

Through the Bible

ECCLESIASTES

Zac Poonen



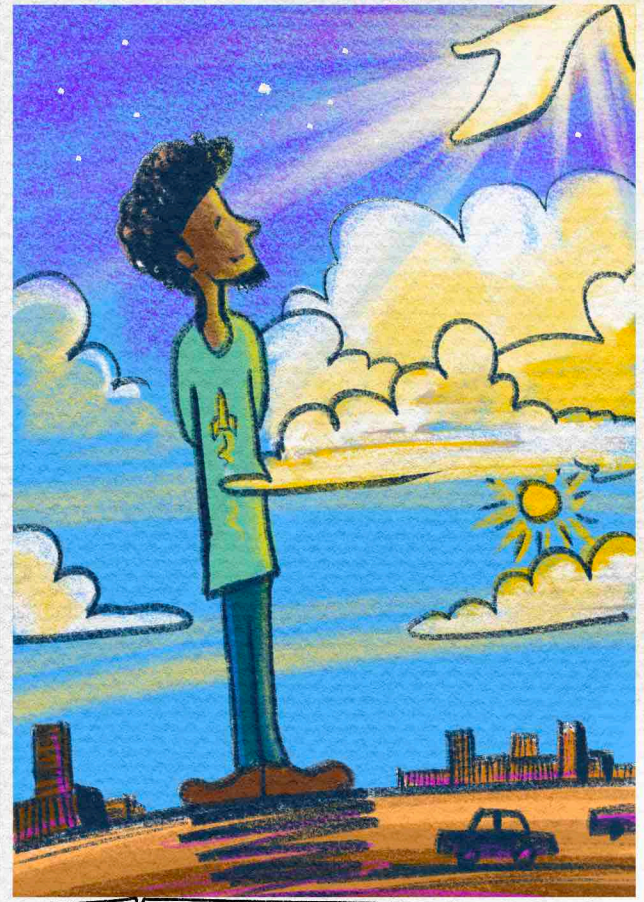
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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

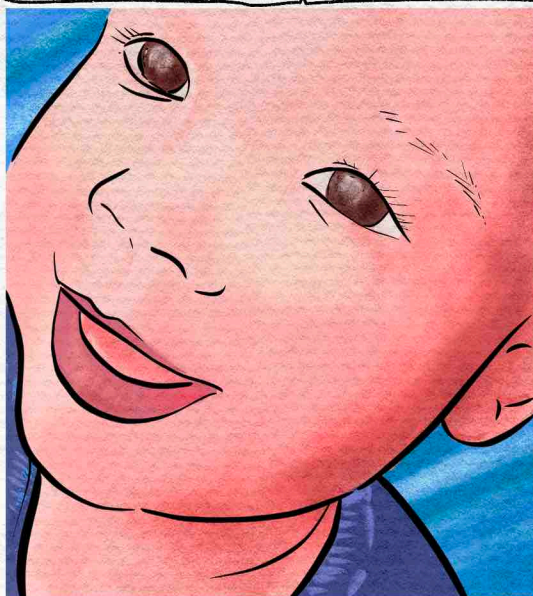
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Ecclesiastes



THIS IS A **DIFFICULT** BOOK TO UNDERSTAND, BUT WE WILL DISCOVER AS WE STUDY IT, THAT THERE IS A REASON WHY GOD HAS PLACED IT IN SCRIPTURE. SOLOMON WAS THE **WISEST** MAN THAT LIVED -- AS FAR AS **HUMAN WISDOM** WAS CONCERNED. THE LORD HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD HAVE WISDOM SUCH AS NO ONE HAD EVER HAD BEFORE HIM OR WOULD HAVE AFTER HIM (1 KINGS 3:12, 13). IN THE **EARLY YEARS** OF SOLOMON'S LIFE, HE HAD SOME **FEAR OF GOD** AND THAT WAS WHEN HE WROTE **PROVERBS**.

PROVERBS IS **DIVINE WISDOM**. ECCLESIASTES, HOWEVER, IS **HUMAN WISDOM** -- THE WISDOM OF THE MAN WHO LIVES "**UNDER THE SUN**" (1:3). THE EXPRESSION 'UNDER THE SUN' COMES OFTEN IN ECCLESIASTES, BECAUSE ITS WRITER LIVED UNDER THE SUN. PROVERBS, HOWEVER, DEMONSTRATES THE WISDOM OF A MAN WHO LIVED ABOVE THE SUN. THIS IS WHERE **WE** ARE CALLED TO LIVE -- IN THE **HEAVENLIES**.

