

Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Twenty-Five)

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We will begin this sermon in Ecclesiastes 7.

Ecclesiastes 7:21-22 Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others.

We begin here with a brief two-verse paragraph. At the same time it briefly address something that contains a small part of the paradox event that we began with (actually we spent three sermons on it), in verse 15. We are almost, but not entirely, done with the paradox.

This brief paragraph addresses what might be a lingering effect of the difficulty of the paradox—as going through it attracts the attention of others, usually close friends, but sometimes family members, and they talk. This kind of talking has a tendency to intensify the discomfort of the paradox, but that is not an absolute because it may very well be sincere, well intended conversation that people are taking. But even if it is sincere, well intended, and in no way malicious, it may be taken very hard by the one going through the paradox, and be difficult to overcome.

It is a truth that human nature is prone to take advantage of another's hard times, pointing out and passing on what it thinks are mistakes, and or sometimes outright character weakness of others. To the one who is being spoken of, or about, it is often like taking a punch right in the gut. It is going to happen in one's lifetime, and perhaps frequently.

Why is it so difficult to deal with? Because it is damaging to our pride, that is to our opinion of ourselves. The gossip, the talking about, maybe well intended and it maybe true, but that does not necessarily deflect or diminish the damage to our pride. The best defense that anyone has is to have a clear conscience, then you know exactly where you stand and if you happen to be innocent you can have a laugh about it, because you know these people were mistaken, perhaps even malicious in what they were saying.

The best defense is to be not guilty to other's suppositions, but rather be consistent in goodness, which is a proof of God's Spirit, (it says that in Galatians 5). Such a person

can patiently navigate the passing of the gossiping storm cloud that precedes the sunshine as the problems ends.

Jesus had to endure the taunts of others even though He was perfectly innocent. Should we expect that we will go through life without the same kind of thing occurring to us? This is why verse 22 follows with a reminder that we too have in all likelihood done the same thing that others are now doing to us.

It is a matter of what goes around comes around. What a person sows he reaps. It is a character weakness to give in to hurt feelings, forgetting that there is no infallibility in any of us and we might have given cause for the grief now coming back on us. It is unreasonable that our feelings be hurt on the basis that we have been guilty of the same thing that others are now doing to us.

Do we remember the time that we lost our temper and called somebody a stupid idiot, and do we remember the time that we have cut somebody off on the highway and given others grief. How many times have we forgotten or been late, or outright careless because of the self-centeredness? Since we cannot be above absolute purity of character ourselves, we cannot really have room to take the high ground above others who are being undeserving of the gossip brought up.

I think that we can plainly see that God's counsel through Solomon is this: it is best to take our licks, repent, and do better in the future, because in all likelihood we have no right to complain. That does not mean that is going to ameliorate our feelings, but at least if we know that we have repented of what we have done to others, that begins to clear the way a bit.

Ecclesiastes 7:19 Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.

Ecclesiastes 7:23-29 All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise"; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out? I applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness. And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. Here is what I have found, says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: one man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found. Truly,

this only I have found: that God made man upright but they have sought out many schemes.”

These might be titled Solomon's search for wisdom. Two or three sermons ago I believe I mentioned to you that in the *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, they titled the paragraph that I just read containing the paradox as, “The Cautions of a Religious Philosopher.” The key word here is cautions. This paragraph is titled in that same commentary, “The Confessions of a Religious Philosopher.” The key word here is confessions. What we just read there was Solomon's confessions.

I think what is happening here is God is allowing us some insight into Solomon's heart and his life. God gifted all men with a proclivity for understanding and wisdom, but achieving them did not come easy. He had to work at it long and very hard. Something to take note here is that a true gift from God enables us to fill our place in the body of Christ, but that does not mean the gifts are given in full blown perfection so that we can fulfill that role without effort.

It is far better right from the start to understand that the gifts from God must be developed, fine-tuned, and polished, until they are truly fit to be used and even then in our use of them they are going to be less than perfect as we do them.

Solomon had these problems, and we have them to a greater degree than he did. Solomon is confessing for himself a truth that we too are discovering as we go along. It is that finding wisdom is one of the most difficult tasks in life, and that search for wisdom is not anywhere near as satisfying as we might think.

