting vine-gardens.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.

- made: Ge 11:4 2Sa 18:18 Da 4:30
- I builded: De 8:12-14 1Ki 7:1,2,8-12 9:1 15:19 10:19,20 2Ch 8:1-6,11 Ps 49:11
- I planted: 1Ch 27:27 2Ch 26:10 Song 1:14 7:12 8:11,12 Isa 5:1

THE GOSPEL OF SELFISHNESS

I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself - Solomon now carries out the "pleasure test" with things that only very rich people could even attempt.

THOUGHT - How many times have you wished you had a ski in/ski out in Colorado and a beachfront condo in Florida, thinking that is all you would need to make you happy in life? Solomon will carry out the experiment for us that we could never afford and he will end up telling us it is empty, chasing after wind! Some of the most miserable people on earth are some of the most wealthy! (cf [Howard Hughes](#)). And think about Solomon's end. He lost the Kingdom of Israel because of his apostasy which was "catalyzed" by his many pagan wives!

*the Teacher does everything described
in this section for his own pleasure*

Temper Longman III - for myself - This prepositional phrase is repeated eight times in Ec 2:4–8, after most of the main verbs. The NLT does not translate it in every instance for fear that it would be overly repetitive. We must not miss the point, however, that the Teacher does everything described in this section for his own pleasure. There are no philanthropic intentions involved with his actions here. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#))

I planted vineyards for myself - For myself appears 8x in these 5 verses (Ec 2:4-8) on pleasure prompting **Duane Garrett** to label this the "gospel" of selfishness" ([Ecclesiastes](#))

NET NOTE The expression **for myself** is repeated eight times in Eccl 2:4–8 to emphasize that Qoheleth did not deny himself any acquisition. He indulged himself in acquiring everything he desired. His vast resources as king allowed him the unlimited opportunity to indulge himself. He could have anything his heart desired, and he did.

ILLUSTRATION - Money Can Make You Mad - [The Death of Howard Hughes](#)

Hughes is reported to have died on April 5, 1976, at 1:27 p.m. on board an aircraft, [Learjet](#) 24B N855W, owned by Robert Graf and piloted by Roger Sutton and Jeff Abrams.^[174] He was en route from his penthouse at the [Acapulco Princess Hotel](#) (now the Princess Mundo Imperial) in Mexico to [the Methodist Hospital](#) in Houston.^[175]

His reclusiveness and possibly his drug use made him practically unrecognizable. His hair, beard, fingernails, and toenails were long—his tall 6 ft 4 in (193 cm) frame now weighed barely 90 pounds (41 kg), and the [FBI](#) had to use [fingerprints](#) to conclusively identify the body.^[176] Howard Hughes' alias, John T. Conover, was used when his body arrived at a morgue in Houston on the day of his death.^[177]

An [autopsy](#) recorded [kidney failure](#) as the cause of death.^[178] In an eighteen-month study investigating Hughes' drug abuse for the estate, it was found that "someone administered a deadly injection of the painkiller to this comatose man ... obviously needlessly and almost certainly fatal".^[179] He suffered from [malnutrition](#) and was covered in [bedsores](#). While his kidneys were damaged, his other internal organs, including his brain, which had no visible damage or illnesses, were deemed perfectly healthy.^[70] [X-rays](#) revealed five broken-off [hypodermic needles](#) in the flesh of his arms.^[70] To inject codeine into his muscles, Hughes had used glass syringes with metal needles that easily became detached.^[70]

Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:5 πο ησ μοι κ πους κα παραδε σους κα φ τευσα ν α το ς ξ λον π ν καρπο

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made me gardens and orchards, and planted in them every kind of fruit-tree.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:5 I designed royal gardens and parks for myself, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks for myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made for me gardens and paradises, and I planted in them trees of every fruit.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:5 made myself gardens and orchards, planting every kind of fruit tree in them;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks, and set out in them fruit trees of all sorts.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks for myself. I planted every kind of fruit tree in them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and fruit gardens, planting in them fruit-trees of all sorts.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

- **myself:** Song 4:12-16 5:1 6:2 Jer 39:4
- **I planted:** Ge 2:8,9 Lu 17:27-29

IS THERE PLEASURE IN PARADISE?

I made (royal) gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees- My title is a play on Solomon's making parks which might well be his attempt to replicate the conditions of the Garden of Eden ([see note below](#)), but of course he found this to be futile for that Garden was undisturbed for a time by sin! Sin contaminated Solomon's "garden of Eden." Gardens and parks were common with ancient kings as in the famous [Hanging Gardens of Babylon](#).

NET NOTE on (royal) **gardens** - The term does not refer here to vegetable gardens, but to orchards (cf. the next line). In the same way the so-called "garden" of Eden was actually an orchard filled with fruit trees. See Ge 2:8–9.

Longman III - The Heb. word is *paredes* [TH6508, ZH7236], which the attentive reader can see is related to the English word "*paradise*." The language of this verse (see also next note) implies that the Teacher is trying to recreate the conditions of paradise—that is, Eden itself. Brown (2000:38) points out that ancient, as well as more recent, kings gloried in their gardens. Their ability to tame "raw nature," he observes, goes with their ability to wage war and to control society. **all kinds of fruit trees.** This language is reminiscent of the language used to describe Eden in Gen 1:11, 29; 2:9 (see Verheij 1991). (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#)) **ED COMMENT** - I think Longman is spot on! The Septuagint translates the Hebrew for parks (*paredes*) with the Greek noun [paradeisos](#) or "paradise" which is used repeatedly in Genesis 2 to describe the Garden of Eden! Ge 2:8 "The LORD God planted a garden (Lxx - [paradeisos](#)) toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed."

NET NOTE on **parks** - The noun פָּרְדֵּי (pardes, "garden, parkland, forest") is a foreign loanword that occurs only 3 times in biblical Hebrew (Song 4:13; Eccl 2:5; Neh 2:8). The original Old Persian term *pairidaeza* designated the enclosed parks and pleasure-grounds that were the exclusive domain of the Persian kings and nobility (HALOT 963 s.v. פָּרְדֵּי; LSJ 1308 s.v. παράδεισος). The related Babylonian term *pardesu* "marvelous garden" referred to the enclosed parks of the kings (AHw 2:833 and 3:1582). The term passed into Greek as παράδεισος ([paradeisos](#), "enclosed park, pleasure-ground"), referring to the enclosed parks and gardens of the Persian kings (LSJ 1308). The Greek term has been transliterated into English as "**paradise**."

Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:6 πο ησ μοι κολυμβ θρας δ των το ποτσαι π α τ ν δρυμ ν βλαστ ντα ξ λα

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made me pools of water, to water from them the timber-bearing wood.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:6 I constructed pools of water for myself, to irrigate my grove of flourishing trees.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:6 I constructed reservoirs of water for myself from which to irrigate a grove of flourishing trees.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:6 I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made for me pools of water, to water from them a forest shooting forth trees.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:6 had pools made for watering the young trees of my plantations.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:6 And I constructed for myself reservoirs to water a flourishing woodland.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made pools to water the forest of growing trees.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made pools to give water for the woods with their young trees.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.

