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Ecclesiastes

1 These are the words from the Teacher. The Teacher was a son of David and king of Jerusalem.

²Everything is so meaningless. The Teacher says that it is all a waste of time!* ³Do people really gain anything from all the hard work they do in this life?*[No!]

Things Never Change

⁴People live and people die. But the earth continues forever. ⁵The sun rises and the sun goes down. And then the sun hurries to rise again in the same place.

⁶The wind blows to the south, and the wind blows to the north. The wind blows around and around. Then the wind turns and blows back to the place it began.

⁷All rivers flow again and again to the same place. They all flow to the sea, but the sea doesn't become full.

⁸Words can't fully explain things.* But people continue speaking.* Words come again and again to our ears. But our ears don't become full. And our eyes don't become full of the things we see.

Nothing is New

⁹All things continue the way they have been since the beginning. The same things will be done that have always been done. There is nothing new in this life.*

meaningless ... a waste of time The Hebrew word means "vapor or breath" or "something that is useless, meaningless, empty, wrong, or a waste of time."

in this life Literally, "under the sun."

Words can't fully explain things Literally, "All words (things) are weak."

But people continue speaking The Hebrew could also be translated, "Man can't speak."

¹⁰A person might say, "Look, this is new!" But that thing has always been here. It was here before we were!

¹¹People don't remember the things that happened long ago. In the future, people will not remember what is happening now. And later, other people will not remember what those people before them did.

Does Wisdom Bring Happiness?

¹²I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³I decided to study and to use my wisdom to learn about all the things that are done in this life. I learned that it is a very hard thing that God gave us to do. ¹⁴I looked at all the things done on earth, and I saw that it is all a waste of time. It is like trying to catch the wind.* ¹⁵[You can't change these things.] If something is crooked, you can't say it is straight. And if something is missing, you can't say it is there.

¹⁶I said to myself, "I am very wise. I am wiser than all the kings that ruled Jerusalem before me. I know what wisdom and knowledge really are!"

¹⁷I decided to learn how wisdom and knowledge are better than thinking foolish things. But I learned that trying to become wise is like trying to catch the wind.* ¹⁸With much wisdom comes frustration. The person that gains more wisdom also gains more sorrow.

Does "Having Fun" Bring Happiness?

2 I said to myself, "I should have fun—I should enjoy everything the most I can." But I learned that this is also useless. ²It is

trying to catch the wind Or, "It is very troubling to the spirit." The word for "troubling" can also mean "craving" and the word for "spirit" can also mean "wind."

foolish to laugh all the time. Having fun doesn't do any good.

³So I decided to fill my body with wine while I filled my mind with wisdom. I tried this foolishness because I wanted to find a way to be happy. I wanted to see what was good for people to do during their few days of life.

Does Hard Work Bring Happiness?

⁴Then I began doing great things. I built houses, and I planted fields of grapes for myself. ⁵I planted gardens, and I made parks. I planted all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I made pools of water for myself. And I used these pools to water my growing trees. ⁷I bought men slaves and women slaves. And there were slaves born in my house. I owned many great things. I had herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. I owned more things than any other person in Jerusalem.

⁸I also gathered silver and gold for myself. I took treasures from kings and their nations. I had men and women singing for me. I had everything anyone could want.

⁹I became very rich and famous. I was greater than any person that lived in Jerusalem before me. And my wisdom was always there to help me. ¹⁰Anything my eyes saw and wanted, I got for myself. My mind was pleased with all the things I did. And this happiness was the reward for all my hard work.

¹¹But then I looked at all the things I had done. I thought about all the hard work I did. I decided it was all a waste of time! It was like trying to catch the wind.* There is nothing to gain from all the things we do in this life.

Maybe Wisdom Is the Answer

¹²No person can do more than a king can do. Some king has already done anything you might want to do.* ¹³And I learned that even the things a king does are a waste of time. So I again began to think about being wise, being foolish, and doing crazy things. ¹⁴I saw that wisdom is better than foolishness in the same

trying to catch the wind Or, "It is very troubling to the spirit."