What we have here is an expose', a confession, that despite all of the great intellectual gifts that Solomon was given, in the end there is far more that he did not know than he actually knew. A lot of times we measure ourselves against the very best, and feel badly that we do not have better character, we do not have or show more insight. But we do not do anywhere near as well as those we may admire and we wish God would just pour it into us, but He does not. It is not His way.

He puts us through the paces. God is not revealing everything about what is going on in this world. He is revealing in *generalities* what is happening and what is going to happen but we have to live through the times as they are unfolding before us. We have to live by faith as those events are unfolding, and then we have to live through the repercussions that occur as a result of what is unfolding.

We are not going to run off to a place of safety without being pretty well-tested and even then there is no absolute promise to any single person that God is going take us in. There is just a generality. There *is* a place of safety, but we have to live knowing, looking into the past: who do we see with the greatest trials? Those with the greatest gifts! Maybe it is a plus to us that we are not gifted like Paul, Peter, Andrew, James—they did not escape the first of the persecutions.

God just takes the weak, but they do not stay weak. That would not be good for the relationship with God. It would be something that He would not look with favor upon.

Ecclesiastes 1:12-13 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.

We see here, Solomon, despite the great gifts that he had, was pushed hard. He had to increase in those things and to look into what was happening on earth, trying to find out what the answers might be. Do you not think that God wants us to do something similar? Sure He does. We are not gifted as great as Solomon was but we have the same responsibility. We might not know why we are living through this but we have to try to find reasons and answers for what is going on.

I want you to notice his earnestness, effort, that he begins the book with, that he set his heart to that.

Ecclesiastes 7:23 All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, “I will be wise”; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?

His goal was set with no “on the surface” overview. With an earnest, exhaustive completeness he applied himself to discover what lay behind what appeared on the surface of the conduct that he examined. He wanted to know the reason of things.

Ecclesiastes 7:25 I applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things.

We should be trying to do that as well. I know that we are not going to be doing it at the

level that Solomon did, because we have not been gifted as Solomon was. God is not calling upon us to write Ecclesiastes, but nonetheless, we have to follow the path that he beat there but not live it like he did. It was not all that good.

Why did he search so thoroughly? I think that he gives at least a partial answer in verse 19, "wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city." I believe that Solomon was looking for spiritual strength through understanding. Let me remind you of something. Solomon asked for wisdom. Before he asked for wisdom, he asked for understanding.

It is the processing of factual knowledge and material that gives a person understanding and then wisdom is the result especially in the application of it, and also in a sense of being sagacious enough to give counsel to others as a result.

Knowledge, understanding, truth is wisdom. So I believe that he was looking for spiritual strength through understanding, because that is what he asked for. The sagacity indicates discernment, that one is keen, perceptive, and sound in judgment.

The Bible is clearly showing us, through verse 19, if you think what people in a city do, ten rulers in a city, we veer away from that, what do rulers do? Wisdom can govern thought, wisdom can govern the will, wisdom can govern one's actions so that one can know what to do as each situation arises. This is not to say he found them all, but that is what he was with his determination and earnestness.

The deep insight that he found revealed the order and the harmony supporting the things observed on the surface. However I think that we are finding out there is a cost to seeking wisdom that we should understand. It is interesting how the Bible compares its achievements of wisdom with cost. I think this is one reason why we suffer in the seeking of wisdom, because we begin to realize there seems to be so little produced with so much effort that we put in, the cost is higher than we think it should be, and we give up.

Cost in the Bible is compared to the value of what one might buy on the market. So that we can understand it a little bit better, the Bible declares that wisdom is more costly than the price of material goods everybody would expect to pay a high price for out on the open market. Wisdom's cost to us are largely in terms of time. How much is your time worth per hour? Your employer is paying you a wage per hour. Being employed by God so that we can be created into His image, the image of His Son, there is a cost involved. Wisdom's cost is largely in terms of time, attention, and the discipline necessary to achieve. Solomon was willing to pay that.

Turn to the book of Job. Job has much to say about this. In Job 28, he goes on and on about the cost of wisdom.