- **I made ponds of water** : Ne 2:14 Song 7:4
- **to irrigate**: Ps 1:3 Jer 17:8

I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees- The implication of this verse is that Solomon utilized technical skill to irrigate an entire forest.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:7 κτησ μην δο λους κα παιδ σκας κα ο κογενε ς γ νοντ μοι κα γε κτ σις βουκολ ου κα ποιμν ου πολλ γ νετ μοι π ρ π ντας το ς γενομ νους μπροσθ ν μου ν Ιερουσαλημ

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got servants and maidens, and servants were born to me in the house: also I had abundant possession of flocks and herds, beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:7 I purchased male and female slaves, and I owned slaves who were born in my house; I also possessed more livestock— both herds and flocks— than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:7 I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:7 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.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got men-servants, and maid-servants, and sons of the house were to me; also, I had

much substance -- herd and flock -- above all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought slaves, male and female, had home-born slaves as well; herds and flocks I had too, more than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:7 I acquired male and female slaves, and slaves were born in my house. I also had growing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves. In addition, slaves were born in my household. I owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got men-servants and women-servants, and they gave birth to sons and daughters in my house. I had great wealth of herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:7 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.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:7 I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

- servants: 1Ki 9:20-22 Ezr 2:58 Ne 7:57
- and had: Ge 17:12,13
- servants born in my house: Heb. sons of my house
- also: Ge 13:2 2Ki 3:4 1Ch 27:29-31 2Ch 26:10 32:27-29 Job 1:3 42:12

Related Passages:

1 Kings 4:20-23+ Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance; they were eating and drinking and rejoicing. 21 Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. 22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour and sixty kors of meal, 23 ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.

I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem - Solomon's description underscores his incredible wealth. He had to possess large herds given his daily provision for food (1Ki 4:22-23).

NET NOTE on **homeborn slaves** - The phrase "sons of a house" (בְּנֵי בַיִת, véne vayit) appears to be parallel to "a son of my house" (בֶּן-בֵּיתִי, ven-beti) which refers to a person born into slavery from male and female servants in the master's possession, e.g., Eleazar of Damascus (Gen 15:3). The phrase appears to denote children born from male and female slaves already in his possession, that is, "homeborn slaves" (NASB) or "other slaves who were born in my house" (NIV). Apparently confusing the sense of the phrase with the referent of the phrase in Gen 15:3, NJPS erroneously suggests "stewards" in Eccl 2:7.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as **musical instruments, and that of all sorts.**

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:8 συν γὰρ ἡ μοι καὶ ἄργυρον καὶ χρυσὸν καὶ περιουσιασμοὺς βασιλέων καὶ τὴν χώραν ποίησα μοι δούλους καὶ δοῦσας καὶ ντρυφματα ὑπὸ τῶν ἄνδρων καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:8 Moreover I collected for myself both silver and gold also, and the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces: I procured me singing men and singing women, and delights of the sons of men, a butler and **female cupbearers.**

NET Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also amassed silver and gold for myself, as well as valuable treasures taken from kingdoms and provinces. I acquired male singers and female singers for myself, and **what gives a man**

sensual delight– a harem of beautiful concubines!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and **many concubines**, the delights of men.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and **a harem as well**--the delights of the heart of man.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had **many beautiful concubines**. I had everything a man could desire!

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:8 I gathered for me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I prepared for me men-singers and women-singers, and the luxuries of the sons of man -- **a wife and wives**.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:8 I amassed silver and gold, the treasures of kings and provinces; acquired singers, men and women, and every **human luxury, chest upon chest of it**.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and delights of the flesh, and **many concubines**.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:8 I amassed for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces. I got for myself male and female singers and **all human luxuries**.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered silver and gold for myself. I gathered the treasures of kings and provinces. I provided myself with male and female singers and **the pleasures men have with one concubine after another**.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:8 I got together silver and gold and the wealth of kings and of countries. I got makers of song, male and female; and the delights of the sons of men -- **girls of all sorts to be my brides**.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and **many concubines, man's delight**.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and **musical instruments** of all kinds.

- **silver**: 1Ki 9:14,28 10:10 14:21,22,27 2Ch 9:11,15-21
- **men singers**: 2Sa 19:35 Ezr 2:65
- **concubines** (KJV - musical instruments) - 1Ch 25:1,6 Job 21:11,12 Ps 150:3-5 Da 3:5,7,15 Am 6:5

MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU HAPPINESS

Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure ([segullah](#)) of kings and provinces (see 1Ki 10:14-29+)

NET NOTE on **treasure** - The term [הַגִּלְגָּל](#) ([segullah](#)) denotes “personal property” (HALOT 742 s.v. 1 [הַגִּלְגָּל](#)) or “valued property, personal treasure” (BDB 688 s.v. 2 [הַגִּלְגָּל](#)). Elsewhere, it refers to a king’s silver and gold (1 Chr 27:3). It is related to Akkadian *sug/kullu* “flock” (AHw 2:1053–54) and *sikiltu* “private property [belonging to the king]” (AHw 2:1041). **The term refers to the personal, private and valued possessions of kings, which do not pass into the hands of the state.** Heb “of kings and provinces.” **This personal treasure was taken as tribute from other kings and governors.** See T. Longman III, [Ecclesiastes \(NICOT\)](#), 92.

I provided for myself male and female singers- Presumably Solomon is saying that he was a generous patron of the arts but it was for himself not the populace at large.

And the pleasures of men—many concubines(KJV - musical instruments) - Many women can't buy happiness and in fact they proved to be Solomon's downfall resulting in division of the Kingdom (1Ki 11:1-14+).

NET NOTE on **Concubines** were slave women in ancient Near Eastern societies who were the legal property of their master, but

who could have legitimate sexual relations with their master. A concubine's status was more elevated than a mere servant, but she was not free and did not have the legal rights of a free wife. The children of a concubine could, in some instances, become equal heirs with the children of the free wife. After the period of the Judges concubines may have become more of a royal prerogative (2 Sam 21:10–14; 1 Kgs 11:3).

Longman III - many concubines. The Heb. word (shiddah [TH7705, ZH8721]) that refers to these women is rare, but is probably related to the word “breast” (shad [TH7699, ZH8716]) and thus is a crude expression referring to a woman by reference to her sexual parts..(See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#))

Concubines (KJV - musical instruments) The difficult words {shiddah weshiddoth} are variously rendered. The LXX. have [oinochoon kai oinochoas,] "male and female cup-bearers," with which the Syriac and Arabic and Parkhurst agree; Aquila, [kulikon kai kulikia,] "a cup and smaller cups;" Jerome, {scyphos et urceolos, (Vulg. {urceos,}) "goblets and pots;" Targum, "warm and cold baths;" others, as M. Desvoeux, "male and female captives;" others, "cooks and confectioners;" others, "a species of musical compositions," derived from Sido, a celebrated Phoenician woman, to whom Sanchoniatho attributes the invention of music; but others, with more probability, "wives and concubines;" and {siddoth} may be in this sense synonymous with the Arabic {seedat, domina, conjux} from {sada,} in {Conj. V. conjugium inivit.} Of the former, Solomon had three hundred concubines, and seven hundred wives; and if they are not mentioned here they are not mentioned at all, which is wholly unaccountable.

Wright on concubines - Various translations have been suggested for שִׁדְדָה וְשִׁדְדוֹת (šiddāh wešiddōt) since the term occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Some suggestions follow:

1. “Harem” (cf. “Concubines,” RSV) is the NIV’s rendering. The word is perhaps connected with שָׁד (šad, “breast”). A Canaanite word of similar form is used to translate the Egyptian word for “concubine” in a letter of Amenophis III (ANET, p. 487a). We note that concubinage was considered a legal relationship and not fornication or adultery by the people. Although it was looked on as a normal convention in OT times, it is nowhere ordered by the Lord.

2. “Musical instruments” (KJV) is a traditional Jewish interpretation (so Kimchi in his lexicon), but its derivation is uncertain.