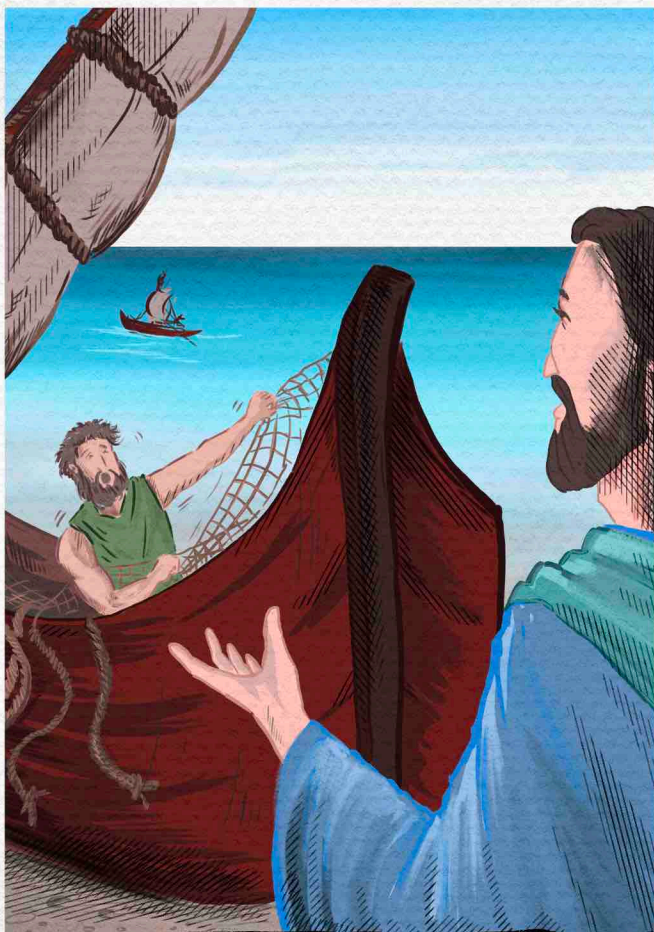


JESUS ONCE SAID, "I THANK YOU, FATHER, THAT YOU HAVE **HIDDEN** THESE THINGS FROM THE **CLEVER** AND THE INTELLIGENT, BUT YOU HAVE REVEALED THEM UNTO **BABES**" (MATTHEW 11:25). WHAT DO **BABES** HAVE THAT **CLEVER** AND INTELLIGENT PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE?

HUMILITY.



GOD GAVE THE PLAN OF THE TABERNACLE TO MOSES NOT WHEN HE WAS 40, BUT WHEN HE WAS 80. WHY? AT 40, HE WAS FULL OF THE WISDOM OF **EGYPT** AND WOULD HAVE MODIFIED GOD'S PLAN CONSIDERABLY. THEN THE GLORY OF GOD WOULD **NOT** HAVE RESTED ON THE TABERNACLE. BUT BY THE TIME MOSES WAS 80, THE **CHAFF** OF **HUMAN WISDOM** HAD BEEN **SIFTED** OUT OF HIS HEAD.



IF **INTELLIGENCE** HAD BEEN THE MAIN REQUIREMENT TO SERVE GOD, THEN JESUS WOULD HAVE GONE TO THE BIBLE SCHOOL THAT **GAMALIEL** WAS RUNNING AT JERUSALEM, AND SELECTED HIS APOSTLES FROM THERE. WHY DIDN'T HE DO THAT? WHY DID HE GO TO THE LAKESIDE IN GALILEE, AND PICK **FISHERMEN** WHO HAD NEVER BEEN TO A BIBLE SCHOOL? BECAUSE HE WAS **NOT** LOOKING FOR CLEVER MEN BUT FOR **HUMBLE** MEN, WHO WERE **WILLING TO LEARN**.



THE **HUMAN** WISDOM THAT IS FOUND IN PSYCHOLOGY TODAY HAS MANY GOOD THINGS IN IT. BUT IT IS **NOT** DIVINE WISDOM. AND IT IS MORE DANGEROUS WHEN DIVINE WISDOM IS MIXED WITH HUMAN WISDOM THAN IF YOU HAD HUMAN WISDOM ALL BY ITSELF. IF SOMEONE WANTED TO POISON YOU, HE WOULD MIX A **LITTLE BIT OF POISON** WITH A **LOT OF MILK**.



THE BOOKS OF **ECCLESIASTES** AND **PROVERBS** CAN BE COMPARED TO THE OFFERINGS OF **CAIN** AND **ABEL**. **CAIN'S** OFFERING WAS A **RELIGIOUS** OFFERING. **ABEL'S** WAS A **SPIRITUAL** OFFERING. THROUGHOUT THE AGES, THERE HAS BEEN A **CONSTANT CONFLICT** BETWEEN **RELIGIOUS** PEOPLE AND **SPIRITUAL** PEOPLE.