Job 28:12-21 “But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? [Without understanding we will not have wisdom.] Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living. The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ It cannot be purchased for gold, nor can silver be weighed for its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air.”

Do not be discouraged here because God can give it. If we are willing, He is willing to give it. I am showing you here it is costly in terms of time, attention, and discipline.

Job 28:22-27 Destruction and Death say, ‘We have heard a report about it with our ears.’ God understands its way, and He know its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and portion out the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt, then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out.”

I hope that I am convincing you that wisdom is not all that easy to find, but because we have a relationship with God, He is willing to give it. But He is not going to give it up easily until He is satisfied with the attempts that we are putting forth—willing to spend the time.

Proverbs 3:13-15 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

In this chapter wisdom is personified as a life of a woman, beautiful, but she is costly.

Proverbs 8:11 For wisdom is better rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.

Let your imagination run wild. You might think what really might be a gift to you, but it is still nothing compared to wisdom. What does wisdom do? Among other things it glorifies God. Another thing is it can even keep us from sinning, because we have the wisdom to avoid it.

When we get to chapter 8, we find another side of wisdom, but we are not going to get to that this time. It will probably be my next sermon.

Back to Ecclesiastes 7. The confessions of Solomon are telling us that he looked at problems from all sides and even contemplated through analysis the opposite of the way that he first saw things. He would jump to conclusions, but the more he thought about it, and saw that it did not really fit, he would analyze and come up with a different deduction all together. Right in the context of his confession he uses terms like wickedness, folly, and madness, thus showing that he was really looking deeply at human behavior. Closely, so closely that he at least emotionally experienced a small measure of the characteristics, even the bad ones, that he was searching into.

Remember how we went into this in Ecclesiastes 2? He said that he sought out wine. He did that because he wanted to experience some level of the kind of enjoyment that the world was having. He said he always kept his head on his shoulders, did not allow himself to get carried away and get drunk, but why did he take the wine? He wanted to come as close as he could without doing what they did and still be able to think. This what I mean about we have to be disciplined.

He would not allow himself to get tipsy, but I am sure that he got to the place in drinking the wine where he felt good, but it never resorted at that time in him sinning.

What did Solomon learn from this? He points out in his confessions here, one thing.

Ecclesiastes 7:23-24 All this I have proved by wisdom, I said, "I will be wise"; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?

He never really got answers to what he was searching for. He was saying, If I have failed at this, what chance are others going to have? I do not want to diminish what

Solomon learned, but he was at least humbly admitting that it did not produce what his expectations were. He said, it was far from me, who can find it out?

We will apply this to you and me. What kind of a plan could we possibly come up with that would impress God to remove the burden of a trial? The trial I am talking about is in verse 15. The context is continuing here, the burden of a paradox. We went through Psalms 73 pretty completely, where we found that God answered the psalmist's prayer. So, God can give you the answer through those trials. That is the right way to solve a paradox, where you are caught in a situation, where you are suffering and do not know for sure why. There are evil people out there are being blessed, and we are not. That is a paradox.

When we obey God we are supposed to be blessed. There he was down in the pits—that is the paradox we all have to deal with. Look at the times that God is having us bear His fruit, I will tell you, knowing as much as we do about the goodness of God, why are we having to live in the face of what is happening here as American's religion is falling. Even though it was not the true religion it had enough of the good stuff in there that it held this nation on course for a good many years. And now it is falling apart, in the process of collapsing.

As I have been saying in my commentaries, it did not happen overnight. Things have been going on from the beginning, it started with a revolution, we knew what was going on, but then we started to decline. We are getting to the really bad parts now, it is really noticeable. There is wisdom in that. We have to come up with our own answer as to how we feel God is teaching us while going through this.

God in His wisdom is making us live through these times, without giving us any more than what is written in His Word. We have to live by faith. There is wisdom in doing this. It is being done this way for us to learn, and we should be glorified in that. We have to do it the best we can, as we go through it.

What we are covering today touches very strongly on wisely judging. Whether it is God we are judging—that was the problem with the man in the paradox, he was wrongly judging God—judging our fellow man, or judging ourselves. What should we ask ourselves is this: are we truly putting forth the effort in this pursuit after wisdom, which its fruit will lead to holiness?

