

Ecclesiastes 7:13-29

“Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For”

Proverbs 9:10— “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight”

1. Wisdom begins and ends with trust in the sovereignty of God (13-14)

- wisdom knows, even in a crooked lot, that God is in charge (13)
- 2 types of days: prosperity/adversity (14)
 - In days of prosperity, God reigns
 - In days of adversity, God reigns
 - We are tempted to lost sight of this when things are the way we thought they should be.
 - When we get bad news or have issues at home
 - When we don’t make the team or don’t get the promotion

2. Wisdom is accessible and practical yet elusive (15-24)

- 2 roads are bought to the readers attention
 - Observation (15)
 - Road of self-righteousness
 - Road of self-indulgence
 - Both lead to destruction of the one traveling it
- interesting instruction (16-17)
 - Don’t be overly righteous (need to be right or proves one case)
 - Don’t be overly wicked/a fool (willingness to suffer wrong)
- take hold of this means to take it to heart (18)
- Wisdom gives strength but doesn’t save (19-20)
- Grow thick skin and don’t think too much of yourself (21-22)
- Wisdom is elusive because our own lack of ability to understand (23-24)
 - But he continued to look anyway
 - Trying to understand the difference between the wise way and the foolish way
 - Yet what he discovered was the darkest and deepest problem of all
 - Which is the heart of the problem

3. Wisdom understands what the heart of the problem is (25-29)

- “found something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets”
- Who is this woman?
 - Delilah?
 - Some commentators make a comparison with the book of Proverbs, where Solomon personifies wisdom and folly as two women in the street calling out to passerby.
 - Proverbs 9:13- “the woman Folly is seductive”
 - So maybe not literal but a metaphor for foolish living
- Some scholars claim he is referring specifically to a pagan philosophy
- But based how Ecclesiastes reads, he is giving personal testimony
- Somewhere along the way he met a woman who tried to destroy him
- He is not saying all women are like this, but some are.
- He is speaking of turning way from the seduction of sexual sins, including temptation
- So let’s clear up what he is not saying
 - All women are evil and seduction
 - Women is less than man and more sinful than man is
 - The bible has more to say about sinful men than sinful women (20)
 - He is giving testimony of his own experience, which says way more about him than anything else
 - King Solomon (700 wives/300 concubines) (1000)

- All unbelieving and worshipped foreign gods so it shouldn't surprise us that he didn't find one who was godly
- the Bible praises godly women (Psalm 45, Proverbs 31, Luke 8)
- Out of 2,000 people, barely found one person
- Here is what he found
 - "God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes"
 - The heart of the problem is the heart of mankind
 - God made us good, but we have all turned to our own schemes
 - We have become "wise" in our own sight

Gospel Lens:

This passage brings to light 2 realities and 1 great truth:

Reality 1: There is more than one path that leads to destruction.

Reality 2: We are broken and deeply effected by our sin and the sins of others.

Truth: There is an escape

- v.18— "the one who fears God"
- v.26— "he who pleases God"

Man scheming and our wisdom lacking sets the stage for Christ

1 Corinthians 1:18- 31

- **We won't find what we are looking for through the schemes of man.**
- **We will find that we can't understand and that our heart is the problem.**
- **But the gospel provides what we didn't even know what we were looking for.**
 - **wisdom of God**
 - **Righteousness**
 - **Sanctification**
 - **Redemption**

C.S. Lewis once said that if we find within ourselves a desire for which no earthly satisfaction can be found, perhaps this is evidence that we were made for another place altogether.

The famous words of Augustine centuries ago: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

1. Wisdom Begins With Trust (vv. 13–14)

1. Solomon tells us to “consider the work of God.” What does that practically look like when life feels “crooked” or out of our control?
2. Why is it sometimes harder to trust God in prosperity than in adversity? Which season do you personally struggle with more?
3. What recent situation revealed how quickly we lose sight of God’s sovereignty?

2. Wisdom Is Accessible Yet Elusive (vv. 15–24)

4. Solomon highlights two dangerous roads: self-righteousness and self-indulgence. Which one do you gravitate toward, and why?
5. What does it mean not to be “overly righteous” or “overly wicked” (vv. 16–17)? How do these warnings challenge our typical view of wisdom?
6. In what ways does wisdom help us (v. 19), and in what ways can it not save us (v. 20)?
7. Verses 21–22 warn us about taking things too personally. What helps you grow “thicker skin” in relationships?
8. Where do you feel the limits of your own understanding (vv. 23–24)? How does this remind us of our need for God?

3. The Heart of the Problem (vv. 25–29)

9. Why does Solomon describe folly as a trap “more bitter than death”?
10. How does Solomon’s personal experience (v. 26) warn us about the power of temptation and destructive relationships?
11. Verse 29 says that God made mankind upright, but we have sought many schemes. What are some “schemes” our culture chases today in the search for fulfillment?
12. How does this passage help us see that the deeper problem is not our circumstances but the human heart?

4. The Gospel Lens

13. According to the passage, who is the one who “fears God” and “pleases God”? How does the gospel make this possible?
14. How does Christ become for us the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption we cannot find on our own (1 Cor. 1:18–31)?
15. In what ways has Jesus given you what you “still haven’t found” elsewhere?

5. Personal Reflection & Application

16. What truth from this passage challenged or comforted you most?
17. What path are you most tempted to walk—self-righteousness, self-indulgence, or self-reliance?
18. What is one step you can take this week to pursue true wisdom in Christ?