3. Connected with the Aramaic root שָׁדָא (šedā, “to pour”), the LXX has “male and female cupbearers.”

4. The Talmud (Gittin 78a) says that in Palestine the word meant “chests” or “sedan chairs”; hence JB’s “every human luxury, chest on chest of it.” (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

NET NOTE on concubines - The meaning of the superlative construction שִׁדְדָה וְשִׁדְדוֹת (shiddah véshiddot) is uncertain because the term שִׁדְדָה (shiddah) occurs only here in the OT. There are four basic approaches to the phrase: (1) Most scholars suggest that it refers to a royal harem and that it is in apposition to “the sensual delights of man” (וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם, véta’anugot béne ha’adam). There are four variations of this approach: (a) There is a possible connection to the Ugaritic sht “mistress, lady” and the Arabic sitt “lady” (HALOT 1420 s.v. שִׁדְדָה). (b) German scholars relate it to Assyrian sadadu “love” (Delitzsch, König, Wildeboer, Siegfried); however, BDB questions this connection (BDB 994 s.v. שָׁדָה). (c) Ibn Ezra relates it to II שָׁד (shad) “plunder; spoil” or שָׁדָה “[women] taken by violence,” and suggests that it refers to the occupants of the royal harem. (d) BDB connects it to the Hebrew noun I שָׁד (shad, “breast”; e.g., Isa 28:9; Ezek 16:7; 23:3, 21, 34; Hos 2:4; 9:14; Song 1:13; 4:5; 7:4, 8, 9; 8:1, 8, 10; Job 3:12) adding that שָׁדָה is related to the cognate Arabic and Aramaic roots meaning “breast” (BDB 994 s.v.). This would be a synecdoche of part (i.e., breast) for the whole (i.e., woman), similar to the idiom “one womb, two wombs” (רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמַתַּיִם, rakham rakhamatayim) where “womb” = woman (Judg 5:30). This is the approach taken by most English versions: “many concubines” (NASB, RSV, NRSV), “a wife and wives” (YLT), “mistresses galore” (MLB), “many a mistress” (Moffatt), and “a harem” (NIV). This is the approach suggested by the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project: “une femme et des femmes” = one or two women (e.g., Judg 5:30); see D. Barthélemy, e.d., Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, 3:566. (2) The NJPS connects it to the Mishnaic Hebrew noun שִׁדְדָה which became שִׁדְדָה (“a strong box, chest”; Jastrow 1558 s.v. שִׁדְדָה) and renders the phrase “coffers and coffers of them” in apposition to the phrase “the luxuries of commoners” (3). (וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם.) KJV and ASV take the phrase in apposition to “male and female singers” and translate it as “musical instruments.” However, there is no known Hebrew term that would justify this approach. (4) The LXX related the term to the Aramaic root שָׁדָא (“to pour out [wine]”) and rendered the phrase as ο νοχόον και ο νοχόας (oinochoon kai oinochoas), “a male-butler and female cupbearers.” Aquila took a similar approach: κυλικιον και κυλικια (kulikion kai kulikia), “wine cups and wine vessels.” This is reflected in the Vulgate and Douay: “cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine.” Although the semantic meaning of the term שִׁדְדָה וְשִׁדְדוֹת (“a breast of breasts”) is uncertain, the grammatical/syntactical form of the phrase is straightforward: (1) It is in apposition to the preceding line, “the delights of the son of men” (2). (וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם.) The phrase is a superlative construction. When the second word is plural and it follows a noun from the same root which is singular, it indicates the best or most outstanding example of the person or thing so described. In addition to the Judg 5:30 parallel cited above, see the expression “a generation, generations” in Pss 72:5; 102:25; Isa 51:8. Unlike, Eccl 2:8, this juxtapositioning of the singular and plural to express the superlative usually involves a construct form. See קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים (qodesh haqqodashim, “the holy of holies,” i.e., the most holy place”; Exod 26:33) שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (shir hashirim, “the song of songs,” i.e., “the most excellent song”; Song 1:1) אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֱדֹנֵי הָאֱדֹנָיִם (’elohe ha’elohim va’adone ha’adonim, “the God of gods and Lord of lords,” i.e., “the Highest God and the Supreme Lord”; Deut 10:17), and עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים (’eved ’avadim, “a slave of slaves,” i.e., “the most abject slave”; Gen 9:25). See GKC

431 §133.i; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 17–18, §80; IBHS 154 §9.5.3j. If the semantic meaning of the terms תִּדְּוּי הַדְּוּי denotes “a breast (among) breasts” or “a lady (among) ladies” (Eccl 2:8, but see the previous note on the phrase “a man’s sensual delights”), the superlative construction may connote “the most beautiful breasts” (metonymy of part for the whole) or “the most beautiful woman.” This might refer to a harem of concubines or to one woman (the wife of the king?) who was the most beautiful woman in the land.

Ecclesiastes 2:9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:9 καὶ μεγάλῃν καὶ προσηκὰ παρὰ πάντας τοὺς γενόμενους ἔμπροσθέν μου ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ γέσοφά μου στή μοι

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great, and advanced beyond all that were before in Jerusalem: also my wisdom was established to me.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I was far wealthier than all my predecessors in Jerusalem, yet I maintained my objectivity:

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:9 And I became great, and increased above every one who had been before me in Jerusalem; also, my wisdom stood with me.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I grew great, greater than anyone in Jerusalem before me; nor did my wisdom leave me.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:9 I became great, and I stored up more than all others before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I grew richer than anyone in Jerusalem before me. Yet, my wisdom remained with me.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:9 And I became great; increasing more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem, and my wisdom was still with me.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

- Ec 1:16 1Ki 3:12 10:7,23 1Ch 29:25 2Ch 1:1 9:22,23

Then - Marks progress in his narrative, moving on to another subject.

I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me - NET - "So I was far wealthier than all my predecessors in Jerusalem, yet I maintained my objectivity"

Ecclesiastes 2:10 All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:10 κα π ν τησαν ο φθαλμο μου ο χ φε λον π α τ ν ο κ πεκ λυσα τ ν καρδ αν μου π π σης ε φροσ νης τι καρδ α μου ε φρ νθη ν παντ μ χθ μου κα το το γ νετο μερ ς μου π παντ ς μ χθου μου

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatever mine eyes desired, I withheld not from them, I withheld not my heart from all my mirth: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not restrain myself from getting whatever I wanted; I did not deny myself anything that would bring me pleasure. So all my accomplishments gave me joy; this was my reward for all my effort.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:10 All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:10 Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:10 And all that mine eyes asked I kept not back from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour, and this hath been my portion, from all my labour,

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:10 I denied my eyes nothing that they desired, refused my heart no pleasure, for I found all my hard work a pleasure, such was the return for all my efforts.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:10 Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy, but my heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was my share for all my toil.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:10 If something appealed to me, I did it. I allowed myself to have any pleasure I wanted, since I found pleasure in my work. This was my reward for all my hard work.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:10 And nothing which was desired by my eyes did I keep from them; I did not keep any joy from my heart, because my heart took pleasure in all my work, and this was my reward.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor.

- **All that my eyes desired:** Ec 3:22 6:9 11:9 Ge 3:6 6:2 Jud 14:2 Job 31:1 Ps 119:37 Pr 23:5 1Jn 2:16
- **my heart was pleased:** Ec 2:22 5:18 9:9 Ps 128:2

SOLOMON DID NOT PRACTICE SELF-DENIAL

All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) - Note repetition of **labor** indicating that he continued to work hard. In context he seems to have "worked hard" at testing pleasures only to find they were a dead end street!

The phrase "**whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them**" points to the lust of the eyes (cf. 1Jn2:16). The Preacher experienced all the joyous sensations from a way of life characterized by the gratification of every whim (v3-9), but when the temporal joy vanished, only the labor remained: a burdensome reminder of the fruitlessness of labor in itself and of the inadequacy

of materialism. When the work ended, so did the enjoyment of it.

