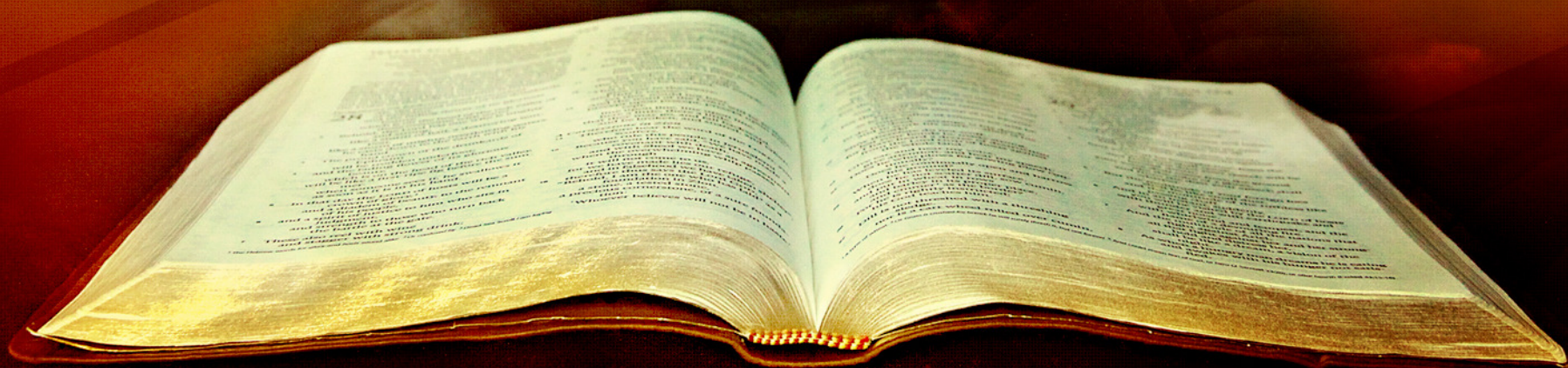


ECCLESIASTES

Ecccl. 2:17-26



Eccl. 2:17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all **my labour** wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity.

20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

21 For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil.

22 For **what hath man of all his labour**, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

24 *There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God.

25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?

26 For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is* good before God. **This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.**

This evening, we continue on a wonderful, spiritual journey through the Book of Ecclesiastes, known also as “The Preacher.”

I. THE PREACHER’S SUBJECT, 1:1-11

A. The Preacher, 1:1 (Solomon)

B. The Problem, 1:2-3

C. The Process, 1:4-11

II. THE PREACHER’S SERMON, 1:12-10:20

A. Things He Had Sought, 1:12—2:26

1. His Persistent Search, 1:12-2:11

a. The World of Thought, 1:12-18

b. The World of Thrills, 2:1-3

(1) Life’s Entertaining Thrills, 2:1-2

(2) Life’s Enslaving Thrills, 2:3

c. The World of Things, 2:4-11

(1) What He Accomplished, 2:4-6

(2) What He Accumulated, 2:7-8

(3) What He Avowed, 2:9-10

(4) What He Acknowledged, 2:11

❖ Solomon was not shy in making pretentious statements about himself.

Eccl. 2:9 **So I was great**, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

❖ Solomon revealed his selfish carnality via hedonistic pleasures:

Eccl. 2:10 And **whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy;**

❖ Solomon then revealed the vanity of it all as he closed out with Eccl. 2:11:

Eccl. 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, **behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit**, and *there was* no profit under the sun.

- ❖ With this as a background, consider Solomon's evaluation of his investigation of pleasure as we look at our passage for tonight.

2. His Pessimistic Summary, 2:12-26

a. The Barrenness of It All, 2:12-16

(1) The Turning Point in His Life, 2:12-14

(a) Why He Turned, 2:12

- i. To Make a Comparison, 2:12a "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly:

ii. To Mature a Conviction, 2:12b
“...for what *can* the man *do* that cometh
after the king? *even* that which hath been
already done.”

- ❖ Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, had little hope to be more successful as king than his father was.
- ❖ Solomon was the G.O.A.T. (Greatest Of All Time) He set the bar too high for anyone to reach.