Hebrew 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

That better be the end result of our investigation. There is nothing wrong with pursuing wisdom, but wisdom should lead us toward holiness. Are we really putting forth an effort worthy of the treasure that we have been freely given by God? Is there anything that we have to repent of simply regarding the time and efforts that we expend?

What we should end with is this: in our pursuit after wisdom, pursuit after holiness, it is no wonder that salvation must be by grace, because we are not equal to the task. Even somebody as gifted as Solomon falls short.

Two major truths that we can learn from Solomon's confession. First, a truly wise person will be humble, knowing that he does not know everything, and this lack of knowledge will effect his choices and conduct because he knows that he knows there is much ignorance in him. Even Solomon said he fell short out of aspiration, the desire to be understanding and wise.

I am sure that his goals were higher than ours simply because of the gifts that he had been given. When we apply this principle that Solomon is showing he came to, then, like Solomon, who was humbled by this, we too could be humbled by our search for wisdom.

The second valuable fruit of this is that the humbling will move us to be cautious in our judgment so that one does not condemn God. That is what Proverbs 7:15 is all about—not judging God wrongly. We will not judge others, they might be going through a trial like verse 15, and our tendency is to judge and think, what are those dumb people doing? It is very easy to misjudge them when we do not know the factors that are working that are causing them to go through that paradox.

Third, it ought to humble our judgment of ourselves. What can you do with somebody God says is pitifully weak? He gives us an evaluation that is spot on! On the one hand we are very encouraged because God called us and gives us a tremendous gift. On the other hand there has to be a right equilibrium in our mind about ourselves, other people, and God Himself.

This is why wisdom is so costly, because adjustments have to be made in our thinking about God, other people and what they are going through, and ourselves. Hey! God called us and that is pretty good!

As we can see in search of the path Solomon took beneficially humiliating. Sons of God, that is you and me, must face up to the reality that we must be constant learners. The reason is that unlike many in the world we are not merely looking for salvation, we are

also facing preparation for the Kingdom of God, and service to God and man in that Kingdom. Our goal is to have the wisdom to glorify God in our life. And have before it the fact that we are doing all of this to be prepared for when we enter this world is looking for salvation. That is pretty much it.

The world does not have enough understanding to connect the life we are now living to what we are going to be doing in the world tomorrow. All they want is salvation. We want salvation but we want to glorify God while we are doing it. That is where the hard work comes in, that is where the humiliation comes in, that is where the wisdom is used, that is where we become holy through sanctification—as we prepare for the Kingdom of God. That is where the cost is involved.

God had a cost. He lost a Son and He had to resurrect Him so that we can be raised like the Son was and be in His image too.

Please turn to I Corinthians 4 because this is a cautionary turn I am taking because the search for wisdom has a bad fruit if we allow it to develop. This is something that has to be under control.

I Corinthians 4:1-8 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. [That is quite a humble beginning. Paul is writing this letter. He is telling the people in the congregation in Corinth to consider him as nothing more than a servant, as a steward. A steward is assigned a responsibility and he carries them out. So the one who is assigning these responsibilities must be higher than the one who is carrying them out. He is setting the stage for something.] Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. [Every one of us is a steward of the mysteries of God. We have different responsibilities within that.] But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you [Uh oh. That is what I was talking about adjustments having to be made in our area of judging others.] or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore [listen to this wisdom] judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness [That is what Solomon was looking for, the hidden things.] and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos [both of whom were teachers] for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of the one against the other. [Here is the possible evil fruit of the

search for wisdom. We begin to feel pretty proud of ourselves, of what we have been able to do.] For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received [or earned] it? You are already full! You are already rich! [speaking sarcastically] You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

The search for wisdom has a downside to it that has to be controlled by the person who is doing the searching. It is one of human nature's proclivities to sometimes flaunt what they have found, or what they have been given, is the way it should be understood. This must be strongly resisted. The wise person knows what Paul says here is true, and resists the self-glorification. The restraint, putting a break on the urge to flaunt, actually makes the person wiser still.