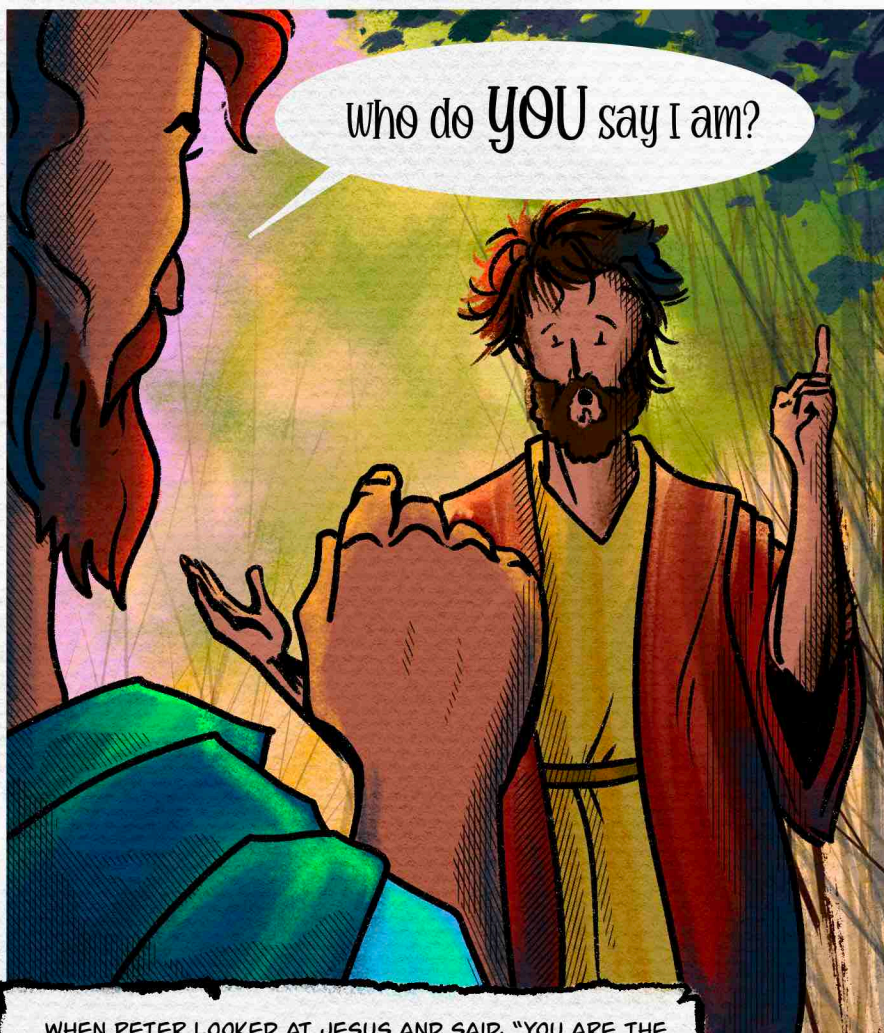
WE MUST PREACH ONLY WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY **PRACTISED**. THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **RELIGIOSITY** AND **SPIRITUALITY**. THIS WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE **PHARISEES** AND **JESUS**. JESUS SAID, "THE **PHARISEES** SAY THINGS BUT DO NOT DO THEM" (MATTHEW 23:3). BUT HE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH WHAT THEY TAUGHT. THE **PHARISEES** WERE THE **FUNDAMENTALISTS** OF THEIR TIME. BUT THEY DID **NOT** LIVE WHAT THEY PREACHED IN THE PULPIT.



THE **RELIGIOUS** MAN DOES GOOD THINGS OUT OF **FEAR** OF JUDGEMENT. THAT IS HOW EVERY FALSE RELIGION OPERATES. THEY TEACH YOU TO BE GOOD, IN ORDER TO AVOID JUDGEMENT AND TO BE REWARDED IN THE NEXT LIFE! **FALSE CHRISTIANITY** PREACHES THE SAME THING. WHERE THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR OUR OBEYING GOD IS THE FEAR OF BEING JUDGED, THERE WE HAVE A **FALSE CHRISTIANITY**. JESUS SAID, "IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS" (JOHN 14:15). TRUE SPIRITUALITY IS NOT MOTIVATED BY THE FEAR OF JUDGEMENT, BUT BY **LOVE**.



HERE WAS A PERSON WHO SOUGHT TO DISCOVER GOD THROUGH HIS **SENSES**, HIS **INTELLIGENCE** AND HIS **REASONING**, **WITHOUT** THE HELP OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. CHRISTIANS WHO DO THAT WILL GO AS MUCH **ASTRAY** FROM THE TRUTH AS THOSE WHO FOLLOW OTHER RELIGIONS. WE CAN KNOW NOTHING ABOUT GOD WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, FOR HE ALONE CAN REVEAL TO US THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD. "THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD" (1 CORINTHIANS 2:11).



WHEN PETER LOOKED AT JESUS AND SAID, "YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD," JESUS REPLIED SAYING, "BLESSED ARE YOU, SIMON, FOR FLESH AND BLOOD HAS NOT REVEALED THIS TO YOU BUT MY FATHER IN HEAVEN." THAT MEANS THAT IT WAS **NOT** PETER'S HUMAN CLEVERNESS THAT **ENABLED** HIM TO UNDERSTAND THIS TRUTH. HOW COULD AN UNLEARNED PERSON LIKE PETER KNOW WHO JESUS WAS, WHEN THE PHARISEES WHO STUDIED THE SCRIPTURES DAY AND NIGHT COULD NOT? THE TRUTHS OF GOD CAN BE KNOWN ONLY BY THE **REVELATION** OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THAT'S WHAT PETER HAD AND THE PHARISEES DIDN'T.



