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Wisdom & Happiness by Ben M.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20: 1Kings10:23 – 11:6

In spite of all his wisdom and learning Solomon made profound mistakes. Like the rest of us, he is a complex human being. The thing that we would not we do. (Romans 7:15) This is so universal. There is only one person who does not sin and that is God himself. That does not mean wisdom is not good to have. Wisdom makes you happy. Happiness is crucial to living the Christian life.

Everything Solomon wrote is shot through with references and understanding of the scriptures that were available to him in his time. It was beholden to him as king to read the Bible every day: exactly the same things we read today (leadership by example). You know from the account of Adam and Eve that when they followed God's rule all went well. But when they didn't, things went terribly wrong. So it's a good thing to do what God says. We learn that from the Bible and so did Solomon. We learn that if we do things God's way it's good. If we don't it's bad. Solomon read the Ten Commandments: love God, don't build idols, don't steal, don't lie, don't break up relationships. As well as general things, the Bible teaches specific things like commands addressed to husbands, some addressed to wives and also the children. We've just read things addressed specifically to kings. Solomon had to write out the scriptures from Deuteronomy so he had no excuse. He knew what God expected him to do. Similarly we know what God expects of us too. At the end of Deuteronomy there are specific blessings for those who do the will of God and specific curses for those who will not do the will of God. It's very very plain. Solomon was not alone. His father worshiped God all the days of his life. We know from his childhood Solomon would have heard the story of David and Goliath first-hand as he sat on his dad's knee. David imparted his personal testimony of God's power to young Solomon just as we encourage one another with our testimonies of how God answers prayer in our lives. His parents also warned him of the bad things that happen when we do not follow God's word. Solomon was being prepared to walk before the Lord through what he was reading and through people like Nathan the mighty prophet and the man of prayer, Zadoc. He also had the incredible, Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom. Solomon is absolutely without excuse. As Jerimiah wrote in 1Kings 3:1, the first thing Solomon did was to make a strategic political alliance with Egypt's mighty Pharaoh by marrying his daughter. Between them they would have the most powerful army in the world.

Later Solomon married into the royal families of the Moabites and the Ammonites to try and establish peace and prosperity. But he's not doing it God's way. Sin gives us an attractive offer. But when the bill comes we realise we cannot pay. We cannot service our debt and it crushes and enslaves us. The plan was that Solomon would be the King of Israel but he built up an empire, ruling other people with other religions and beliefs. He has to decide whether he will remain faithful or try to accommodate all these other multi-cultural beliefs into his system. He gets dragged deeper and deeper into this cultural mishmash. As he writes Ecclesiastes he knows he had the capacity to live wisely and he knows he has done foolish things. (Eccl. 2:13) He concludes that wisdom is better than folly. Because he has lived both ways, he can say, 'Be wise.' By verse 14 he says whichever route we take we all die. The wise way does not avoid death. Wisdom brings good fruits and values to your life and those around you. If Solomon had followed God's laws the kingdom would have been secure forever. It's not just for us but for succeeding generations. What is most important: money and power or God? Solomon made choices that meant that the

kingdom would know nothing but strife and conflict. In the end everybody sins. (Eccl. 7:20)

In Romans 12 Paul talks about the tension inside himself. Paul says in his mind he is a slave to God's law but in my sinful nature I am a slave to the law of sin and death. It's one thing to know what we should do but it's another thing to do it. God hates hypocrisy and yet Solomon is a hypocrite. Every person who knows what is right and does not do it is essentially a hypocrite. We are all hypocrites. There is inconsistency in all of us even though we love God with all our heart. What Solomon says in the book of Proverbs (a book of consequences) is true but it doesn't mean he has the power to walk perfectly in that truth any more than we can. This is painful.

However, life is complicated. It's not that straightforward that if we do good all will be well. Consider Job. As Solomon writes the Song of Solomon he is writing about the one thing he never had: true love. He never married for the love of a woman who loved God as in Ruth and in Proverbs 31, 'the wife of noble character who feared the Lord'. So sad, so painful so hypocritical.

The good news is that God doesn't reject people just because they mess up. How is it that the hypocrite is not rejected by God? It's G. R. A. C. E.: God's riches at Christ's expense. The Grace of God! That's why Solomon will be in Heaven. That's why the words he wrote are the words of God. It's not because he got it all right but because God is good. God's treasure is hidden in us, humble 'Jars of clay' (2 Cor 4:7) 'so that the all surpassing power is seen to be from God and not from us.' The glory belongs not to Solomon, not to us but to God, This is about God. God gave Solomon wisdom and insight. All the good stuff of Solomon's wisdom that people came to hear came from God. It was God they heard. The bad stuff comes from us, from our hearts. God alone doesn't sin.

We have the law through Moses who had anger issues. The Psalms were written by David an adulterer and murderer. Proverbs was written by Solomon who betrayed the throne. Peter betrayed Jesus and Paul persecuted the church. If you start taking out the books in the Bible written by sinners it's going to get smaller and smaller. The Bible has a twin authorship: imperfect human beings used by an all mighty gracious God. "Prophecy never had its origin in the human will." (2 Peter 1:21) It never comes from us. "The Prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The wonder of this book is that we get to hear God speak through these jars of clay. All these people who broke God's law were useful to God. The Bible doesn't justify sin. Sin matters. Paul feels trapped in his hypocrisy. (Roman 7:24&25) He wants a way out because he knows the consequences of his actions. "Thank God through Jesus Christ." he escapes from "this body of death". It's through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

If God could use these people could he use you? God doesn't need you to write another book. The scriptures are complete. But there are prayers that need to be made. People need serving and loving and forgiving. There are churches to be planted and evangelism to be done. Messages need to be preached, coffee to be made and chairs to be set out, people to be greeted. So many things God would have you do. None of us will do it perfectly.

Will you be in heaven with Peter and Paul, Solomon and David? Will you be there because of the grace of God and your faith in Jesus? Are you truly happy despite your failures and sins? When you know you are forgiven and Heaven is your home you will incline to holy living. Gospel happiness is greater than anything else on earth. The wisdom of God makes us happy.