The word for "troubling" can also mean "craving" and the word for "spirit" can also mean "wind."

No person ... want to do The Hebrew is not clear here.

way that light is better than darkness. ¹⁴It is like this: A wise man uses his mind like eyes to see where he is going. But a fool is like someone walking in the dark.

But I also saw that the foolish man and the wise man both end the same way. ¹⁵They both die. I thought to myself, "The same thing that happens to a foolish person will also happen to me. So why have I tried so hard to become wise?" I said to myself, "Being wise is also useless." ¹⁶The wise man and the foolish person will both die! And people will not remember either the wise man or the foolish person forever. In the future, people will forget everything they did. So both the wise man and the foolish person are really the same.

Is There Real Happiness in Life?

¹⁷This made me hate life. It made me very sad to think that everything in this life* is useless, like trying to catch the wind.*

¹⁸I began to hate all the hard work I had done. I had worked hard, but I saw that the people that live after me will get the things that I worked for. I will not be able to take those things with me. ¹⁹Some other person will control everything I worked and studied for. And I don't know if that person will be wise or foolish. This is also senseless.

²⁰So, I became sad about all the work I had done. ²¹A person can work hard using all his wisdom and knowledge and skill. But that person will die and other people will get the things he worked for. Those people did not do the work, but they will get everything. That makes me very sad. That is also not fair and is senseless.

²²What does a person really have after all his work and struggling in this life? ²³All his life he has pain, frustrations, and hard work. Even at night, a person's mind does not rest. This is also senseless.

²⁴⁻²⁵Is there any person that tried to enjoy life more than I have? No! And this is what I learned: The best thing a person can do is eat, drink, and enjoy the work he must do. I also

in this life Literally, "under the sun."

saw that this comes from God.* ²⁶If a person does good and pleases God, then God will give that person wisdom, knowledge, and joy. But a person that sins will get only the work of gathering and carrying things. God takes from the bad person and gives to the good person. But all this work is useless. It is like trying to catch the wind.*

There Is a Time ...

3 There is a right time for everything. And everything on earth will happen at the right time.

- 2 There is a time to be born,
and a time to die.
There is a time to plant,
and a time to pull up plants.
- 3 There is a time to kill,
and a time to heal.
There is a time to destroy,
and a time to build.
- 4 There is a time to cry,
and a time to laugh.
There is a time to be sad,
and a time to dance from joy.
- 5 There is a time to throw weapons down,
and a time to pick them up.*
There is a time to hug someone,
and a time to stop holding so tightly.
- 6 There is a time to look for something,
and a time to consider it lost.
There is a time to keep things,
and a time to throw things away.
- 7 There is a time to tear cloth,
and there is a time to sew it.
There is a time to be silent,
and a time to speak.
- 8 There is a time to love,
and a time to hate.
There is a time for war,
and a time for peace.

Is there ... from God Or, “²⁴The best a person can do is eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I also saw this comes from God. ²⁵No one can eat or enjoy life without God.”

trying to catch the wind Or, “It is very troubling to the spirit.” The word for “troubling” can also mean “craving” and the word for “spirit” can also mean “wind.”

There is a time to ... pick them up Literally, “There is a time to throw stones away, and a time to gather stones.”

God Controls His World

⁹Does a person really gain anything from his hard work? [No!] ¹⁰I saw all the hard work God gave us to do. ¹¹God gave us the ability to think about his world.* But we can never completely understand everything God does. And yet, God does everything at just the right time.

¹²I learned that the best thing for people to do is to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. ¹³God wants every person to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. These are gifts from God.

¹⁴I learned that anything God does will continue forever. People can’t add anything to the work of God. And people can’t take anything away from the work of God. God did this so people would respect him. ¹⁵Things that happened in the past have happened, [and we can’t change them]. And things that will happen in the future will happen, [and we can’t change them]. But God wants to help people that have been treated badly.*

¹⁶I also saw these things in this life.* I saw that the courts should be filled with goodness and fairness—but there is evil there now. ¹⁷So I said to myself, “God has planned a time for everything. And God has planned a time to judge everything people do. God will judge the good people and the bad people.”