SOLOMON TRIED TO FIND SATISFACTION THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS OF **PLEASURE**, ACQUIRING **PROPERTY**, MAKING PONDS OF WATER (2:6), HAVING MANY SLAVES (2:7), COLLECTING PLENTY OF SILVER AND **GOLD**, ETC. "EVERYTHING THAT MY EYES DESIRED, I DID NOT REFUSE THEM" (2:10). AT THE END OF IT ALL HE SAYS, "THUS I CONSIDERED ALL MY ACTIVITIES AND THERE WAS NO PROFIT UNDER THE SUN" (2:11). HE THEN TALKS ABOUT THE **FUTILITY** OF HARD WORK, BECAUSE "ALL THE FRUIT OF HIS LABOUR HE WOULD HAVE TO **LEAVE** TO SOMEBODY WHO CAME AFTER HIM, AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER HE WILL BE A WISE MAN OR A FOOL!" "UNDER THE SUN EVERYTHING WAS **VANITY**"



CHAPTER 3:1--8: SOLOMON WAS A KEEN OBSERVER OF HUMAN **NATURE** AND SOLOMON SAYS THAT THERE IS A TIME TO GIVE BIRTH, A TIME TO DIE AND A TIME TO PLANT. ALL OF THAT IS CORRECT. BUT THEN HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT THERE IS A TIME TO KILL AND A TIME TO **HATE!** FOR A SPIRITUAL MAN, THERE IS **NEVER** A TIME TO KILL OR TO HATE -- AND THERE ARE **NO** HUMAN BEINGS HE HATES. A SPIRITUAL MAN DWELLS IN GOD AND **LOVES** ALL PEOPLE, **ALL** THE TIME.



WE READ SOMETHING INTERESTING IN CHAPTER 2:26: "TO A PERSON WHO IS GOOD IN GOD'S SIGHT, GOD HAS GIVEN WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE AND JOY." THIS IS A TRUE STATEMENT. BUT WHAT TASK DOES GOD GIVE A **SINNER**? THE TASK OF GATHERING, COLLECTING AND HOARDING MONEY AND OTHER MATERIAL THINGS, SO THAT ONE DAY THEY CAN ALL BE GIVEN TO THE MAN WHO IS SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM **FIRST!** (VERSE 26). IN ETERNITY, THE **MEEK** WILL **INHERIT** THE EARTH.

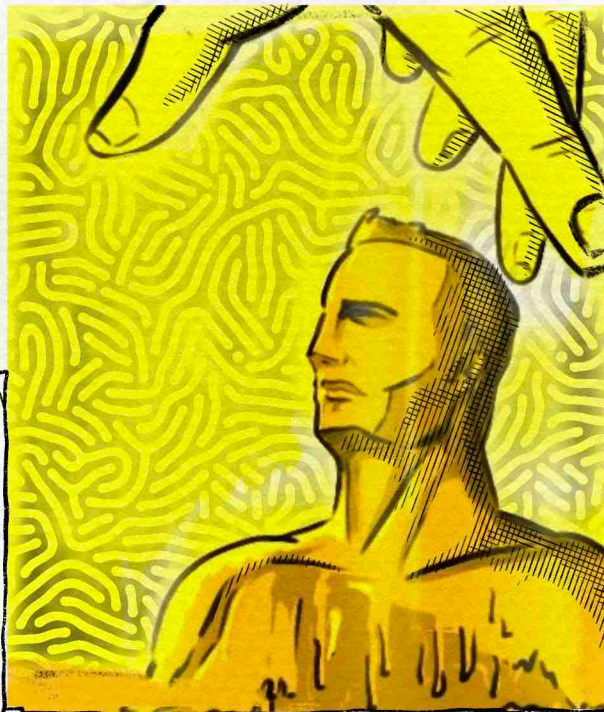


LET ME GIVE YOU ONE EXAMPLE: A NEW TEACHING HAS ARISEN IN CHRISTENDOM CALLED "**VISUALISING**". FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU ONLY OWN A SCOOTER, **VISUALISE** YOURSELF OWNING A NICE, NEW **CAR**. THEN YOU WILL HAVE THE FAITH NECESSARY TO GET THESE THINGS. FAITH IS **NOT** BASED ON VISUALISATION. ROMANS 10:17 IS CLEAR THAT "FAITH COMES BY HEARING AND HEARING BY THE **WORD** OF CHRIST".

GOD SHAPEN VOIN..



THE WORD "ETERNITY" OCCURS JUST **ONCE** IN THIS BOOK -- IN 3:11: "HE HAS SET ETERNITY IN THEIR HEART, WITHOUT WHICH MAN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FIND OUT THE WORK WHICH GOD HAS DONE" (LITERAL TRANSLATION). THERE IS A GOD-SHAPED **VACUUM** IN EVERY HUMAN HEART THAT CAN NEVER BE FILLED OR SATISFIED BY ANYONE OR ANYTHING OTHER THAN GOD. AS SOMEONE HAS PUT IT, "WE ARE **RESTLESS** UNTIL WE FIND OUR REST IN **GOD**". GOD HAS PUT ETERNITY IN OUR HEARTS SO THAT WE WILL **NEVER** FIND SATISFACTION IN MONEY, WOMEN, PROPERTY, HONOUR OR POSITION. IT GOES ON TO SAY HERE THAT UNLESS WE GIVE PRIMARY IMPORTANCE TO THE ETERNAL THINGS, WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO FIND OUT WHAT GOD HAS DONE.



IN 3:19--21, WE SEE HOW HUMAN WISDOM HAS **NO** CLUE ABOUT ETERNITY: "THE FATE OF THE SONS OF MEN AND THE FATE OF BEASTS IS THE SAME. AS ONE DIES, SO DIES THE OTHER, AND THERE IS NO ADVANTAGE FOR MAN OVER THE BEAST. THEY CAME FROM DUST, THEY GO BACK TO DUST. WHO KNOWS WHETHER THE BREATH OF MAN ASCENDS UPWARDS AND THE BREATH OF BEASTS DESCENDS DOWNWARDS TO THE EARTH?"