Labor (mischief, toil trouble, anguish) ([05999](#)) **amal** from verb **amal** = to labor especially the dark side of labor, the grievous and unfulfilling aspects of work) means trouble, labor, toil, toilsome, wearying work. Every use of amal in the Septuagint is translated with the noun **mochthos** which describes hard and difficult labor involving suffering hardship, struggle, strenuous toil. Note that **amal** is not just describing physical toil but can also describe mental anguish as in the following passages -- anguish (Ps. 25:18), Joseph's 'anguish' of mind (Ge 41:51), the 'misery' from which Israel was delivered (Nu 23:21NIV), Job's 'trouble' (Job 3:10).

Labor (amal) is used by Solomon in Ps 127:1+ explaining how man's labor is in vain without the LORD! = "Unless the LORD builds the house, They **labor (amal)** in **vain** who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in **vain**."

Gilbrant - This is the noun that describes the labor that Qoheleth, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, considered vanity, because the laborer could never enjoy the fruit of the labor (Ecc. 1:3; 2:11). The term is used figuratively to describe the heaviness of certain painful thoughts, particularly the psalmist's concern over the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:16). 'āmāl can also refer to the fruit or produce of labor (Ps. 105:44; Ecc. 2:19) and the notion of trouble or vexation (general weariness or weariness of situations and circumstances). Joseph named his firstborn son Manasseh since God had made him forget all his toil (Gen. 41:51). The Lord heard the affliction and toil of his people in Egypt and sent Moses to deliver them (Deut. 26:7). Job's so-called friends are called "troublesome comforters" (Job 3:10; 16:2). The Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, experienced for our sakes "the anguish of his soul" (Isa. 53:11). 'āmāl may also be translated "wickedness" (cf. Num. 23:21; Isa. 10:1), which conveys the emotion of vexation and anguish associated with sinful behavior, especially by those who are the recipients of such evil acts. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

AMAL USES IN ECCLESIASTES - Ecc. 1:3; Ecc. 2:10; Ecc. 2:11; Ecc. 2:18; Ecc. 2:19; Ecc. 2:20; Ecc. 2:22; Ecc. 2:24; Ecc. 3:13; Ecc. 4:4; Ecc. 4:6; Ecc. 4:8; Ecc. 4:9; Ecc. 5:15; Ecc. 5:18; Ecc. 5:19; Ecc. 6:7; Ecc. 8:15; Ecc. 9:9; Ecc. 10:15;

TANTALUS - In Greek mythology, King Tantalus offended the gods and was punished in the underworld. He was placed in a lake in water up to his chin, but whenever he attempted to satisfy his burning thirst the water receded. Over his head were branches laden with choice fruit, but when he tried to satisfy his hunger they eluded his grasping hands. (cp Lu 16:19-31)

Tantalus, therefore, became the symbol of utter frustration. Even today his name is remembered in the English word tantalize. Outside of a relationship with God, many things in life are tantalizing but unrewarding (cp Heb 11:25). The author of Ecclesiastes pursued happiness through knowledge, pleasure, riches, and work. Nothing satisfied the hunger in his soul. So he wrote, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1:2). It was only when he focused on knowing and pleasing God (Ecc 12:13-14) that he found life's true purpose.

If you are among those who have been tantalized by what you thought would bring you happiness and peace (and this includes every one of us in one form or another) & you feel frustrated & worn out, come to Jesus. He promised to "give you rest" (Mt 11:28). You will discover with joy that He has everything you've ever hoped for—and much more -- He alone is true Life, the essence of all that satisfies the deepest needs of our soul. He alone is the Source of rivers of living water (Jn 7:38). All else is broken cisterns (Jer 2:13).

If we commit ourselves to Christ
And follow in His way,
He'll give us life that satisfies
With purpose for each day. —Sper

Only Jesus, the Living Water, can satisfy the thirsty soul.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:11 καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἰσχυροῦς μου οὐκ ἔβρισην ἄνεμους καὶ ἄνεμους

μ χθησα το ποιε ν κα δο τ π ντα μαται της κα προα ρεις πνε ματος κα ο κ στω περισεα π τ ν λιο ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:11 And I looked on all my works which my hands had wrought, and on my labour which I laboured to perform: and behold, all was vanity and waywardness of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:11 Yet when I reflected on everything I had accomplished and on all the effort that I had expended to accomplish it, I concluded: "All these achievements and possessions are ultimately profitless-- like chasing the wind! There is nothing gained from them on earth."

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:11 When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:11 But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless-- like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:11 and I have looked on all my works that my hands have done, and on the labour that I have laboured to do, and lo, the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun!

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:11 I then reflected on all that my hands had achieved and all the effort I had put into its achieving. What futility it all was, what chasing after the wind! There is nothing to be gained under the sun.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:11 But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold! all was vanity and a chase after wind, with nothing gained under the sun.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:11 But when I turned to look at all that I had accomplished and all the hard work I had put into it, I saw that it was all pointless. It was like trying to catch the wind. I gained nothing from any of my accomplishments under the sun.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I saw all the works which my hands had made, and everything I had been working to do; and I saw that all was to no purpose and desire for wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.

- I looked: Ec 1:14 Ge 1:31 Ex 39:43 1Jn 2:16,17
- behold: Ec 2:17-23 1:3,14 Hab 2:13 1Ti 6:6

Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) which I had exerted, and **behold ([hinneh](#); Lxx - [idou](#)) all was vanity ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.**

Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:12 κα π βλεψα γ το δε ν σοφ αν κα περιφο ρ ν κα φροσ νην τι τ ς νθρωπος ς πελε σεται π σω τ ς βουλ ς τ σα πο ησεν α τ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I looked on to see wisdom, and madness, and folly: for who is the man who will follow after counsel, in all things where in he employs it?

NET Ecclesiastes 2:12 Next, I decided to consider wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas. For what more can the king's successor do than what the king has already done?

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly, for what will the man be like who comes after the king? He will do what has already been done.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king?).

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I turned to see wisdom, and madness, and folly, but what is the man who cometh after the king? that which is already -- they have done it!

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:12 My reflections then turned to wisdom, stupidity and folly. For instance, what can the successor of a king do? What has been done already.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the one do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:12 For what will the man do who is to come after the king? What men have already done! I went on to the consideration of wisdom, madness and folly.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned my attention to experience wisdom, madness, and foolishness. For instance, what can the man who replaces the king do? Only what has already been done.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I went again in search of wisdom and of foolish ways. What may the man do who comes after the king? The thing which he has done before.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what he has already done.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king?-- Only what he has already done.

- I turned: Ec 1:17 7:25, even that which hath already been done, or, in those things which have been already done, Ec 2:25

SOLOMON'S SEARCH SHIFTS TO WISDOM

So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly - NET - "Next, I decided to consider wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas." Solomon now shifts from pleasure to wisdom.

for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done- NET - "For what more can the king's successor do than what the king has already done?" He is in essence saying none of my predecessors can "top" me in my experiments to try to arrive at the meaning of life. He is saying that anyone who came after him would only be able to repeat what Solomon already tried. Solomon's description would include all the famous philosophers (Socrates, Aristotle, etc) and brilliant thinkers (Stephen Hawking, Bertrand Russell, etc).

Solomon is explaining that he has already tested the limits of earthly wisdom and pleasure, and no one after him will discover a different result by repeating the same experiment. His point reinforces the vanity of life "under the sun"—without God, all efforts eventually prove empty.