Are People Just Like Animals?

¹⁸I thought about the things people do to each other. And I said to myself, “God wants people to see that they are like animals. ¹⁹Is a man better than an animal? [No!] Why? Because everything is useless. The same thing happens to animals and to people—they die. People and animals have the same “breath.”* Is a dead animal different from a dead person? ²⁰The bodies of people and animals end the same way. They came from the earth, and in the end they will go back to the earth. ²¹Who knows what

the ability to think about his world Or, “a desire to know the future.”

Verse 15 Or, “What happens now also happened in the past. The things that happen in the future have also happened before. God makes things happen again and again.”

in this life Literally, “under the sun.”

breath Or, “spirit.”

happens to the spirit of a man? Who knows if a man's spirit goes up to God while an animal's spirit goes down into the ground?

²²So I saw that the best thing a person can do is to enjoy what he does. That is all he has. ¹Also a person should not worry about the future. Why? Because no one can help that person see what will happen in the future.

Is It Better to be Dead?

4 Again I saw that many people are treated badly. I saw their tears. And I saw that there was no one to comfort those sad people. I saw cruel people had all the power. And I saw that there was no one to comfort the people they hurt. ²I decided that things are better for people that have died than for people that are still alive. ³And things are even better ¹for people that die at birth! Why? Because ¹they never saw the evil that is done in this world.*

Why Work So Hard?

⁴Then I thought, “Why do people work so hard?” I saw people try to succeed and be better than other people. Why? Because people are jealous. They don't want other people to have more than they have. This is senseless. It is like trying to catch the wind.*

⁵Some people say, “It is foolish to fold your hands and do nothing. If you don't work, you will starve to death.” ⁶Maybe that is true. But I say it is better to be satisfied with the few things you have than to always be struggling to get more.

⁷Again I saw something else that didn't make sense: ⁸A person might not have any family. He might not have a son or even a brother. But that person will continue to work very, very hard. That person is never satisfied with what he has. And he works so hard that he never stops and asks himself, “Why am I working so hard? Why don't I let myself enjoy my life?” This is also a very bad and senseless thing.

in this world Literally, “under the sun.”

trying to catch the wind Or, “It is very troubling to the spirit.”

The word for “troubling” can also mean “craving” and the word for “spirit” can also mean “wind.”

Friends and Family Give Strength

⁹Two people are better than one. When two people work together, they get more from the work they do.

¹⁰If one person falls, then the other person can help him. But it is very bad for the person that is alone when he falls—there is no one there to help him.

¹¹If two people sleep together, they will be warm. But a person sleeping alone will not be warm.

¹²An enemy might be able to defeat one person, but that enemy can't defeat two people. ¹And three people are even stronger. They are like ¹a rope that has three parts wrapped together—it is very hard to break.

People, Politics, and Popularity

¹³A young leader that is poor but wise is better than a king that is old but foolish. That old king does not listen to warnings. ¹⁴Maybe that young ruler was born a poor man in the kingdom. And maybe he came from prison to rule the country. ¹⁵But I have watched people in this life, ¹and I know this: ¹People will follow that young man. He will become the new king. ¹⁶Many, many people will follow this young man. But later, those same people will not like him. This is also senseless. It is like trying to catch the wind.*

Be Careful About Making Promises

5 Be very careful when you go to worship God. It is better to listen ¹to God ¹than to give sacrifices* like foolish people. Foolish people often do bad things, and they don't even know it. ²Be careful when you make promises to God. Be careful about the things you say to God. Don't let your feelings cause you to speak too soon. God is in heaven, and you are on the earth. So you need to say only a few things to God. This saying is true:

³ Bad dreams come with too many worries,
and a fool with too many words.

sacrifices A gift to God. Sometimes it was a special kind of animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

⁴If you make a promise to God, then keep your promise. Don't be slow to do the thing you promised. God is not happy with foolish people. Give God what you promised to give him. ⁵It is better to promise nothing than to promise something and not be able to do it. ⁶So don't let your words cause you to sin. Don't say to the priest,* "I didn't mean what I said!" If you do this, then God might become angry with your words and destroy everything you have worked for. ⁷You should not let your useless dreams and bragging bring you trouble. You should respect God.