THIS WAS **SOLOMON'S** CONCLUSION, WITH ALL HIS **HUMAN WISDOM**. HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THERE WAS ANY **DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN MAN AND BEAST WHEN THEY BOTH DIED.

IN THIS BOOK, WE SEE THE **WISEST** MAN ON EARTH TRYING TO UNDERSTAND GOD AND RELIGION. HE GOT A FEW THINGS RIGHT, AND MANY THINGS WRONG. WHY THEN DID GOD ALLOW ECCLESIASTES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE BIBLE: TO TEACH US THAT WE **CANNOT** FIND HIM THROUGH HUMAN WISDOM AND **PSYCHOLOGY**, BUT **ONLY** THROUGH HIS HOLY SPIRIT.



two ARE
BETTER
than one



CHAPTER 4:4: "I HAVE SEEN THAT EVERY **LABOUR** AND EVERY SKILL WHICH IS DONE IS THE RESULT OF **RIVALRY** BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS NEIGHBOUR". SOLOMON OBSERVED THAT MOST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE **MOTIVATED** BY THE SPIRIT OF **COMPETITION**. BUT SADLY THIS IS TRUE OF MUCH OF CHRISTENDOM TOO. CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS GRAB WORKERS FROM OTHER CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS BY OFFERING THEM **HIGHER SALARIES**. THAT IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS **WORLD**. A GODLY MAN WILL **NEVER** COMPETE WITH ANYONE ELSE -- WHETHER MAN, OR CHURCH, OR ORGANISATION

THERE ARE SOME REALLY GOOD STATEMENTS IN 4:9--12. "TWO ARE **BETTER** THAN ONE BECAUSE THEY HAVE A GOOD RETURN FOR THEIR LABOUR" (4:9). A HUSBAND AND WIFE WORKING TOGETHER CAN ACCOMPLISH MUCH MORE FOR **GOD** THAN IF THEY WORKED SEPARATELY. THEY ALSO MULTIPLY AND HAVE CHILDREN, AND THUS MORE IS ACCOMPLISHED THAN IF THEY HAD BEEN SINGLE. THIS APPLIES TO BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN A CHURCH TOO.

HERE IS A SECOND REASON WHY TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE: "IF ONE OF THEM FALLS, THE OTHER CAN LIFT HIM UP" (4:10). IT IS WONDERFUL WHEN A CHURCH IS LIKE THAT -- WITH BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO ARE EAGER TO LIFT UP ONE WHO HAS FALLEN INTO SIN OR DISCOURAGEMENT, ETC.

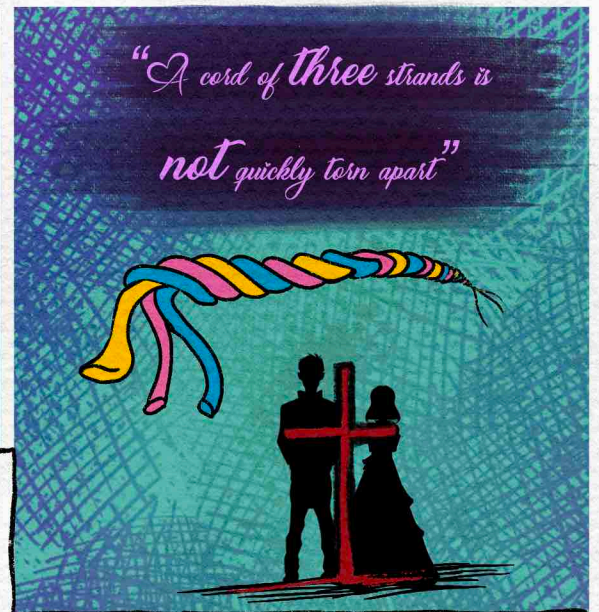


"WOE UNTO HIM WHO IS ALONE WHEN HE FALLS AND HE DOESN'T HAVE ANYBODY TO LIFT HIM UP" (4:10). IT IS **DANGEROUS** TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ALONE AND WITHOUT **FELLOWSHIP**.

HERE IS A ANOTHER REASON FOR FELLOWSHIP: "IF TWO ARE TOGETHER THEY CAN BE WARM" (4:11). WE CAN KEEP THE FIRE BURNING IN EACH OTHER'S HEARTS WHEN WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP. IF YOU CAN'T STAY ON FIRE FOR GOD ON YOUR OWN, THEN YOU MUST SEEK FELLOWSHIP WITH THOSE WHO ARE ON **FIRE FOR GOD**.



"IF ONE CAN OVERPOWER HIM WHO IS ALONE, TWO CAN RESIST HIM" (4:12). JESUS SAID, "WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN **MY** NAME (TO GLORIFY **MY** NAME), AND WHERE THEY ARE ONE IN **SPIRIT** WITH EACH OTHER, THERE I AM IN THEIR MIDST, AND THEN WHATEVER THEY BIND ON EARTH WILL BE BOUND IN THE HEAVENLIES" (MATTHEW 18:18-- A BELIEVER CANNOT DO THAT ALONE, BECAUSE THAT NEEDS AN EXPRESSION OF THE **BODY** OF CHRIST -- AND THE MINIMUM FOR THAT IS **TWO**.