(a) What He Testified, 2:13-14

i. Discretion is Inestimable, 2:13-14a “Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. 14 The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness...”

❖ From the practical, intellectual perspective, “wisdom” trounces “folly” regarding value.

ii. Death is inevitable, 2:14b “...and I myself perceived also that **one event happeneth to them all.**”

❖ Death is an equal opportunity, inevitable, occurrence to all, waiting to happen.

Heb. 9:27 And as **it is appointed unto men once to die**, but after this the judgment:

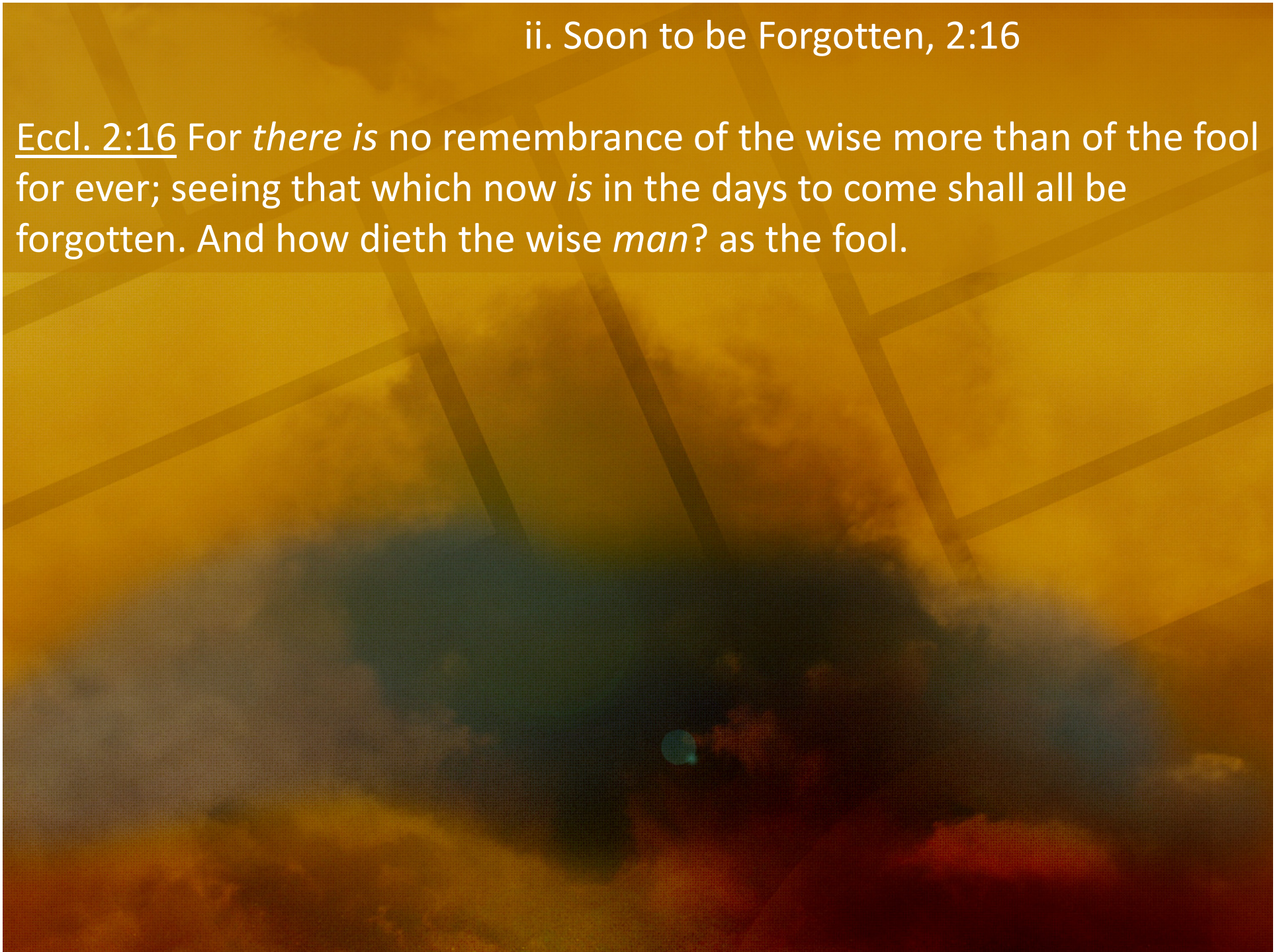
(2) The Turning Point in His Logic, 2:15-16

