

Thursday, September 5

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Ecclesiastes 10:1 - 12:14

10 **1** As dead flies cause even a bottle of perfume to stink, so a little foolishness spoils great wisdom and honor. **2** A wise person chooses the right road; a fool takes the wrong one. **3** You can identify fools just by the way they walk down the street! **4** If your boss is angry at you, don't quit! A quiet spirit can overcome even great mistakes. **5** There is another evil I have seen under the sun. Kings and rulers make a grave mistake **6** when they give great authority to foolish people and low positions to people of proven worth. **7** I have even seen servants riding horseback like princes—and princes walking like servants! **8** When you dig a well, you might fall in. When you demolish an old wall, you could be bitten by a snake. **9** When you work in a quarry, stones might fall and crush you. When you chop wood, there is danger with each stroke of your ax. **10** Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed. **11** If a snake bites before you charm it, what's the use of being a snake charmer? **12** Wise words bring approval, but fools are destroyed by their own words. **13** Fools base their thoughts on foolish assumptions, so their conclusions will be wicked madness; **14** they chatter on and on. No one really knows what is going to happen; no one can predict the future. **15** Fools are so exhausted by a little work that they can't even find their way home. **16** What sorrow for the land ruled by a servant, the land whose leaders feast in the morning. **17** Happy is the land whose king is a noble leader and whose leaders feast at the proper time to gain strength for their work, not to get drunk. **18** Laziness leads to a sagging roof; idleness leads to a leaky house. **19** A party gives laughter, wine gives happiness, and money gives everything! **20** Never make light of the king, even in your thoughts. And don't make fun of the powerful, even in your own bedroom. For a little bird might deliver your message and tell them what you said.

11 **1** Send your grain across the seas, and in time, profits will flow back to you. **2** But divide your investments among many places, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead. **3** When clouds are heavy, the rains come down. Whether a tree falls north or south, it stays where it falls. **4** Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest. **5** Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things. **6** Plant your seed in the morning and keep busy all afternoon, for you don't know if profit

will come from one activity or another—or maybe both. **7** Light is sweet; how pleasant to see a new day dawning. **8** When people live to be very old, let them rejoice in every day of life. But let them also remember there will be many dark days. Everything still to come is meaningless. **9** Young people, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do. **10** So refuse to worry, and keep your body healthy. But remember that youth, with a whole life before you, is meaningless.

12 1 Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore." **2** Remember him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and rain clouds continually darken your sky. **3** Remember him before your legs—the guards of your house—start to tremble; and before your shoulders—the strong men—stoop. Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly. **4** Remember him before the door to life's opportunities is closed and the sound of work fades. Now you rise at the first chirping of the birds, but then all their sounds will grow faint. **5** Remember him before you become fearful of falling and worry about danger in the streets; before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom, and you drag along without energy like a dying grasshopper, and the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire. Remember him before you near the grave, your everlasting home, when the mourners will weep at your funeral. **6** Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. **7** For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. **8** "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless." **9** Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them. **10** The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly. **11** The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep. **12** But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out. **13** That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. **14** God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 8:1 - 15

8 **1** Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. **2** They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. **3** For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. **4** They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. **5** They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do. **6** So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. **7** Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving. **8** I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. **9** You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. **10** Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. **11** Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. **12** Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. **13** Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. **14** Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. **15** As the Scriptures say, "Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough."

Psalms 49:1 - 20

49 **1** Listen to this, all you people! Pay attention, everyone in the world! **2** High and low, rich and poor—listen! **3** For my words are wise, and my thoughts are filled with insight. **4** I listen carefully to many proverbs and solve riddles with inspiration from a harp. **5** Why should I fear when trouble comes, when enemies surround me? **6** They trust in their wealth and boast of great riches. **7** Yet they cannot redeem themselves from death by paying a ransom to God. **8** Redemption does not come so easily, for no one can ever pay enough **9** to live forever and never see the grave. **10** Those who are wise must finally die, just like the foolish and senseless, leaving all their wealth behind. **11** The grave is their eternal home, where they will

stay forever. They may name their estates after themselves, **12**but their fame will not last. They will die, just like animals. **13** This is the fate of fools, though they are remembered as being wise. Interlude **14** Like sheep, they are led to the grave, where death will be their shepherd. In the morning the godly will rule over them. Their bodies will rot in the grave, far from their grand estates. **15** But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of the grave. Interlude **16** So don't be dismayed when the wicked grow rich and their homes become ever more splendid. **17** For when they die, they take nothing with them. Their wealth will not follow them into the grave. **18** In this life they consider themselves fortunate and are applauded for their success. **19** But they will die like all before them and never again see the light of day. **20** People who boast of their wealth don't understand; they will die, just like animals.

Proverbs 22:20 - 21

22 20 I have written thirty sayings for you, filled with advice and knowledge. **21** In this way, you may know the truth and take an accurate report to those who sent you.