Duane Garrett writes that "In context this line states that there is little chance that humans will behave with greater wisdom than their first ancestor, Adam, who came directly from the hand of God." (Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:13 κα ε δον γ τι σιν περισσε α τ σοφ π ρ τ ν φροσ νην ς περισσε α το φωτ ς π ρ τ σκ το ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly, as much as light excels darkness.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:13 I realized that wisdom is preferable to folly, just as light is preferable to darkness:

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I realized that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, like the advantage of light over darkness.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:13 I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:13 I thought, "Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that there is an advantage to wisdom above folly, like the advantage of the light above the darkness.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:13 More is to be gained from wisdom than from folly, just as one gains more from light than from darkness; this, of course, I see:

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom has the advantage over folly as much as light has the advantage over darkness.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:13 But I saw that wisdom has an advantage over foolishness as light has an advantage over darkness.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom is better than foolish ways -- as the light is better than the dark.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness.

- I saw: Ec 7:11,12 9:16 Pr 4:5-7 16:16 Mal 3:18 4:1,2
- that wisdom excelleth folly: Heb. that there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly, etc
- light: Ec 11:7 Ps 119:105,130 Pr 4:18,19 Mt 6:23 Lu 11:34,35 Eph 5:8

WISDOM EXCELS FOLLY

And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness - Solomon uses a straightforward term of comparison to emphasize what is fairly obvious, that wisdom excels folly

Duane Garrett writes that "In context this line states that there is little chance that humans will behave with greater wisdom than their first ancestor, Adam, who came directly from the hand of God." Wisdom is like light. The wise know where they are going, even if they only know they are heading for trouble. They therefore can avoid some disasters and be prepared for others. Fools, however, are always surprised by events that befall them.(Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:14 το σοφο ο φθαλμο ατο ν κεφαλ ατο κα φρων ν σκ τει πορε εται κα γνων κα γε γ τι συν ντημα ν συναντ σετα το ς π σιν α το ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness: and I perceived, even I, that one event shall happen to them all.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also realized that the same fate happens to them both.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also knew that one fate comes to them both.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:14 For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark." Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise! -- his eyes are in his head, and the fool in darkness is walking, and I also knew that one event happeneth with them all;

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise have their eyes open, the fool walks in the dark. No doubt! But I know, too, that one fate awaits them both.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness. Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I knew that one lot befalls both of them.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:14 A wise person uses the eyes in his head, but a fool walks in the dark. But I have also come to realize that the same destiny waits for both of them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the foolish man goes walking in the dark; but still I saw that the same event comes to them all.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I perceived that one fate comes to all of them.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all.

- wise: Ec 8:1 10:2,3 Pr 14:8 17:24 1Jn 2:11
- one: Ec 9:1-3,11,16 Ps 19:10 49:10

The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both

Duane Garrett writes that "The wise man can see death coming and contemplate it. This is better than the mindless tumble into death taken by the fool, but he can do nothing to stop it. Both the wise and the fools are equal heirs of human mortality described in Gen 3. (Borrow [Proverbs. Ecclesiastes. Song of songs page 294](#))

Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:15 κα ε πα γ ν καρδ μου ς συν ντημα το φρονος κα γε μο συναντ σετα μοι κα να τ σοφισ μην γ τ τε περισσ ν λησα ν καρδ μου δι τι φρων κ περισσε ματος λαλε τι κα γε το το μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:15 And I said in my heart, As the event of the fool is, so shall it be to me, even to me: and to what purpose have I gained wisdom? I said moreover in my heart, This is also vanity, because the fool speaks of his abundance.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I thought to myself, "The fate of the fool will happen even to me! Then what did I gain by becoming so excessively wise?" So I lamented to myself, "The benefits of wisdom are ultimately meaningless!"

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will also happen to me. Why then have I been overly wise?" And I said to myself that this is also futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I thought in my heart, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless."

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:15 Both will die. So I said to myself, "Since I will end up the same as the fool, what's the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!"

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:15 and I said in my heart, 'As it happeneth with the fool, it happeneth also with me, and why am I then more wise?' And I spake in my heart, that also this is vanity:

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:15 'Since the fool's fate', I thought to myself, 'will be my fate too, what is the point of my having been wise?' I realised that this too is futile.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall me also, why then should I be wise? Where is the profit for me? And I concluded in my heart that this too is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:15 I thought to myself, "If the destiny that waits for the fool waits for me as well, then what is the advantage in being wise?" So I thought that even this is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then said I in my heart: As it comes to the foolish man, so will it come to me; so why have I been wise overmuch? Then I said in my heart: This again is to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said to myself, "What befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, It also happens to me, And why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity."

- **Then I said to myself** Ec 1:16,18 1Ki 3:12
- **Why then!**: Ec 2:1 1:2,14

SOLOMON SOBERED BY THOUGHT THOUGHT OF HIS OWN MORTALITY

Then I said to myself is literally **to my heart** = [leb](#), to his "control center" so to speak.

"As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?"- Did wisdom give Solomon longer life? No, not really. In fact he died at about age 60, ten years younger than his father David, despite the fact that Solomon's wisdom far superseded David's!

So I said to myself, **"This too is vanity** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness)

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:16 τι ο κ σπιν μν μη το σοφο μετ το φρονος ε ς α να καθ τι δη α μ ραι α ρχ μεναι τ π ντα πελ σθη κα π ς ποθανε ται σοφ ς μετ το φρονος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise man with the fool for ever; forasmuch as now in the coming days all things are forgotten: and how shall the wise man die with the fool?

NET Ecclesiastes 2:16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be remembered for very long, because in the days to come, both will already have been forgotten. Alas, the wise man dies— just like the fool!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:16 For, just like the fool, there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man, since in the days to come both will be forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies just like the fool?

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:16 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!

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:16 For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:16 That there is no remembrance to the wise -- with the fool -- to the age, for that which is already, in the days that are coming is all forgotten, and how dieth the wise? with the fool!

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no lasting memory for the wise or the fool, and in the days to come both will be forgotten; the wise, no less than the fool, must die.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no enduring remembrance of the wise or of fools, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How can the wise die just like fools?

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:16 Neither of the wise man nor of the fool will there be an abiding remembrance, for in days to come both will have been forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies as well as the fool!

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:16 Neither the wise person nor the fool will be remembered for long, since both will be forgotten in the days to come. Both the wise person and the fool will die.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:16 Of the wise man, as of the foolish man, there is no memory for ever, seeing that those who now are will have gone from memory in the days to come. See how death comes to the wise as to the foolish!

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For of the wise man 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 man dies just like the fool!

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!

- **there is:** Ec 1:11 Ex 1:6,8 Ps 88:12 103:16 Mal 3:16
- **how:** Ec 6:8 2Sa 3:33 Ps 49:10 Heb 9:27

FUTURE MEMORY OF WISE MEN NO BETTER THAN FOOLS

For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die - Obscurity does not play favorites for both wise men and fools will fade into the abyss of obscurity! Future generations no more remember the wise man than they do the most abject fool, for in time both will be forgotten. While wisdom may improve one's life temporarily, it cannot preserve one's memory to future generations nor can it delay mortality. In short, time erases names, memories, and legacies! Solomon acknowledges that even the best of human endeavors cannot defeat the grave.

THOUGHT- The Unseen Line Beyond the Grave

Death is the great equalizer.

But Christ is the great Redeemer.

We spend much of life trying to leave a legacy—building a name, a reputation, a monument that will outlast us. But Solomon

reminds us that even wisdom and greatness cannot defeat forgetfulness. Time swallows kings and fools alike. Libraries gather dust. Statues crumble. But there is the sure hope of the Gospel of grace for...

While earth forgets, God remembers.

While death erases, Christ redeems.

Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20+) Jesus also promised to give overcomers (all believers) 'a **new name** written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' (Rev 2:17+) Again He promised "He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and **I will confess his name** before My Father, and before His angels." (Rev 3:5+) And finally again to overcomers Jesus promised "**I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God**, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name." (Rev 3:12+) And finally at the end of the Bible Jesus promises that all believers "shall see His face, and **His name shall be on their foreheads.**" (Rev 22:4+)

Dearly beloved of the Father, this is just a small preview of our eternal legacy in Christ. While we may not be remembered for long by man, we will be known eternally by God.

