

6713U

IDYLLWILD BIBLE SCHOOL - 1992

UNDER THE SUN - THEMES FROM ECCLESIASTES

Speaker: Bro. Michael Ashton

Study #2: Experience

Well good morning, my dear brethren and sisters. Yesterday, when we were commencing our studies of Ecclesiastes, we were thinking about MORTALITY, we're now going to move on from there, and if you open your bibles at Romans 8 you'll find that we have there, a summary of the things that we discussed yesterday, and in more places than we might expect in the New Testament, we have references back to the book of Ecclesiastes. They are perhaps more in the form of a cipher, in a code, than in direct quotation, but I think this passage particularly, you'll recognize as being based fundamentally on the passages that we looked at yesterday in the book of Ecclesiastes. The passage starts in verse 18 of Romans 8, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to (notice!) **vanity**, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and **travaileth** in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it'. What a remarkable passage of scripture that is! and how clearly it is based on those things that we considered yesterday about our mortality, those things that we have received because we are sons of Adam.

But did you notice particularly, in verse 20, this is a verse where clearly they are based on those passages in Ecclesiastes. Let me just read it to you from the RV, 'For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope'. So there was a **hope** for mankind, there was a purpose in the mind of God in subjecting creation and the creatures of creation to the things which we have received as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. There was a thought which we just momentarily considered yesterday and that is God does nothing without a purpose! That God does not introduce punishment for the sake of punishing mankind, but that those things which do befall us, are there for us rightly to respond to them, and unless

we respond in that way, then we are going to be just like the beasts that perish. Our madness is going to take over and we will die in our madness and in our folly, and did you also notice in this same passage, in verse 23, we considered yesterday that there is one thing over which we have no control and that is our mortality? The things over which we do have a control are, how we are going to respond to the temptations which are brought upon us because we are related to death and in verse 23 we read this, 'Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body', that over which we have no control but we wait for it.

While we're waiting for it that verse tells us, we have the first fruits of the Spirit. Quite a difficult concept for us to grasp but nonetheless, if we just cast our eyes toward the beginning of Romans 8, we're given a clue as to what it means. Verse 5, 'They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, and neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God'. So the first fruits of the Spirit are the **forgivenesses** of our sins which we have committed, and we can now stand in a different relationship with God, but we still need the redemption of the body, as we saw yesterday of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'pain with strong crying and tears unto Him who is able to save Him out of death and was heard in that He feared'. So we too, must make the same prayer to God, we also wish for the redemption of the body, we wish to be saved out of death, but as we wait for that time, then because we have received the first fruits of the Spirit, because we know the calm of sins forgiven, then we can approach each new temptation with a different attitude of mind; now with the mind of the Spirit and no longer with the mind of the flesh, to try and root out the madness of mind, and to replace it with the calm of the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ which we are trying to develop as we come closer to the word of God.

So, that sets the background now, for those things which we shall consider today. Our lives are now subjected in **hope**, once we have allied our self to the hope of the gospel. The things then that occur in our lives, we must see as being directed towards that end. The experiences of life and our experiences will all be different, and it's how are we going to respond to them that becomes important. Brother Peter said in his exhortation on Sunday, 'it's our attitude then that becomes important', and that's true, isn't it? it's the attitude of our minds as we approach these things. But there are those who just appear to sail through life as if life is so easy, it has no affects upon them at all. There are others who apparently are assailed on every side by difficulty, and yet there are problems with both of those! it was the wise man, wasn't it? who said, 'give me neither riches nor poverty, feed me with food convenient for me'. In other words, there were problems with both extremes and it may well be that prayer also should be on our lips!

Well, let's turn then to Ecclesiastes and we'll go in at chapter 3, just two verses to start with, one from chapter 3 and another from chapter 1; picking up where we left off

yesterday, this is chapter 3 verse 18, 'I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts'. All these things we read in Romans 8 have been subjected in 'hope', they've also been done, Ecclesiastes 3 verse 18 tells us, so God will show to mankind what man is like if he keeps away from God, and man with his back turned to God is a beast, is like the beasts that perish. Have you noticed what your margin in your KJV says for verse 18? 'I've said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that they might fear God and see that they themselves are beasts'. It's actually showing the righteousness of God, that God was righteous in subjecting man to this period of mortality in which we now live. That's on one hand and on the other hand that man might see what he really is and what he deserves when he commits sins and turns away from God.