i. Soon to be Finished, 2:15

Eccl. 2:15 Then said I in my heart, **As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me**; and why was I then more wise? Then **I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.**

ii. Soon to be Forgotten, 2:16

Eccl. 2:16 For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man*? as the fool.



Leo Tolstoy had much in common with Solomon.

Leo Tolstoy (1828 –1910) was a Russian writer widely regarded as one of the greatest novelists in all of literature. His masterpieces *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* represent some of the best realistic fiction ever penned.

Tolstoy tells us that he wrote to make money, take care of his family, and to distract himself from questions about meaning. But later—when seized with questions about the meaning of life and death—he came to regard his literary work as worthless. Without an answer to questions of meaning, he was incapable of doing anything. Despite fame, fortune, and family, he wanted to kill himself. He claimed that being born was a stupid trick that was played on him. “Sooner or later there would come diseases and death...all my affairs...would sooner or later be forgotten, and I myself would not exist. So why should I worry about all these things?” In short, why should he do anything or care about anything if all is for naught?

<https://reasonandmeaning.com/2015/01/05/leo-tolstoy-meaning-and-a-leap-of-faith/>

b. The Bitterness of It All, 2:17-26

(1) He Hated His Life, 2:17

(a) Nothing in His Life was Satisfying, 2:17a
“Therefore I hated life...”

(b) Nothing in His Life was Spiritual, 2:17b –
“...because the work that is wrought **under the sun** is grievous unto me: for **all is vanity and vexation of spirit.**”

(2) He Hated His Labors, 2:18-21

(a) Lose Possession of His Things, 2:18

Eccl. 2:18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken **under the sun**: because **I should leave it** unto the man that shall be after me.

(b) Lose Power over His Things, 2:19

Eccl. 2:19 And **who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool?** yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise **under the sun.**
This *is* also vanity.

2 Chron. 12:1 And it came to pass, when **Rehoboam had established the kingdom,** and had strengthened himself, **he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.**

2 And it came to pass, *that* in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, **because they had transgressed against the LORD,**

3 With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people *were* without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.

4 And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. (**12:1-11**)

(c) Lose Pleasure in His Things, 2:20-21a

i. His Gloom, 2:20

Eccl. 2:20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took **under the sun**.

ii. His Doom, 2:21a “For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion...”

(d) Lose Purchase of His Tradition (**Legacy**),
2:21b “...This also *is* vanity and a great evil.”

(3) He Hated His Lot, 2:22-26

(a) A Question, 2:22-23

i. As to an Adequate Reason for Everything, 2:22

Eccl. 2:22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

ii. As to an Adequate Result for Everything, 2:23

Eccl. 2:23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

(b) A Quest, 2:24-25

- i. The Materialist and His Goal, 2:24a “*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour...*”
- ii. The Materialist and His God, 2:24b-25 “...This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?”

(c) A Qualification, 2:26

- i. God's Gifts, 2:26a “For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy...”
- ii. God's Government, 2:26b “...but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.”

So one must have faith, but what is faith? For Tolstoy “faith was the knowledge of the meaning of human life...Faith is the power of life. If a man lives he believes in something.” And he found this faith, not in the wealthy or the intellectuals, but in the poor and uneducated. The meaning given to the simple life by simple people ... that was the meaning Tolstoy accepted. Meaning is found in a simple life and religious faith.

<https://reasonandmeaning.com/2015/01/05/leo-tolstoy-meaning-and-a-leap-of-faith/>



Conclusion

Psa. 39:4 **LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is*; *that* I may know how frail I *am*.**

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and mine age *is* as nothing before thee: **verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity.** Selah.

6 **Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:** surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