For Every Ruler There Is a Ruler

⁸In some country you might see poor people that are forced to work very hard. You might see that this is not fair to the poor people. It is against the rights of the poor people. But don't be surprised! The ruler that forces those people to work has another ruler that forces him. And there is still another ruler that forces both of these rulers. ⁹Even the king is a slave—his country owns him.*

Wealth Can't Buy Happiness

¹⁰The person that loves money will never be satisfied with the money he has. The person that loves wealth will not be satisfied when he gets more and more. This is also senseless.

¹¹The more wealth a person has, the more "friends" he has to help spend it. So that rich person really gains nothing. He can only look at his wealth.

¹²A man that works hard all day comes home and sleeps in peace. It is not important if he has little or much to eat. But a rich person worries about his wealth and is not able to sleep.

¹³There is a very sad thing that I have seen happen in this life. A person saves his money for the future.* ¹⁴And then something bad happens and he loses everything. So that person has nothing to give to his son.

priest Or, "angel," "messenger." This might be an angel, or it might be a priest or a prophet who speaks for God.

The ruler ... owns him Or, "One ruler is cheated by a higher ruler. And they are cheated by an even higher ruler. ⁹Even the king gets his share of the profit. The wealth of the country is divided among them."

for the future Or, "to his harm."

We Come with Nothing— We Leave with Nothing

¹⁵A person comes into the world from his mother's body with nothing. And when that person dies, he leaves the same way—with nothing. He works hard to get things. But he can take nothing with him when he dies. ¹⁶That is very sad. He will leave the world the same way he came. So, what does a person gain from his "trying to catch the wind"? ¹⁷He only gets days that are filled with sadness and sorrow. In the end, he is frustrated, sick, and angry!

Enjoy Your Life's Work

¹⁸I have seen that this is the best a person can do: A person should eat, drink, and enjoy the work he does during his short life on earth. God has given him these few days, and that is all he has.

¹⁹If God gives a person wealth, property, and the power to enjoy those things, then that person should enjoy them. That person should accept the things he has and enjoy his work—that is a gift from God. ²⁰A person does not have many years to live. So he must remember these things all his life. God will keep him busy with the work that person loves to do.*

Wealth Does Not Bring Happiness

6 I have seen another thing in this life that is not fair. It is very hard to understand: ²God gives a person great wealth, riches, and honor. That person has everything he needs and everything he could ever want. But then God does not let that person enjoy those things. Some stranger comes and takes everything. This is a very bad and senseless thing.

³A person might live a long time. And that person might have 100 children. But if that person is not satisfied with those good things, and if no one remembers him after his death, then I say that a baby that dies at birth is better off than that man. ⁴It is really senseless when a baby is born dead. That baby is quickly buried in a dark grave, without even a name. ⁵That baby never saw the sun. That baby

God ... to do Or, "God will do whatever he wants to that person."

never knew anything. But that baby finds more rest than the man that never enjoyed the things God gave him. ⁶That man might live 2,000 years. But if he does not enjoy life, then the baby that was born dead has found the easiest way to the same end.*

⁷A man works and works. Why? To feed himself. But he is never satisfied. ⁸In this way, a wise man is no better than a foolish person. It is better to be a poor man that knows how to accept life as it is. ⁹It is better to be happy with the things you have than to always want more and more. Always wanting more and more is useless. It is like trying to catch the wind.*

^{10–11}A man is only what he was created to be—a man. And it is useless to argue about it. A man can't argue with God about this. Why? Because God is more powerful than man. And a long argument will not change that fact.