So that's one verse, Ecclesiastes 3 verse 18. The other one, Ecclesiastes 1 verse 12, 'I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem (this one is the introduction to the verse we really want to look at, the real verse is verse 13). Let's just pause a moment on verse 12, as I mentioned yesterday, there is no mention of the covenant name of God in Ecclesiastes, there is only one mention of Israel in Ecclesiastes, and that's there in verse 12. 'I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem', so this is for all people, Jews and Gentiles no matter what background we may have come from. So 'I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem and I gave my heart (mind) to seek and search out wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be **exercised thereby**.' Or as your margin will say, 'to afflict them'. Again, it's for a purpose, man is being exercised by these things, to know more accurately, the ways of God. It may seem to us a strange way of achieving it, but nonetheless this is God's way. But God is now disciplining us in the proper sense of that word 'discipline', teaching us by those experiences of life which befall us, about Him and about His purpose on the one hand, and about ourselves and our need for salvation on the other. Both of these objects are achieved by our being placed in this sore travail, to use the words of Ecclesiastes. Sounds like a sad and doleful subject and you know, it's not really characteristic to be sad and doleful, nor is it any of ours really, but it's necessary that we open our eyes to our real state before God, and that's what the book of Ecclesiastes is doing for us. Remember though, that in this part of Ecclesiastes, what the Preacher is telling us is that these are the things that happen **under the sun**, when we're not taking God into account.

So we saw all those words which are associated with life under the sun; labour and travail and vanity, but what we didn't do yesterday was then looking to the other side and lifting our eyes to the sun! So let's just do that for a moment, and the writer of Ecclesiastes now says, and he introduces to us a concept that instead of all these things which will only drag a man down, there are things better than that! and it's interesting that Solomon uses the same idea as the writer to the Hebrews. You'll know that the thesis of the letter to the Hebrews is, that the Lord Jesus Christ was **better**

than the Law to which those who read the letter to the Hebrews were wishing to return. They were holding onto the Law as being their anchor, there was now a new refuge for them, a new city of refuge for them, 'they should flee for refuge and lay hold on the hope that existed in the Lord Jesus Christ.' So the Lord Jesus Christ was better than the angels who gave the Law, better than the priests who administered the Law, better than the sacrifices that were offered under the Law, better than the altar on which the sacrifices were placed, better than the high priest, in fact, He was not a priest in the line of Aaron but a priest after the order of Melchizedek, better than all of these things. So now in Ecclesiastes Solomon speaks of 'lifting his eyes now **above the horizon**' and beholding the sun.

Verse 13 of Ecclesiastes 2, 'Then I saw that wisdom is better than folly, as far as light is better than darkness' (and you'll notice that I've changed the words slightly from the KJV only because the original word is translated later in the book, and I've got no idea why the translators of the KJV didn't stick to the words that they use later on. This idea of '**better**' being better than, comes out later if you move on to verse 24 of Ecclesiastes 2, you'll see the same word is being used but now it's translated as 'better'. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and should make his soul enjoy good in his labour, this also I saw that it was from the hand of God.' So all of these things which might if we left God out of the picture completely, which seems to be what Solomon was saying to start with an ecclesia, I suppose, would then drag us down and make us feel that we're just caught up in a cycle which is grinding away inexorably taking us down and down and down towards the grave, even in those things themselves, we are to recognize the hand of God. Because God is behind them, there can be nothing better for a man than those things which God has given to him, to exercise him; because in those very things if we properly appreciate them, we shall see the hand of God. So there's nothing better for a man than to 'eat and drink', make his soul enjoy good in his labour.