"A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart"

THREE STRANDS ARE NECESSARY FOR A **STRONG** MARRIAGE -- THE **HUSBAND**, THE **WIFE** AND THE **LORD**. IF THE **LORD** IS NOT IN THE **CENTRE** OF A MARRIAGE, THAT MARRIAGE CANNOT PROSPER.



HERE IS A GOOD WORD ABOUT **CORRECTION**: "A **POOR**, **WISE**, **YOUNG** MAN IS MUCH BETTER THAN AN OLD AND **FOOLISH** KING WHO DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO RECEIVE CORRECTION" (4:13). IT IS EASY TO BECOME A **FOOLISH** KING. WHEN GOD HAS RAISED US TO A POSITION OF **SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**, IT IS EASY TO IMAGINE THAT WE ARE ALWAYS **RIGHT**, AND THAT NO-ONE CAN CORRECT US ANY MORE. MAY GOD **SAVE** US FROM EVER COMING TO THAT PLACE OF **FOLLY**. I

THANK GOD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE CORRECTED ME. I HAVE RECEIVED THEIR CORRECTION AND BECOME A BETTER MAN. MANY CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE BECOME OLD AND **FOOLISH** KINGS, BECAUSE THEY REFUSED TO BE CORRECTED. A **WISE** MAN IS ALWAYS WILLING TO RECEIVE **CORRECTION**.



IN CHAPTER 5:1--3, WE ARE TOLD NOT TO SPEAK MUCH WHEN WE ARE IN GOD'S PRESENCE: "DON'T BE HASTY IN WORD OR IN THOUGHT TO BRING UP A MATTER IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD BECAUSE GOD IS IN HEAVEN AND YOU ARE ON EARTH. THEREFORE LET YOUR WORDS BE **FEW**" (VERSE 2). WHEN WE SPEAK TO SOMEONE FAR MORE **MATURE** THAN US, DO WE SPEAK MORE OR **LISTEN** MORE? ONLY A **PROUD** PERSON WOULD TALK MORE THAN LISTEN TO SOMEONE MORE **GODLY** THAN HIM.



PRAYER SHOULD BE 90% **LISTENING** AND 10% **SPEAKING**. JESUS TOLD US TO "PRAY **ALWAYS**" (LUKE 18:1). SO WE MUST DEVELOP THE HABIT OF LISTENING TO GOD ALWAYS. WE HAVE ALL SEEN POLICE OFFICERS WITH THEIR "WALKIE-TALKIES". THAT IS A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF HOW WE SHOULD ALSO LIVE -- ALWAYS ALERT TO LISTEN TO ORDERS FROM OUR HEADQUARTERS IN **HEAVEN**.



CHAPTER 5:10: "HE WHO LOVES **MONEY** WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH MONEY, NOR HE WHO LOVES **ABUNDANCE** WITH INCOME. THIS TOO IS **EMPTY**." SOMEONE HAS SAID, "GOD HAS MADE ENOUGH IN THIS WORLD FOR EVERY MAN'S **NEED**, BUT NOT ENOUGH FOR EVEN **ONE MAN'S GREED**."

"DON'T MAKE VOWS TO GOD THAT YOU CANNOT PAY. IT IS BETTER NOT TO MAKE A VOW THAN TO VOW AND NOT PAY" (5:4, 5). WE SHOULD NEVER MAKE PROMISES TO GOD THAT WE CAN'T KEEP. WE MUST NOT TELL LIES TO GOD WHEN WE SING SONGS OF DEVOTION AND SURRENDER TO THE LORD. DON'T SING, "TAKE MY **SILVER** AND MY **GOLD** -- NOT A MITE WOULD I **WITHHOLD**," IF YOU DON'T MEAN IT. DON'T SING, "TAKE MY **VOICE** AND LET ME SING ALWAYS ONLY FOR MY KING", IF YOU ALSO SING WORLDLY SONGS. DON'T SING, "**ALL TO JESUS I SURRENDER**", IF YOU HAVEN'T **ACTUALLY** SURRENDERED EVERYTHING IN YOUR LIFE TO THE LORD. CHRISTIANS TELL **MORE LIES** TO GOD ON **SUNDAYS** THAN ON ANY OTHER DAY OF THE WEEK BECAUSE THAT IS THE DAY WHEN THEY **SING** SUCH SONGS IN THEIR MEETINGS. WHEN YOU FIND WORDS IN A SONG THAT ARE NOT YET TRUE OF YOUR LIFE, YOU CAN SING THEM AS A **PRAYER** AND NOT AS A TESTIMONY. TELL THE LORD THAT THAT IS HOW YOU **WANT** TO LIVE. THEN YOU ARE HONEST. BUT IF THE LIFE DESCRIBED IN ONE LINE OF A SONG IS NOT EVEN YOUR **LONGING**, THEN IN ALL HONESTY, YOU MUST KEEP **QUIET** WHEN YOU COME TO THAT LINE. IF OTHERS ARE TELLING LIES, LET THEM SING LIES TO GOD. BUT YOU BE **HONEST** YOURSELF.

A GREEDY MAN WILL **NEVER** BE **HAPPY** NO MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY HE MAKES. EVEN THE MILLIONAIRE WANTS MORE. JESUS SAID THAT WE **CANNOT** LOVE GOD AND MONEY (LUKE 16:13) -- BECAUSE THEY ARE **OPPOSITES**. "WHEN GOOD THINGS INCREASE (WHEN YOUR SALARY INCREASES), YOUR EXPENSES INCREASE TOO" (5:11).