¹²Who knows what is best for a person during his short life on earth? His life passes like a shadow. No one can tell him what will happen later.

A Collection Of Wise Teachings

7 It is better to have a good name (*respect*) than good perfume.*

The day a person dies is even better than the day he is born.

2 It is even better to go to a funeral than to a party.

Why? Because all people must die, and every person alive should accept this.

3 Sorrow is even better than laughter. Why? Because when our face is sad, our heart becomes good.

4 A wise person thinks about death, but a foolish person thinks only about having a good time.

5 It is better to be criticized by a wise man than to be praised by a foolish person.

then the baby ...the same end Or, "Isn't it true that all go to the same place?"

It is better ... catch the wind Or, "Having what you can see is better than chasing after the things you want. This is also like trying to catch the wind."

good name ... perfume This is a word play in Hebrew: the word for "name" and the word for "perfume" sound the same.

6 The laughter of fools is such a waste. It is like thorns burning under a pot.

[The thorns burn up so fast, that the pot does not get hot.]*

7 Even a wise man will forget his wisdom, if someone pays him enough money. That money destroys his understanding.

8 It is better to finish something than to start it. It is better to be gentle and patient than to be proud and impatient.

9 Don't become angry quickly. Why? Because being angry is foolish.

10 Don't say, "Life was better in the 'good old days.' What happened?" Wisdom doesn't lead us to ask that question.

¹¹Wisdom is better if you also have property. Really, wise people* will get more than enough wealth. ¹²Wisdom and money can protect you. But knowledge gained through wisdom is even better—it can save your life!

¹³Look at the things God has made. You can't change a thing, even if you think it is wrong! ¹⁴When life is good, enjoy it. But when life is hard, remember that God gives us good times and hard times. And no one knows what will happen in the future.

People Can't Be Truly Good

¹⁵In my short life, I have seen everything. I have seen good men die young. And I have seen evil men living long lives. ^{16–17}So why kill yourself? Don't be too good or too bad. And don't be too wise or too foolish. Why should you die before your time?

¹⁸Try to be a little of this and a little of that.* Even God's followers will do some good things and some bad things. ^{19–20}Surely there is not a good man on earth that always does good and never sins.

The laughter ... get hot Or, "The cackling of fools like the crackling of thorns under a pot is senseless."

wise people Literally, "People that see the sun." This means wise people can see and plan what they should do.

Try to be a little of this and a little of that Or, "Hold onto this, but don't let go of that."

Wisdom gives a person strength. One wise man is stronger than ten [foolish] leaders in a city.

²¹Don't listen to all the things people say. You might hear your own servant saying bad things about you. ²²And you know that many times you too have said bad things about other people.

²³I used my wisdom and thought about all these things. I wanted to be truly wise. But it was impossible. ²⁴I can't understand why things are like they are. It is too hard for anyone to understand. ²⁵I studied and I tried very hard to find true wisdom. I tried to find a reason for everything. [What did I learn?] I learned that it is foolish to be evil, and it is crazy to act like a foolish person.

²⁶I also found that [some women are dangerous like traps]. Their hearts are like nets, and their arms are like chains. It is worse than death to be caught by those women. A person that follows God will run away from those women. But a sinner will be caught by them.

^{27–28}The Teacher says, "I added all these things together to see what answer I could find. I am still looking for answers. But I did find this: I found one [good] man in a thousand. But I did not find even one [good] woman.

²⁹"There is one other thing I have learned: God made people good. But people found many ways to be bad."

Wisdom and Power

8No one can understand and explain things the way a wise man can. His wisdom makes him happy. It changes a sad face into a happy one.

²I say you should always obey the king's command. Do this because you made a promise to God. ³Don't be afraid to give suggestions to the king. And don't support something that is wrong. But remember, the king gives the commands that please him. ⁴The king has the authority to give commands. And no one can tell him what to do. ⁵A person will be safe if he obeys the king's command. But a wise man knows the right time to do this, and he also knows when to do the right thing.