Chapter 3 verse 12, (reading from the RV now) 'I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and do good, so long as they live and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy good in all his labour; it is the gift of God'. So these things are given by God that they might **exercise** us! Verse 22, 'Wherefore I saw that there nothing better than a man should rejoice in his works, for that is his portion; for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?' We have a period of time upon the earth in which we are to recognize that we are here by the gift of God and we're to respond to those things which He gives us. We're not going to be brought back to see what happens after we've died; life is the time to serve the LORD!

We'll then move on to chapter 8 and verse 15, 'Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun'. So in this situation, nothing better than to eat and drink and to be merry'. Over

to the next chapter, chapter 9 and verse 7, 'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts thy works'. Did you notice that in the middle of verse 15 of chapter 8, 'there is nothing better than to eat and to drink and to be merry?' We know how it's picked up in the New Testament of the one who said to himself, 'soul, I've done well and I've made up much store! and what was said to the man, 'eat, drink and be merry, this night thy soul is required of thee'; that there's actually a background to this verse in Ecclesiastes in the life of Solomon himself. Solomon was expressing in his comments here about those things which are good for man. Because God has given these things to him, let that man enjoy those things, and while he's enjoying them, recognize that they are gifts from God. Just turn to 1 Kings 4, we turned to this chapter yesterday to see that the wisdom of Solomon was something which was involved with the promises which had been made by God to Abraham, that was in verse 29 of 1 Kings 4. If you now just look at the beginning of the chapter; verse 1 is almost a repetition of verse 12 of Ecclesiastes 1 which says, 'I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem', 1 Kings 4 verse 1 says, 'So king Solomon was king over all Israel'. Verse 20 of 1 Kings 4, 'Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude' (cross reference that with verse 29) 'God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore' (straight out of Genesis 22 verse 17). So here we have a partial fulfilment at least of the promise to Abraham that if you can count the grains of sand on the seashore then that is the measure of your descendants, you see. 'Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude', but that's not where verse 20 finishes, and do you notice how it continues; what were they doing? 'they were eating and drinking and making merry'.

Now because of the way that's used later in scripture, we understand that it's an indication to us that although apparently a promise to Abraham had been fulfilled in that his seed was now so numerous, they were as the sand that is by the seashore for multitude, their attitude of mind was not the attitude of mind of the kingdom age even though there will be feasting in the kingdom. Perhaps many of you know that I quite enjoy my food and I've always been grateful that there's going to be feasting in the kingdom, but it's not feasting like this, you see, this was eating, drinking and making merry and the implication is that although that can be used in a good way, generally speaking those who eat, drink and make merry are just feeding the flesh, in a spiritual sense as well as a physical sense. All they're doing is trying to satisfy their own desires, it's not a response to the gifts from God! So Solomon now, knowing that that is the background of the nation over which he is ruling, starts to examine in Ecclesiastes, all the things which are summed up by that phrase 'of eating, drinking and making merry'.

Turn to Ecclesiastes 2, Solomon says in his heart, 'Go to now, I'll will prove thee with mirth therefore enjoy pleasure'; and what did he discover? He discovered that it was the same as man when he doesn't take God into account in his life, it's vanity! 'I said of laughter it is mad and of mirth, what doeth it? I sought in my heart (in my mind) to give myself unto wine' (and he just adds and it's almost parenthetical, it's almost introduced

to us as a thought so we recognize that Solomon was now carrying out an intellectual exercise, because he still retained his wisdom) 'he acquainted his heart with wisdom (so he didn't let the wine completely overtake him): he took wine and laid hold on folly so that I might see what it was that was good for the sons of men, which they should do under the sun all the days of their life'. In all of these things, he was now experiencing for himself, the things which all of human kind have experienced, some here and some there at different times down through the history of man. We must realize that for each of the things which Solomon introduces to us, of themselves, there is nothing wrong in them. There is nothing wrong with our desire to eat, it's a God-give desire, what is wrong is when we eat too much! and what is good and right and necessary becomes evil and wrong and purely self satisfying. It's the same with all our other instincts and desires; there's nothing wrong with those things which physically drive us, so long as we recognize what they're driving us to, and don't go beyond it. There is nothing wrong with the relationship between man and woman in the right place, but dreadfully wrong and unseemly and evil and wicked in the wrong place and the wrong time! There is nothing wrong with our building houses and occupying them, but there's something dreadfully wrong, if by doing it, it so occupies our mind that there is room for nothing else. There's nothing wrong with our planting gardens and eating the fruit of them, but if that's all that we do, and if it becomes the beginning and the end of our life, then it's dreadfully wrong. Then verse 7 of Ecclesiastes 2, though we might not think so, there is nothing wrong with our having menservants and maidservants (now it's difficult to say this in a country which is the land of the 'free') but nonetheless there is nothing wrong with menservants and maidservants of themselves, it's how we treat them that becomes important and scripture never criticizes the having of servants, but does criticize **abuse** of that gift; and there is nothing wrong with trading, but abuse of trading is dreadfully wrong. So in verse 9, Solomon says, 'I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also, as he said when he took wine, 'my wisdom remained with me' (my wisdom stood by me) almost as if he was an observer and was able to stand outside of his body and watch what he was doing in all of these things.