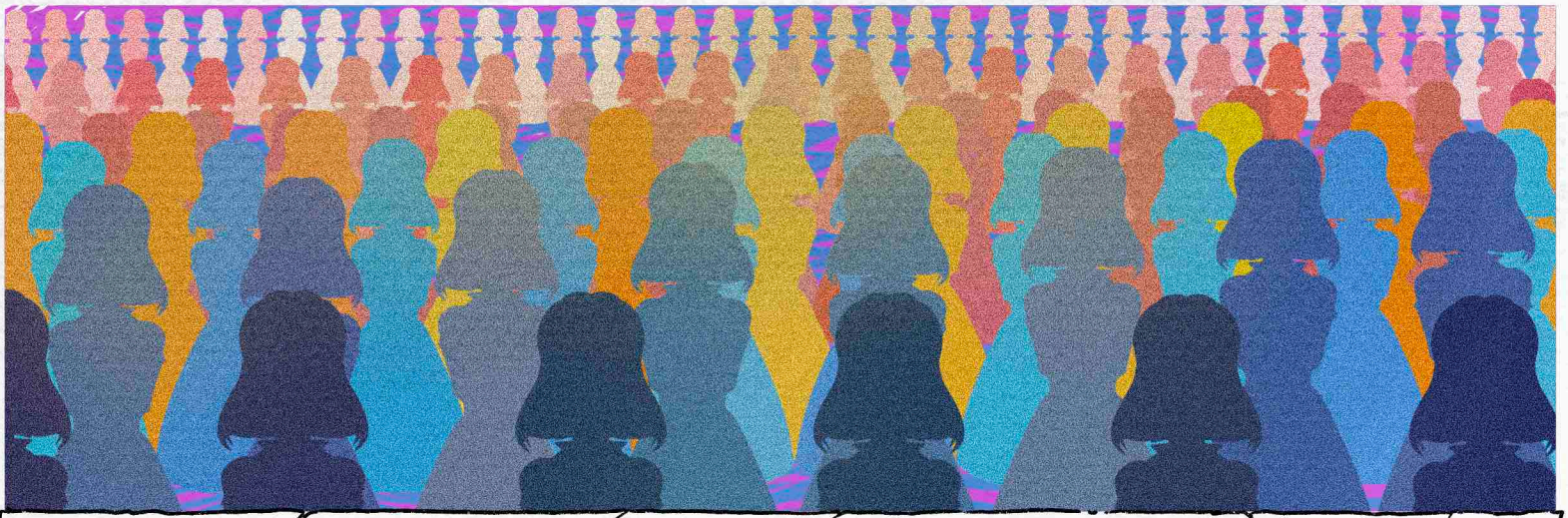


"THE **WORKING** MAN DOES NOT EARN MUCH, BUT HIS **SLEEP** IS PLEASANT WHETHER HE EATS LITTLE OR MUCH. BUT THE FULL STOMACH OF THE RICH MAN DOES NOT ALLOW HIM TO SLEEP" (5:12). IF YOU EAT A LOT OF RICH FOOD AT NIGHT, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SLEEP PROPERLY. **SIMPLE** FOOD LEADS TO A **HEALTHIER** LIFE.



CHAPTER 6:1, 2: "THERE IS AN EVIL WHICH I HAVE SEEN UNDER THE SUN AND IT IS PREVALENT AMONG MEN. A MAN TO WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN RICHES AND WEALTH AND HONOUR SO THAT HIS SOUL LACKS NOTHING OF ALL THAT HE DESIRES; YET GOD HAS NOT EMPOWERED HIM TO EAT FROM THEM." HERE IS A MAN WHO HAS MADE A **LOT** OF MONEY, BUT HE LOSES HIS **HEALTH** IN THE PURSUIT OF **WEALTH** AND THEN IS **FORBIDDEN** BY THE **DOCTORS** TO EAT MANY THINGS. MANY PEOPLE NOWADAYS SPEND THE **FIRST** HALF OF THEIR WORKING LIFE **RUINING** THEIR HEALTH AND **ACCUMULATING** WEALTH, AND THEN SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIFE **SPENDING** THAT WEALTH TO REGAIN THEIR **HEALTH**!