⁶There is a right time and a right way for a person to do everything. [And each person must take a chance and decide what he should do.] He must do this even when he has many troubles ⁷and he isn't sure what will happen. Why? Because no one can tell him what will happen in the future.

⁸No person has the power to keep his spirit from leaving. No person has the power to stop his death. During war, a soldier does not have the freedom to go any place he wants to go. In the same way, if a person does evil, that evil won't allow him to be free.

⁹I saw all those things. I thought very hard about the things that happen in this world. And I saw that people always struggle for the power to rule other people. And this is bad for them.

¹⁰I also saw great and beautiful funerals for evil people. While the people were going home after the funeral services, they said good things about the evil people that had died. This happened even in the same towns where the evil people had done many, many bad things. That is senseless.

Justice, Rewards, and Punishment

¹¹Sometimes people are not immediately punished for the bad things they do. Their punishment is slow to come. And that makes other people want to do bad things too.

¹²A sinner might do a hundred evil things. And he might have a long life. But I know that it is still better to obey and respect God. ¹³Evil people don't respect God, so those people won't really get good things. Those evil people won't live long lives. Their lives won't be like the shadows that become longer and longer [as the sun goes down].

¹⁴There is something else that happens on earth that does not seem fair. Bad things should happen to bad people and good things should happen to good people. But sometimes bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. That is not fair. ¹⁵So I decided it was more important to enjoy life. Why? Because the best thing people can do in this life* is to eat, drink, and enjoy life. At least

in this life Literally, "under the sun."

that will help people enjoy the hard work God gave them to do during their life on earth.

We Can't Understand All God Does

¹⁶I carefully studied the things people do in this life. I saw how busy people are. They work day and night, and they almost never sleep. ¹⁷I also saw the many things that God does. And I saw that people can't understand all the work that God does on earth. A person might try and try to understand, but he can't. Even if a wise man says he understands the work God does, it is not true. No person can understand all those things.

Is Death Fair?

9I thought about all these things very carefully. I saw that God controls what happens to the good and wise people and the things they do. People don't know if they will be loved or hated. And people don't know what will happen in the future.

²But, there is one thing that happens to everyone—we all die! Death comes to good people and bad people. Death comes to people that are pure and to people that are not pure. Death comes to people that give sacrifices* and to people that do not give sacrifices. A good man will die just like a sinner. A person that makes special promises to God will die just like a person that is afraid to make those promises.

³Of all the things that happen in this life, the worst thing is that all people end the same way. But it is also very bad that people always think evil and foolish thoughts. And those thoughts lead to death. ⁴There is hope for any person that is still alive—it does not matter who he is. But this saying is true:

A living dog is better than a dead lion.

⁵Living people know that they will die. But dead people don't know anything. Dead people have no more reward. People will soon forget them. ⁶After a person is dead, his love, hate, and jealousy are all gone. And dead

sacrifices A gift to God. Sometimes it was a special kind of animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

people will never again share in the things that happen on earth.

Enjoy Life While You Can

⁷So go and eat your food now and enjoy it. Drink your wine and be happy. It is all right with God if you do these things. ⁸Wear nice clothes and make yourself look good. ⁹Enjoy life with the wife you love. Enjoy every day of your short life. God has given you this short life on earth—and it is all you have. So, enjoy the work you have to do in this life. ¹⁰Every time you find work to do, do it the best you can. In the grave there is no work. There is no thinking, no knowledge, and there is no wisdom. And we are all going to that [place of death].

Life Isn't Fair

¹¹I also saw other things in this life* that were not fair: The fastest runner does not always win the race; the strongest army does not always win the battle; the wisest man does not always get the food he earns; the smartest man does not always get the wealth; and an educated person does not always get the praise he deserves. When the time comes, bad things happen to everyone!