And in all of those experiences that he had, verse 11, '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'. Solomon is renown for the things that he did; the stables of Solomon, the groves of Solomon, the gardens of Solomon, the wealth of Solomon, the wisdom of Solomon, all of these things are part of Solomon's renown and yet at the end of it, when he'd tried them all, done them all, to and beyond the limit on occasions, he was able to say, 'there's nothing there! there's an emptiness in it', and yet the remarkable thing about Ecclesiastes 2 is that it is a description of our western 20th century world! We might feel some measure of pride that we've got these things under control, well, if there is any feeling like that, in the heart of anyone here, then let's expel it immediately. If there's a list of things that we've not got under control, they're here in Ecclesiastes 2! With no doubt, we all live in houses which are excessive for our needs, we all eat beyond what we need to eat; and drink beyond what we need to drink; we've amassed wealth beyond what we need to

amass; **all of us!** We might rationalize them in our mind, we might say that we're going to use our houses in the service of God and so we should, and I hope we do. We might show our hospitality whenever we can, and we ought to, but whenever we think we've got this problem licked, this problem has licked us! and we need to have our eyes opened to the things that Solomon discovered, and if we're going to turn this school into a period of reassessment and reevaluation of our lives, then let's think about these things!

The next purchase which we are planning to make and we've rationalized our need for it so carefully that it's impossible for us to do without it, do you really believe it? It's not true, is it? it's much better that we should do without it, and yet constantly we deceive ourselves by our own thoughts. Turn to chapter 4 of Ecclesiastes and verse 4, 'Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh'. Isn't that a lovely picture? That's what we're doing if we've got no thought about the call that God has called us by, all we're doing is folding our hands together and eating our own flesh.

'Better is a handful with quietness than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit'. Keep your hand in Ecclesiastes 4 and just turn to 1 Timothy 6, it seems that here is a reference from the writings of Paul to these thoughts in Ecclesiastes, and interestingly the apostle Paul links the thought not so much with the physical things of life, but with those things which we tend to put in a separate compartment and those are our beliefs, the doctrines of scripture, as if it was possible to separate doctrine from right living! We can't do that, can we? these are **sound words**, verse 3 of 1 Timothy 6, 'If any man teach otherwise and consent not to **wholesome words** (sound words, healthy words) even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. He is proud knowing nothing, doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself'. In coming to that conclusion, the apostle Paul then draws on what Solomon has said in Ecclesiastes that, 'godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it's certain that we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown man in destruction and perdition'. 'The fool folded his hands together and eateth his own flesh!' drowns in his own desires, in his own flesh. So better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit'- Ecclesiastes 4 verses 5 and 6.