Ecclesiastes 7:25-29 I applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness. And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her. "Here is what I have found," says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found. Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

I have already begun preparing my next sermon. This one will be built around verse 29.

Beginning in verse 25, Solomon makes it clear that wisdom is not on the surface, that it can be found only by those who work, dig, study, to analyze and uncover it. Truth and error are most often mixed together with the same problem, thus they must be untangled from each other. It takes a great deal of understanding to untangle them properly so that the wisdom can be brought out.

We are discovering in the liberality taking place in our nation, that some forms of human evil are so bold and irrational that it almost defies the description. By way of contrast, Satan was so subtle deceiving Eve that he slid the lies right in front of her and she, in her naiveté missed the trap altogether. How did she miss it? Her mind was on the desire for knowledge.

The terminology at the end of verse 25 suggests that Solomon is searching for the most vivid example of the most painful aspects of evil that he could find. We covered the examples he gave in chapter 2. Recall that it says that he deliberately sought pleasure. He may have purposefully done that, but he clearly learned that sometimes evil is pleasurable. Very important. But is it wisdom simply because it is pleasurable? Our pleasures are educated. One man's pleasure may be another man's curse. We have heard that before and it is true. It is a possibility.

What we are touching on here is how deeply Solomon looks, it was like a laboratory experiment to him. He may have allowed himself to get a little bit tipsy, but never lost his ability to think, but he wanted to experience the search for wisdom under that circumstance where pleasure was his main objective, what he could learn from it.

Solomon had the dancing girls, fishing, he built all those wonderful gardens, he built other building projects that he had going all over the place. Do you think it was not fun, pleasurable for Solomon to build a beautiful building, putting people on the job, he was their overseer (way up here) but he was a part of it, he just enjoyed it.

Any one of us who have built something, put something together, we just enjoy it so much.

I remember when I was 17, 18, years old, and I overhauled my first engine. That gave me a lot of pleasure. Here I was, just a kid. I had two cars so I could take the engine out of one and put the overhauled engine in the other. I did not have an acetylene torch so I had to saw every one of those things apart with a hack saw. I overhauled the engine and put it in the car that I had left over.

I am using this as an example of something that I went through, that I built. There is pleasure in doing those kind of things. Anyone who has ever built anything—a house, bird house, dog house, a shed—there is pleasure in doing those kinds of things.

I mentioned earlier about the liberality in this nation some of it so bold that it is evil, and yet there is pleasure that might be mixed up within it. Know this, wisdom that we get from Solomon proves obvious that pleasure is addictive and often plays a very large part in leading to, in many cases, painful enslavement to evil desire.

It is becoming clear to me that wisdom has two major elements to it. The Bible emphasizes practical wisdom, in actual use I have termed it as skill in living. That is great. But in the world the emphasis regarding wisdom is on sagacity, which is more intellectually slanted but it also has practical usage in being helpful in giving counsel.

Both of these elements are good especially when they are enhanced by God's truth.

This section that we just read are things that will be enhanced by God's truth. What Solomon is doing, in his confession here, is that he is weaving the two of them together—sagacity and practical application. I think this is one of the reasons why he used such strong terminology in this section. He uses folly, foolishness, and madness, as his descriptors. They are significant terms, because he wanted to grasp the full gamut of wisdom. He dug deeply, experiencing some of these things. In one sense this part of his confession is a warning. His warning to us is do not be fooled by beginning feelings, some of the grossest evil has pleasurable feelings as they begin.

Everything that is not truly wisdom *never* satisfies for long, but eventually it enviably becomes more difficult to bear as it builds and to overcome, and the foolishness and the madness of sin, which is never wisdom, always comes out and that fruit cannot be hidden. It will let itself be known. We can deliberately hide from it, but its reality is there. He is essentially saying that a lack of wisdom is *a/ways* destructive, if we allow ourselves to be lured by the pleasure at the beginning. Do not let it suck us in, because it is not going to end up good even though it is pleasurable at that point.

In Hebrew terminology, in verse 27, it indicates that he made this search very carefully, and we can add to this that he apparently wrote Ecclesiastes late in life when he was an old man. In verse 26, God gave him the opportunity to provide an example from his own life and he provides it with a vivid description. He describes a woman whose heart is snare and nets, whose hands are fetters. Her very heart is snares and nets. It seems he writes of this woman in Proverbs 7.