¹²A person never knows what will happen to him next. He is like a fish caught in a net—the fish does not know what will happen. He is like a bird caught in a trap—the bird does not know what will happen. In the same way, a person is trapped by the bad things that suddenly happen to him.

The Power of Wisdom

¹³I also saw a person doing a wise thing in this life. And it seemed very important to me. ¹⁴There was a small town with a few people in it. A great king fought against that town and put his armies all around it. ¹⁵But there was a wise man in that town. That wise man was poor, but he used his wisdom to save his town. After everything was finished, the people forgot about that poor man. ¹⁶But I still say that wisdom is better than strength. Those

in this life Literally, "under the sun."

people forgot about the poor man's wisdom, and the people stopped listening to what he said. [But I still believe that wisdom is better.]

17 A few words quietly spoken by a wise man
are much better than words shouted
by a foolish ruler.*

18 Wisdom is better than swords and spears
in war.
But one foolish person* can destroy
much good.

10 A few dead flies will make even the best perfume smell bad. In the same way, a little foolishness can ruin much wisdom and honor.

²A wise man's thoughts lead him in the right way. But the thoughts of a foolish person leads him the wrong way. ³A fool shows his foolishness, even when he is just walking down the road. So everyone sees that he is a foolish person.

⁴Don't quit your job just because the boss is angry at you. If you remain calm and helpful, you can correct even great mistakes.*

⁵Here is something else that I have seen in this life. And it is not fair. It is the kind of mistake that rulers make: ⁶Foolish people are given important positions, while rich people get jobs that are not important. ⁷I have seen people that should be servants riding on horses, while people that should be rulers were walking [beside them like slaves].

Every Job Has Its Dangers

⁸A person that digs a hole might fall into it. A person that knocks down a wall might be bitten by a snake. ⁹A person that moves large stones might be hurt by them. And a person that cuts trees is in danger—[the trees might fall on him].

A few words ... foolish ruler Or, "Words of a wise man quietly heard are better than the shouts of a ruler among foolish people."

foolish person Literally, "sinner."

If you ... great mistakes Literally, "A healer can put to rest great sins." The word "healer" means a person that is forgiving and that tries to help other people.

¹⁰But wisdom will make any job easier. It is very hard to cut with a dull knife. But if a person sharpens the knife, then the job is easier. [Wisdom is like that.]

¹¹A person might know how to control snakes. But that skill is useless if a snake bites someone when he is not around. [Wisdom is like that.]

12 A wise man's words bring praise.
But a foolish person's words bring
destruction.

¹³A foolish person begins by saying foolish things. In the end, he is saying crazy things.

¹⁴A foolish person is always talking [about what he will do]. But no one knows what will happen in the future. No one can tell what will happen later.

15 A foolish person isn't smart enough
to find his way home,
so he must work hard all his life.

The Value of Work

¹⁶It is very bad for a country if the king is like a child. And it is very bad for a country if its rulers use all their time eating. ¹⁷But it is very good for a country if the king comes from a good family.* And it is very good for a country if the rulers control their eating and drinking. Those rulers eat and drink to become strong, not to become drunk.

18 If a person is too lazy to work,
his house will begin to leak,
and the roof will fall in.

¹⁹People enjoy eating, and wine makes life happier. But money solves a lot of problems.

Gossip

²⁰Don't say bad things about the king. Don't even think bad things about him. And don't say bad things about rich people, even if you are alone in your home. Why? Because a little bird might fly and tell them everything you said.

comes from a good family Literally, "is a son of freedmen." This is a person that was never a slave and whose parents were not slaves.

Boldly Face the Future

11 Do good things every place you go.* After a while, the good things you do will come back to you.

²Invest what you have in several different things.* You don't know what bad things might happen on earth.

³There are some things you can be sure of. If clouds are full of rain, then they will pour water on the earth. If a tree falls—to the south or to the north—then it will stay where it falls.

⁴But there are some things that you can't be sure of. You must take a chance. If a person waits for perfect weather, then he will never plant his seeds. And if a person is afraid that every cloud will bring rain, then he will never harvest his crops.