So, Solomon now considers what happens to the man who gains all of these things that the world has to offer, that **God has given** for us to seek after, if that's the sort of people we are, and in doing so we'll be exercised. How now is the man who passed

these things on to consider his life; so Solomon says in verse 13 of Ecclesiastes 4, 'Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished'. Then in a remarkable prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'yet though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor', then in verse 14 I don't know if you've ever applied these words to the Lord Jesus Christ, but just think about them as being a description of Him. 'For out of prison He cometh to reign (the prison in which we all are, this prison where we've been placed by God in order to understand God's ways); and the Lord Jesus Christ being of like nature with ourselves had the same bars around Him, He was mortal as we are, He was tempted to sin as we are tempted to sin, and had He given way to them, those temptations, then there would have been madness in His heart; thankfully there wasn't! thankfully there wasn't!) 'But out of prison He cometh to reign, whereas also he that is born in His kingdom becometh poor'. Let me read that from the RV 'Out of prison He came forth to be king, yea, even in His kingdom, He was born poor!'; and that's true, it was shown by the gift that Mary and Joseph made, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift for poor parents at the birth of a child. Even in His kingdom, He was born poor and He was born king, never let us forget that; not born to be king, He was **born king**, even the wise men declared that when they came; 'where is He that is born King of the Jews?' and you recall that was what Herod did not like! Even in His kingdom born poor. If we keep the picture of Him before our eyes, then it might start to put into context for us, those things that we should do in this land and life of plenty in which we live.

But in all the things that Solomon tried in his life, he also sought for companionship. 'It is not good that man should be alone', it was said of Adam in the garden of Eden. Just look here in verse 9 of Ecclesiastes 4, 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour', so Solomon had recognized this is something better, it's part of that sequence of passages that we looked at before, 'it's better than' and 'two are better than one', it's not good for us to be alone as it was not good for Adam to be alone; it's better to be like that, verse 10, 'for if they fall the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, he hath not another to help him up!' We must see this spiritually as well as naturally; there are those for whatever circumstance, they find them alone and without a partner in this life. Quite often there is pressure to take a partner, well, don't take a partner just because there is pressure placed upon you; only take a partner when you know that in that one whom you choose, is a **real help meet for you!** and to look at the characteristics and to understand that that one will answer your need and that together you will compliment the other. But don't succumb to the pressure just to take a partner because the world is full of couples and families; the apostle Paul held up the single state in a way that we do not sufficiently hold up. It's possible to serve the Lord as an individual just as it's possible to serve the Lord as a husband or a wife and through a family. Never let us forget it! and we ought to recognize that there is something about celibacy, not in the way that the Roman Catholics treat celibacy, but there is something there and the apostle Paul highlighted the attributes, and we ought to speak more about it and we don't, sadly we don't! But the promise that's here and not only here, is that the person that finds themselves in

that position, or chooses that way of service to the Lord, is not left alone! That's a remarkable thing, that was why the apostle Paul was able to uphold his position; because if they fall, their fellow will lift them up, and the fellow of the single person is even more the Lord Jesus Christ than the fellow of one of the married couples; because the married couple looks to his or her partner, and the single person looks to the Lord, and He is our fellow and in Him we have fellowship! 'So woe to him that is alone when he falls; he hath not another to help him up'.

Look at verse 11 of Ecclesiastes 4, again, 'if two lie together then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone?' I wonder if Solomon had in mind the last days of his father David, when Abishag the Shunammite was the human hot water bottle brought to David just to keep himself warm in bed?' If two lie together then they have heat, and Solomon had a whole closet full of hot water bottles, didn't he? a 1,000 of them, but do you know, I don't think Solomon found companionship; and I think the lesson of Solomon is, that there is not companionship in excess, and the promiscuous world in which we live proves it to us! It's not companionship that people seek, it's the quick thrill and the short fix. Companionship? and the number of sexual partners that some people in this world have, that run into 4 figures, and they would not even remember the names, let alone their personality, and Solomon with a 1,000 in his harem, and how would he know them all? and where would he find companionship? So he was speaking from the heart here, 'if two lie together then they have heat; and how can one be warm alone?' and I think he was a very lonely person! and needed to rest on the fellowship of his God, because the LORD God had also spoken of His being a fellow of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through Christ with ourselves.