Ponder these questions:

- Are you living for a name on earth or a name in heaven?
- What does it mean to be wise in the eyes of God, not just in the eyes of men?

Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:17 κα μ σησα σ ν τ ν ζω ν τι πονηρ ν π μ τ πο ημα τ πεποιημ νον π τ ν λιον τι τ π ντα μαται της κα προα ρειςις πνε ματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life; because the work that was wrought under the sun was evil before me: for all is vanity and waywardness of spirit.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I loathed life because what happens on earth seems awful to me; for all the benefits of wisdom are futile— like chasing the wind.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless-- like chasing the wind.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:17 And I have hated life, for sad to me is the work that hath been done under the sun, for the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:17 Life I have come to hate, for what is done under the sun disgusts me, since all is futility and chasing after the wind.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I loathed life, since for me the work that is done under the sun is evil; for all is vanity and a chase after wind.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I came to hate life because everything done under the sun seemed wrong to me. Everything was pointless. It was like trying to catch the wind.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I was hating life, because everything under the sun was evil to me: all is to no purpose and desire for wind.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

- **I hated:** Nu 11:15 1Ki 19:4 Job 3:20-22 7:15,16 14:13 Jer 20:14-18 Jon 4:3,8 Php 1:23-25
- **work:** Ec 1:14 3:16 Eze 3:14 Hab 1:3
- **because:** Ec 2:11,22 6:9 Ps 89:47

SOLOMON'S BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT IN LIFE

So (term of conclusion) **I hated life**, **for** (term of explanation) **the work which had been done under the sun was grievous** (distressing, evil, awful, troubling) **to me**; **because** (term of explanation) **everything is futility** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and striving after wind**.

Ecclesiastes 2:18 Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:18 κα μ σησα γ σ ν π ντα μ χθον μου ν γ μοχθ π τ ν λιον τι φ ω α τ ν τ ν θ ρ π τ γινομ ν μετ μ

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:18 And I hated the whole of my labour which I took under the sun; because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:18 So I loathed all the fruit of my effort, for which I worked so hard on earth, because I must leave it behind in the hands of my successor.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the man who comes after me.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:18 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,

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:18 And I have hated all my labour that I labour at under the sun, because I leave it to a man who is after me.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:18 All I have toiled for under the sun and now bequeath to my successor I have come to hate;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:18 And I detested all the fruits of my labor under the sun, because I must leave them to a man who is to come after me.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to hate everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun, because I will have to leave it to the person who replaces me.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:18 Hate had I for all my work which I had done, because the man who comes after me will

have its fruits.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:18 Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

- **I hated:** Ec 2:4-9 1:13 4:3 5:18 9:9
- **I should:** Ec 2:26 5:13,14 1Ki 11:11-13 Ps 17:14 39:6 49:10 Lu 12:20 16:27,28 Ac 20:29,30 1Co 3:10

WHEN SUCCESS BREEDS BITTERNESS AND FUTILITY

Thus I hated (despised, loathed) **all the fruit of my labor** ([amal](#) - toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **for which I had labored under the sun, for** (term of explanation) **I must leave it to the man who will come after me-** Why did Solomon hate **the fruit of his labor**? Because he would have to **leave** it to his heir. Solomon once delighted in his achievements—now he despises them, not for what they are, but for what they cannot do: stay with him. Because death demands we let go. Our houses, businesses, ministries—even our families—will eventually be led by someone else. Everything he built and achieved through hard labor would one day be left behind, inherited by someone else—possibly unworthy or foolish (as stated in v.19). This verse reveals a shift from pleasure-driven despair to legacy-driven disillusionment. Even when work produces visible success, its impermanence renders it bitter, especially when it must be relinquished in death. He "hated" the very fruit he once celebrated—because it would outlive him but not stay with him.

Under the sun (שְׁמֶשֶׁת תַּחַת tahath ha-shemesh) is a key phrase in Ecclesiastes (29x) and refers to life without reference to God and eternity, but describes purely an earthly, temporal perspective.

Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:19 κα τ ς ο δ εν ε σοφ ς σται φρων κα ξουσι ζεται ν παντ μ χθ μου μ χθησα κα σοφισ μην π τ ν λιον κα γε το το μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? and whether he will have power over all my labour in which I laboured, and wherein I grew wise under the sun? this is also vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master over all the fruit of my labor for which I worked so wisely on earth! This also is futile!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun. This too is futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:19 and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless!

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knoweth whether he is wise or foolish? yet he doth rule over all my labour that I have laboured at, and that I have done wisely under the sun! this also is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:19 who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the work into which I have put my efforts and wisdom under the sun. That is futile too.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:19 -- and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruits of my wise labor under the sun. This also is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? He will still have control over everything under the sun for which I worked so hard and used my wisdom. Even this is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who is to say if that man will be wise or foolish? But he will have power over all my work which I have done and in which I have been wise under the sun. This again is to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:19 and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.

- **who knows:** Ec 3:22 1Ki 12:14-20 14:25-28 2Ch 10:13-16 12:9,10
- **wise:** Ec 9:13 Lu 16:8 Jas 1:17 3:17

SOLOMON'S DESPAIR OVER UNCERTAINTY OF HEIR'S WISDOM

And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?- Solomon is speaking of his heir and sadly his son Rehoboam proved to be a fool, taking advice of younger men and disregarding advice of older men.

Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity** ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness). It was vanity because he did not know whether his son would squander the family fortune.

Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:20 κα π στρεψα γ το ποτ ξασθαι τ καρδ μου π παντ τ μ χθ μ χθησα π τ ν λιον

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:20 so I went about to dismiss from my heart all my labour wherein I had laboured under the sun.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I began to despair about all the fruit of my labor for which I worked so hard on earth.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I began to give myself over to despair concerning all my work that I had labored at under the sun.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:20 And I turned round to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour that I laboured at under the sun.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:20 I have come to despair of all the efforts I have expended under the sun.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun,

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:20 So my feelings turned to despair of all the fruits of my labor under the sun.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:20 Then I fell into despair over everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:20 So my mind was turned to grief for all the trouble I had taken and all my wisdom under the sun.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.

- Ge 43:14 Job 17:11-15 Ps 39:6,7 1Co 15:19 2Co 1:8-10 1Th 3:3,4

SOLOMON DESPAIRS OVER HIS LABOR

Therefore (term of conclusion) - What is Solomon concluding? Solomon understood that the future of his legacy was uncertain. In the prior verses (esp. vv. 18–19), Solomon lamented that everything he had built could be handed to someone unwise or careless and he could not guarantee the value or stewardship of what he was leaving behind.

I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **for which I had labored under the sun** - He reaches a low point of despair, not because his work was unproductive, but because its ultimate fate is out of his control. The Hebrew word for “**despaired**” (יָאֵשׁ - ya’ash) means to give up hope or fall into deep discouragement. This is not mild disappointment but is a soul-level collapse of confidence in the value of his earthly labor.

Solomon is exposing a painful truth that if one's hope is in their accomplishments, they will be devastated when they face mortality. Without a view of eternity, even our best work feels like sand slipping through our fingers.