Proverbs 7:1-28 [Living Bible] Follow my advice, my son; always keep it in mind and stick to it. Obey Me and live, guard My words as your most precious possession, write them down, and also keep them deep within your heart. Love wisdom like a sweetheart, make her a beloved member of your family. Let her hold you back from visiting a prostitute, from listening to her flattery. I was looking out the window of my house one day and saw a simple minded lad, a young man lacking in common sense, walking at twilight down the street to the house of this wayward girl, [a prostitute]. She approached him, saucy and pert, and dressed seductively. She was the brash coarse type, seen often in the streets and markets, soliciting at every corner for men to be her lovers. She puts her arms around him, and kissed him, and with a saucy look she said, "I've decided to forget our quarrel. I was coming to look for you and here you are! My bed is spread with lovely colored sheets, the finest linen imported from Egypt, perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Come on let us make ourselves fill of love until morning, for my husband is away on a long trip. He has taken a wallet full of money with him and will not return for several days.” She seduced him with her pretty speech, her coaxing and her wheedling, until he yielded to her. He couldn’t resist her flattery. He followed her as an ox going to the butcher, or as a stag that is trapped, waiting to be killed with an arrow through the heart. He was as a bird flying into a snare, not knowing the fate awaiting it there. [Honey, it was all so pleasurable!] Listen to me young men. Not only listen and obey, don’t let your desires get out of hand; [Remember what I said earlier. Sin is often pleasurable at the beginning.] don’t let yourself think about her, don’t go near her, stay away from where she walks lest she tempt you and seduce you. For she has been a ruin of multitudes, a vast host of men have been her victims. And if you want to find the road to hell, look for her house.

Jesus testified that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” This was the case with the prostitute. Her very heart is snares and nests, which she uses with consummate skill for the accomplishment of her purpose, and he loved it. Notice the flattering secrecy. It is though she is letting him on something that nobody else has access to, as though she deliberately sought him only to the exclusion of many others. Her whole being is as an actress playing a part in a dangerous drama. She continues to use alluring salesmanship emphasizing enjoyment and safety since her husband is away for a long time. This guy was trapped right from the beginning because it seems he deliberately took the path right past her place of business where she frequently plied her trade.

We will apply this to you and me. We will see if there are any principles of play in this illustration that may be wisdom applicable to temptation outside of or beyond the use of a prostitute. We will suppose for a moment that the temptress is being used by Solomon as a type of the allurements of *any* unlawful desire that one might have burning in their mind as that desire seeks fulfillment. Notice how many means are employed by the prostitute to play on the customer’s desire to snare or catch him.

That desire might be for drugs. Some are greatly bothered by the desire to smoke. It might be a yearning for alcohol or perhaps to overeat or imbibe in an alluring dessert that will one’s blood sugar completely out of balance. These days pornography is a strong temptation because of Internet availability. Perhaps it might be to gamble fooled by the possibility of winning, or to skip work or school or the yearning to go much faster driving than the law allows or the desire to put off any distasteful chore that needs doing but it is greatly desired not even to face it. Because the purpose of the desire is to

induce pleasure.

The desire is like a siren's song putting the pressure on by giving one reason after another why it would not be so bad to fulfill that desire *just one more time*. All too often the one lusting becomes ever more willing to fulfill his desire until he caves in because he can no longer endure denying himself.

The reality is that we argue ourselves into crashing and doing it. Like the young man in the illustration we deliberately go in temptation's direction, just like the young man did. Despite the Bible's counsel regarding wisdom being so valuable, when we crash it has not to that point done us much good, if at all. Where was the wisdom when we crashed? That is the cost, disciplining ourselves to do the right thing in spite of the pleasurable temptation that we are receiving from the possibility of fulfilling our desire. Do you get the point? It does not have to be from somebody of the opposite sex. There are hundreds of things that we can desire, get pleasure from, that are wrong to do and evil from the get-go.

In an overall sense what Solomon found is what we might label the overall general sinfulness of mankind. That is why verse 29 is in the book.