⁵You don't know where the wind blows. And you don't know how a baby grows in its mother's body. In the same way, you don't know what God will do—and he makes everything happen.

⁶So begin planting early in the morning, and don't stop working until evening. Why? Because you don't know which things will make you rich. Maybe everything you do will be successful.

⁷It is good to be alive! It is nice to see the light from the sun. ⁸You should enjoy every day of your life, no matter how long you live! But remember that you will die. And you will be dead much longer than you were alive! And after you are dead, you can't do anything!

Serve God While You are Young

⁹So young people, enjoy yourselves while you are young. Be happy! Do whatever your heart leads you to do. Do whatever you want. But remember that God will judge you for everything you do. ¹⁰Don't let your anger control you. And don't let your body lead you to sin.* People do foolish things in the dawn of life while they are young.

Do good ... go Or, "Throw your bread on the water."

Invest what you have in several different things Or, "Give a part to seven, or even eight."

Don't let ... sin Or, "Don't worry about things. Protect yourself from troubles."

The Problems of Old Age

12 Remember your Creator while you are young, before the bad times [of old age] come—before the years come when you say, "I have wasted my life."*

²[Remember your Creator while you are young,] before the time comes when the sun and the moon and the stars become dark to you. [And troubles come again and again,] like one storm after another.

³At that time, your arms will lose their strength. Your legs will become weak and bent. Your teeth will fall out and you will not be able to chew your food. Your eyes will not see clearly. ⁴You will become hard of hearing. You will not hear the noise in the streets. Even the stone grinding your grain will seem quiet to you. You won't be able to hear the women singing. But even the sound of a bird singing will wake you early in the morning [because you won't be able to sleep].

⁵You will be afraid of high places. You will be afraid of tripping over every small thing in your path. Your hair will become white like the flowers on an almond tree. You will drag yourself along like a grasshopper when you walk. You will lose your desire [to live].* And then you will go to your eternal home (*the grave*). The mourners* will gather in the streets [as they carry your body to the grave].

Death

⁶ [Remember your Creator while you are young,] before the silver rope snaps and the golden bowl is crushed, [before your life becomes useless] like a jar broken at the well, [before your life becomes wasted] like a stone cover on a well that breaks and falls in.

I have wasted my life Literally, "I take no pleasure in them."

This might mean, "I don't like the things I did when I was young" or "I don't enjoy life now that I am old."

desire [to live] Or, "appetite" or "sexual desire." The Hebrew is hard to understand here.

mourners People that cry at a funeral. In Bible times, there were professional mourners that people hired to show great sadness at a person's funeral.

7 Your body came from the earth.
 And when you die,
 your body will go back to the earth.
 But your spirit came from God.
 And when you die,
 your spirit will go back to God.

⁸Everything is so meaningless. The Teacher says that it is all a waste of time!*

CONCLUSION

⁹The Teacher was very wise. He used his wisdom to teach the people. The Teacher very carefully studied and arranged* many wise teachings. ¹⁰The Teacher tried very hard to find the right words. And he wrote the teachings that are true and dependable.

¹¹Words from wise men are like sharp sticks that people use to make their animals go the right way. Those teachings are like strong pegs that won't break. [You can trust those teachings to show you the right way to live.] Those wise teachings all come from the same Shepherd (*God*). ¹²So son, [study those teachings,] but be careful about other books. People are always writing books, and too much study will make you very tired.

^{13–14}Now, what should we learn from all the things that are written in this book?* The most important thing a person can do is to respect God and obey his commands. Why? Because God knows about all the things people do—even the secret things. He knows about all the good things and all the bad things. He will judge everything people do.

meaningless ... a waste of time The Hebrew word means “vapor or breath” or “something that is useless, meaningless, empty, wrong, or a waste of time.”

arranged This Hebrew word means, “to make straight, arrange, correct, edit.”

Now ... book Literally, “The sum of the matter, when all is heard, is: ...”