Well, turn over to the next chapter, Ecclesiastes 5, and here is wealth and the problem of wealth. 'He that loveth silver, verse 10, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity'. I don't know whether in this country you have Parkinson's law, is Parkinson's law anything known to you? '**Work expands to fill the time available for it**'? well, Parkinson's law was not invented by Parkinson; it was in Ecclesiastes 5 verse 11, long before Parkinson came to it! 'When goods increase, they are increased that eat them', it's like the first person in a neighbourhood to have a swimming pool; he discovers suddenly, all the friends he never knew he had. That's what Ecclesiastes 5 verse 11 is telling us, 'when goods increase, they are increased that eat them'. It is with whatever we have, whatever it is that we wish to bring into our lives, we discover that it is not a possession; we wrongly speak about possessions as if we possess the thing that we purchase. It's not right! the thing that we purchase **possesses us**! Think about it, it's true! If you buy a boat, you've got to use it, and you've got to spend time using it; build a swimming pool and you've got to use it because it's there; buy a television and you've got to switch it on, otherwise you've wasted your money. Whatever it may be! and sports are as much a waste of time (oh, they've got their place, I enjoy a game of volleyball as much as the next person, I enjoy swimming as much as the next person) they have their place, but you know what this world is like with sports, it's become the modern god, and for young people, it will draw

you away from the truth. If you've got a skill for sport and your school or college wishes to draw you into the team, you're being drawn away from God. It's as if you're being sucked into the world on a fast stream; beware of it! 'for when goods increase, they are increased that eat them'. 'And what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?' and there we are, we're out there every day with our possessions, making sure it looks good, have to polish it, keep it clean; we are being possessed by it, it's taking our time.

'Verse 13, 'There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches got by the owners thereof **to their hurt**'. If we are sufficiently strong, we will get rid of things, rather than allow them to hurt us. It is possible to get rid of things, it is possible to clear them away from our lives; it's better not to get them in the first place, but if we have got them, get rid of them! and learn how to control them if we do somehow rationalize in our mind, that they are needful for our life. 'Those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand; as he came forth of his mothers womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand'. The apostle Paul said, 'we've brought nothing into this world, we shall take nothing out', that's the verse on which he based it. This also is a sore evil in all points, as he came so shall he go; and what profit hath he that laboureth for the wind?' It's like trying to catch the wind. So what Solomon is saying in this passage here, these verses in Ecclesiastes 5 and chapter 6, the more a man gets, the more he wants. The more he gets the more his burden increases; he's got no assurance of keeping what he's got. He may be deprived of drawing them by an early death. But even if he lives long, he might not enjoy those things which he has got; and since there is no end to his desire, because he's always wanting more, his labour in trying to get them is vain. The only victor in this conquest is death and mortality places a limit upon man's desire! That's what he's saying here!

Verse 10 of Ecclesiastes 6, 'That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man; neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he, (and that's death) and there be many things that increase vanity. What is man the better? For who knoweth, what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?' So all our experiences should turn us now to look at God the giver of these things and to try and appreciate the call which has been extended to each one of us, to try and control our lives properly in His service, and to recognize there is that which is good for man; there are those things which are better in life. Let us indeed be thankful for the things with which God has blessed us. Let us use them properly in His service, but let us recognize above all else, that what God is looking for in this exercise which He has placed before us, is the response of good and honest hearts to His call, and to find men and women on the earth when His Son returns, who are reflecting the attributes of that Son who was born poor in this kingdom which God was going to give to Him.

Let us just bow our heads in prayer, shall we?

LORD God who has created this wondrous world which we behold, we thank Thee for thy majesty and power displayed to us so eloquently, in giving us all things necessary for this life. We thank Thee indeed, for the blessing of daily food, for our clothing and our homes, for our friends and for our families. We thank Thee too, for that One provided to be our fellow, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the hope of life which lies through His work. We lift our eyes to Him, to the Son, the Son of righteousness and the time when He shall come with healing in His wings. We pray that that day shall soon appear upon the earth, when the knowledge of Thee will fill the earth as the waters cover the seas, and may we in our time of probation, acknowledge Thee as the God and Father of all. Lift our hearts, our voices, all those things which Thou hast given to us with which we might praise thy name, and might recognize the beauty of thy purpose and wish to be more closely associated with it, as we await the coming of the King, and the establishment of the kingdom. We offer our prayers through His name, Amen'.