Solomon had it all—kingdoms, vineyards, wisdom, wealth. But here he sits, looking at the fruit of his labor with empty hands and a heavy heart. Why? Because he knows it can't follow him past the grave. The palaces will stand, but he will fall. The vineyards will bloom, but he won't taste them again. His despair is deeply human. It's the ache of a soul who built for time, but not for eternity.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:21 τι σπιν νθρωπος ο μ χθος α το ν σοφ κα ν γν σει κα ν νδρε κα νθρωπος ς ο κ μ χθησεν ν α τ δ σει α τ μερ δ α α το κα γε το το μαται της κα πονηρ α μεγ λη

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is such a man that his labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in fortitude; yet this man shall give his portion to one who has not laboured therein. This is also vanity and great evil.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; however, he must hand over the fruit of his labor as an inheritance to someone else who did not work for it. This also is futile, and an awful injustice!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:21 When there is a man whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great wrong.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:21 because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:21 Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn't worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity, and to

a man who hath not laboured therein he giveth it -- his portion! Even this is vanity and a great evil.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:21 For here is one who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully and must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all. This is futile too, and grossly unjust;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:21 because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:21 For here is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not labored over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:21 Here is someone who had worked hard with wisdom, knowledge, and skill. Yet, he must turn over his estate to someone else, who didn't work for it. Even this is pointless and a terrible tragedy.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:21 Because there is a man whose work has been done with wisdom, with knowledge, and with an expert hand; but one who has done nothing for it will have it for his heritage. This again is to no purpose and a great evil.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:21 because sometimes a man who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

- whose: Ec 2:17,18 9:18 2Ch 31:20,21 33:2-9 34:2 35:18 36:5-10 Jer 22:15,17
- leave: Heb. give

When there is a man who has labored ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity** ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and a great evil.**

Duane Garrett - Not only the man's possessions but even the skill and intelligence by which he acquired them are nullified by death. Hence the fact that he was a great businessman means very little. (Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:22 π τ γ νεται τ νθρ π ν παντ μ χθ α το κα ν προαιρ σει καρδ ας α το α τ ς μοχθε π τ ν λιον

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:22 For it happens to a man in all his labour, and in the purpose of his heart wherein he labours under the sun.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:22 What does a man acquire from all his labor and from the anxiety that accompanies his toil on earth?

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors at under the sun?

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:22 What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun?

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun?

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:22 So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety?

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what hath been to a man by all his labour, and by the thought of his heart that he laboured at under the sun?

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:22 for what does he gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun-

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:22 What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun?

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what profit comes to a man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun?

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:22 What do people get from all of their hard work and struggles under the sun?

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:22 What does a man get for all his work, and for the weight of care with which he has done his work under the sun?

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:22 What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?

- **man:** Ec 1:3 3:9 5:10,11,17 6:7,8 8:15 Pr 16:26 1Ti 6:8
- **and of the:** Ec 4:6,8 Ps 127:2 Mt 6:11,25,34 16:26 Lu 12:22,29 Php 4:6 1Pe 5:7

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:3+ What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?

WHAT'S THE PAYDAY FOR ALL THE TOILSOME LABOR?

For what does a man get in all his labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **and in his striving with which he labors under the sun** - NET= "What does a man acquire from all his labor and from the anxiety that accompanies his toil on earth?" NLT = "So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety?" What's the return on all this effort? It's not just the physical work—but the mental and emotional turmoil that comes with it. What's the gain that endures? Solomon's question implies even the most ambitious human labor and passionate striving when disconnected from eternal purpose ultimately yields nothing of lasting worth.

Solomon is concluding that, **under the sun**, apart from God, man gains no ultimate benefit from his work. It may fill time, produce wealth, or build empires—but it cannot satisfy the soul, prevent death, or secure lasting peace. This question drives us toward the ultimate answer Solomon will give in the final chapter: "Fear God and keep His commandments..." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

THOUGHT - This passage does not have to be a believer's lament. Here are two verses that change this somber perspective entirely: (1) Ephesians 2:10+ "For (see what Paul is explaining - Eph 2:8-9+) we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that (term of purpose) we would walk in them." This should motivate us to seek His face and ask Him to show us those divinely pre-prepared **good works** in Christ. (2) John 15:5+ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, **he bears much fruit**, for apart from Me you can do (absolutely) nothing (that lasts past the grave)." So once God shows us the good works, we need to be diligent to abide in Christ, allowing His Spirit to supernaturally enable us to accomplish those works, bearing fruit for the glory of the Father (Mt 5:16+), works, unlike those mentioned by Solomon, which will endure forever and ever. (Jn 15:16+). Amen

Ecclesiastes 2:23 Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:23 τι πσαι α μ ραι α το λημη των κα θυμο περισπασμ ς α το κα γε ν νυκτ ο κοιμ ται καρδ α α το κα γε το το μαται της στ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are days of sorrows, and vexation of spirit is his; in the night also his heart rests not. This is also vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all day long his work produces pain and frustration, and even at night his mind cannot relax! This also is futile!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:23 Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail sadness; even at night his heart hath not lain down; this also is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:23 since his days are full of sorrow, his work is full of stress and even at night he has no peace of mind? This is futile too.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:23 Their entire life is filled with pain, and their work is unbearable. Even at night their minds don't rest. Even this is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days are sorrow, and his work is full of grief. Even in the night his heart has no rest. This again is to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night his mind does not rest. This also is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.

- **all:** Ge 47:9 Job 5:7 14:1 Ps 90:7-10,15 127:2
- **his heart:** Ec 5:12 Es 6:1 Job 7:13,14 Ps 6:6,7 32:4 77:2-4 Da 6:18 Ac 14:22

SOLOMON EXPLAINS WHY LABOR IS STRIVING UNDER THE SUN

Because (Hebrew conjunction כִּי *kî*, used to introduce a term of explanation) What is Solomon explaining? In effect Solomon is answering the rhetorical question and explaining why a man's labors are striving under the sun.

All his days his task is painful (עָבַד – [makob](#) - burdensome, draining and wearisome, not merely difficult) **and grievous** (כָּבֵד – [kaas](#) - implies emotional distress or frustration that accompanies the toil, mental anguish not just physical effort); **even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) -- Man gains nothing lasting from his labor because (1) his work is painful ("his task is painful" – עֲבֹדָתוֹ, literally "his occupation is sorrowful"), (2) it causes grief, emotional or mental distress, not just physical hardship, and (3) it robs him of rest so that even at night, his thoughts are troubled and he can't "shut off" his mind.

His mind does not rest is literally "his heart ([leb](#) = mind, will, and emotions) does not lie down" - Describes a person who is mentally restless, with no peace or contentment, even during sleep (BEEN THERE, DONE THAT!!!)

THOUGHT - Have you ever fallen into bed exhausted, only to stare at the ceiling as your thoughts race—budgets, deadlines, regrets, plans? Solomon gets it. Even after a lifetime of building, achieving, and succeeding, he found no rest in his work—not by day, not by night. The more he gained, the more it cost him emotionally. And in the end? It was all vanity.

This verse exposes a painful reality that work without God wears us down but never fills us up. When God is absent from our daily grind, even success becomes a burden, and rest becomes a stranger. But Jesus offers us a better way calling out "Come to Me, all

who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) In Christ, filled with (Eph 5:18+) and walking in (Gal 5:16+) HIS SPIRIT, we are not just promised rest **after** labor, but rest **within** it—peace for our minds, and purpose for our days.

Ask yourself...

- Am I working for a reward that time and stress will consume?
- Have I invited God's Spirit into my labor, or am I shouldering it alone?

Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:24 ο κ σπιν γαθ ν ν νθρ π φ γεται κα π εται κα δε ξει τ ψυχ ατο γαθ ν ν μ χθ ατο κα γε το το ε δον γ τι π χειρ ς το θεο σπιν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:24 A man has nothing really good to eat, and to drink, and to shew his soul as good in his trouble. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in their work. I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for man than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God's hand,

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:24 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,

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:24 A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:24 So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing good in a man who eateth, and hath drunk, and hath shewn his soul good in his labour. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is no happiness except in eating and drinking, and in enjoying one's achievements; and I see that this too comes from God's hand;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God;

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for man than to eat and drink and provide himself with good things by his labors. Even this, I realized, is from the hand of God.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for people to do than to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in their work. I saw that even this comes from the hand of God.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than taking meat and drink, and having delight in his work. This again I saw was from the hand of God.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:24 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

- **nothing:** Ec 3:12,13,22 5:18 8:15 9:7-9 11:9,10 De 12:12,18 Ne 8:10 Ac 14:17 1Ti 6:17
- that it: Ec 3:13 5:19 6:2 Mal 2:2 Lu 12:19,20

**THE GIFT OF JOY FROM
THE HAND OF GOD**

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) is good. NET = " There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in their work." When we came to this passage most of us probably took a deep breath and said something like "Thank you. Finally something positive and uplifting!" Clearly Solomon makes a thematic shift in his reflections. After lamenting the futility of labor and pleasure apart from God (Eccl 2:18–23), Solomon acknowledges that simple joys of eating, drinking, and work can be good, but only when recognized as gifts from God. Solomon is not preaching hedonism, but rather contentment and gratitude. Enjoyment is no longer the goal of life for that was vanity and striving after wind, but now he offers enjoyment as a good thing when understood as the byproduct of seeing God as the Source. We are thankful that finally Solomon affirms even earthly (under the sun) things can be good when viewed with an "over the heavens" God-centered lens.

THOUGHT - This verse reminds me of James 1:17+ which teaches that "Every **good thing given** and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shifting shadow ("and He never flicker!")." This should evoke a Hallelujah chorus, an attitude of deep gratitude to our great and good God. We need to continually remind ourselves that goodness is received not achieved. What are some good and perfect gifts you have overlooked even today? How would our hearts respond if you saw everything as coming from the Father of lights? Are you (am I) chasing blessings or continually thanking the Blessor (1Th 5:18+)? May we continually fix our eyes on the Giver, not the gift. And when your eyes are fixed on the Giver, every day is filled with gifts. Just keep your eyes open.

Father of lights, open our eyes to Your goodness and grace today, so that we might see every breath, every moment, every kindness as a gift from You. Teach us to trust not in the gifts, but in the Giver Who never changes. In Christ Jesus Name. Amen.

This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God- NET = I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God." What is **this** at the beginning of this clause? Solomon is referring to the fact that toil "under the Son" and "in the Son" (in Christ) is good and can be enjoyed.

Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:25 τι τ ς φ γεται κα τ ς φε σεται π ρεξ α το

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who shall eat, or who shall drink, without him?

NET Ecclesiastes 2:25 For no one can eat and drink or experience joy apart from him.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:25 because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from Him?

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:25 for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who eateth and who hasteth out more than I?

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:25 for who would get anything to eat or drink, unless all this came from him?

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat or drink apart from him?

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:25 Who can eat or enjoy themselves without God?

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:25 Who may take food or have pleasure without him?

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?

- **who can:** Ec 2:1-12 1Ki 4:21-24

For - Term of explanation.

Who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? This is a rhetorical question, and the implied answer is no one, for without Him all is vanity and striving after wind. Solomon is explaining that even the most basic pleasures like eating, enjoying work, finding satisfaction are impossible apart from God. You might possess things, but not the ability to enjoy them without Him, and most often they end up possessing you!

*Life's deepest enjoyments are not earned by effort
but granted by grace.*

Solomon had unmatched wealth, wisdom, and pleasure (Eccl 2:4–10), but he came to realize that having everything means nothing if God does not give the heart to enjoy it. Without God, you can eat but not taste, labor but not rest, own but not enjoy. Solomon underscores a key biblical truth that enjoyment is not automatic but is God-given (cf fruit of Spirit Gal 5:22+). God not only provides blessings, but also the capacity to rejoice in them. Apart from God, even life's simplest pleasures become meaningless. With God, even the simplest things like food, rest, and labor become deeply fulfilling.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:26 τι τ νθρ π τ γαθ πρ προσ που α το δωκεν σοφ αν κα γν σιν κα ε φροσ νην κα τ μαρτ νοντι δωκεν περισπασμ ν το προσθε ναι κα το συναγαγε ν το δο ναι τ γαθ πρ προσ που το θεο τι κα γε το το μαται της κα προα ρειςις πνε ματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:26 For God has given to the man who is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but he has given to the sinner trouble, to add and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God; for this is also vanity and waywardness of spirit.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the one who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner, he gives the task of amassing wealth— only to give it to the one who pleases God. This task of the wicked is futile— like chasing the wind!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and accumulating in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God's sight. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:26 To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless-- like chasing the wind.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to a man who is good before Him, He hath given wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; and to a sinner He hath given travail, to gather and to heap up, to give to the good before God. Even this is vanity and vexation of spirit.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:26 Wisdom, knowledge and joy, God gives to those who please him, but on the sinner he lays the task of gathering and storing up for someone else who is pleasing to him. This too is futility and chasing after the wind.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to whatever man he sees fit he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering possessions to be given to whatever man God sees fit. This also is vanity and a chase after wind.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to anyone who pleases him. But to the person who continues to sin, he gives the job of gathering and collecting wealth. The sinner must turn his wealth over to the person who pleases God. Even this is pointless. It's like trying to catch the wind.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:26 To the man with whom he is pleased, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of getting goods together and storing up wealth, to give to him in whom God has pleasure. This again is to no purpose and desire for wind.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:26 For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

- **in his sight:** Heb. before him, Ge 7:1 Lu 1:6
- **wisdom:** 2Ch 31:20,21 Pr 3:13-18 Isa 3:10,11 Joh 16:24 Ro 14:17,18 1Co 1:30,31 Ga 5:22,23 Col 1:9-12 3:16,17 Jas 3:17
- **to the sinner:** Job 27:16,17 Pr 13:22 28:8

THE TRANSFER OF TREASURE

For (אֲשֶׁר – *kî*) is a term of explanation, which introduces an explanation for the statement that precedes it, in this context explaining the basis of true enjoyment. The previous verses say that joy in labor, food, and life come from God. Now in this verse, Solomon explains that this is so because God selectively gives joy, wisdom, and knowledge to those who please Him.

*“Better is little with the fear of the Lord
than great treasure and turmoil with it.”*

– Proverbs 15:16

To a person who is good in His sight (lit before His face) **He has given wisdom** (ability to live skillfully) **and knowledge** (spiritual and practical insight) **and joy** (ability to enjoy life as a gift from God) - **A person who is good** is not explained by Solomon, but suggests that this is a person who knows God and has a personal relationship with Him through belief in Christ (e.g. Abel - Ge 4:4, Heb 11:4).

*The righteous receive joy,
while the sinner gathers wealth he may never enjoy.*

While to the sinner (*chata'* - one who misses the mark of Your will) **He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight.** The **sinner** is a person who chooses to live their life apart from God, replacing God with the vain idols of possessions, accomplishment, money, etc. And what is the reward to the sinner? God gives him the exhausting task of accumulating wealth, only to have it transferred to the godly. This reality upends worldly expectations. The "sinner" may seem successful, but his labor is ultimately fruitless. Imagine two people: One toils without God and builds a fortune but never enjoys it. Another walks with God, receives less, but enjoys it fully because joy is a gift, not a possession.

The task of gathering and collecting - depicts activity that is laborious and repetitive, reflecting a cycle of toil without eternal reward and parallels the theme of “chasing the wind”

*True enjoyment in life is not earned by effort,
but granted by grace.*

This too is vanity (*hebel*; *Lxx* - *mataiotes* - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and striving after wind** - To what does "this" refer? In the immediate context it refers to the sinner.