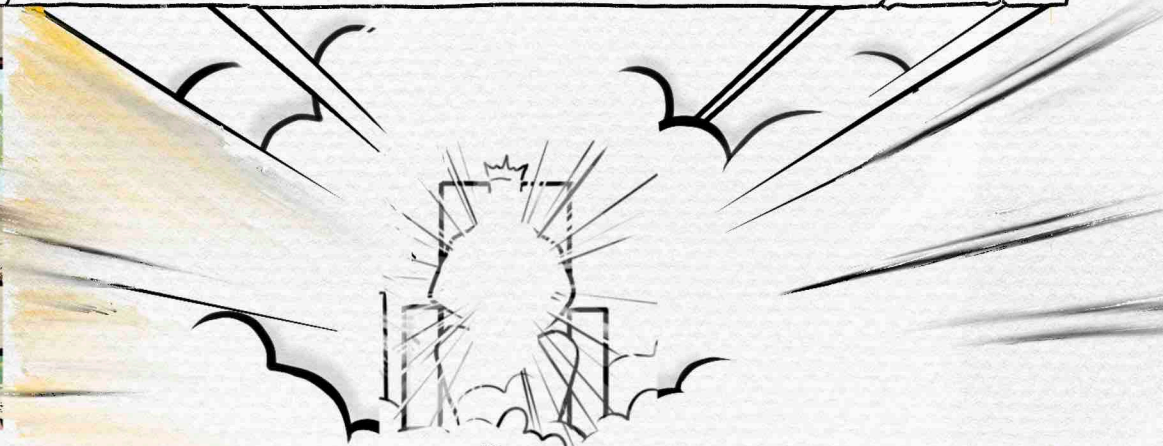
CHAPTERS 7 TO 9 HAVE A LOT OF GOOD, **PRACTICAL** ADVICE ON HOW TO LIVE IN THE WORLD. CHAPTER 7:16, 17 SAYS "DON'T BE TOO RIGHTEOUS AND DON'T BE TOO WICKED, FOR YOU WILL ONLY DESTROY YOURSELF." **WORLDLY** PEOPLE WILL SAY THAT IT IS **IMPOSSIBLE** TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD WITHOUT **COMPROMISING**. ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT THIS VERSE WOULD BE TO READ IT AS: "DON'T TRY TO BE **SUPER-RIGHTEOUS** THAT IS BY GOING **BEYOND** THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOD'S WORD.



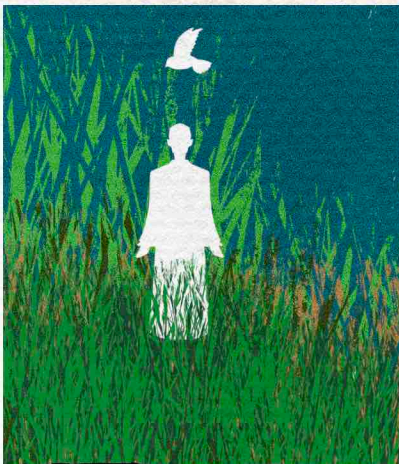
IN CHAPTER 7:28, SOLOMON SAYS, "I HAVE FOUND ONE WISE MAN AMONG A THOUSAND MEN. BUT I HAVEN'T FOUND A WISE **WOMAN** AMONG A THOUSAND WOMEN." DOES THAT MEAN THAT MEN ARE WISER THAN WOMEN? **NO**. GOD CREATED MEN AND WOMEN WITH **EQUAL** POWERS AND EQUAL ABILITY TO BE **SPIRITUAL**. SOLOMON IS REFERRING HERE, HOWEVER, TO THE 1000 WOMEN HE HAD IN HIS **HAREM** -- 700 WIVES AND 300 CONCUBINES (1 KINGS 11:3). KNOWING THE FLIRTATIOUS WOMEN HE HAD IN HIS HAREM, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT HE DIDN'T FIND WISDOM AMONG ANY OF THEM. BUT THERE ARE MANY, MANY **GODLY** WOMEN WHO ARE **WISER** THAN MEN.



A MAN'S WISDOM ILLUMINES HIM AND CAUSES HIS SERIOUS FACE TO **BEAM** WITH JOY" (8:1). THE MORE WISDOM WE HAVE, THE MORE OUR FACES WILL RADIATE THE JOY OF THE LORD. A GRUMPY, MISERABLE LOOK IS ONE MARK OF A FOOLISH MAN WHO HAS **NO** WISDOM. **JESUS** WAS NEVER GRUMPY OR SOUR. NEITHER SHOULD HIS DISCIPLES BE.



" BECAUSE PUNISHMENT AGAINST AN EVIL DEED IS NOT EXECUTED **QUICKLY**, THEREFORE THE HEARTS OF MEN ARE GIVEN FULLY TO DO EVIL" (8:11). IF GOD HAD METED OUT PUNISHMENT AS SOON AS ANYONE SINNED IN ANY WAY, MEN WOULD HAVE STOPPED SINNING ALL OVER THE WORLD. BUT **JUDGEMENT-DAY** IS COMING. "EVEN IF A SINNER DOES EVIL A HUNDRED TIMES AND EXTENDS HIS LIFE, I KNOW IT WILL GO WELL ONLY FOR THOSE WHO FEAR GOD OPENLY" (8:12). CHAPTER 8:17 SAYS THAT THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT GOD DOES, THAT WE CANNOT FULLY **UNDERSTAND** OR EXPLAIN WITH OUR LIMITED HUMAN WISDOM.



CHAPTER 9:8 IS A BEAUTIFUL VERSE THAT WE COULD APPLY TO OUR LIFE AND MINISTRY: "LET YOUR CLOTHES BE WHITE ALL THE TIME, AND LET NOT OIL BE LACKING ON YOUR HEAD." THAT MEANS THAT WE SHOULD KEEP OUR **CONSCIENCE** CLEAN AND OUR **HEARTS** PURE ALWAYS. SECONDLY, WE SHOULD SEEK TO LIVE UNDER THE ANOINTING OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AT ALL TIMES.



CHAPTER 9:14--18 TELLS THE STORY OF A SMALL CITY THAT WAS DELIVERED FROM THE ENEMY BY A SIMPLE WISE MAN. YET NO ONE REMEMBERED THAT WISE MAN. "**WISDOM** IS BETTER THAN **WEAPONS** OF WAR" (9:18). WE MUST WIN PEOPLE BY **KINDNESS** AND NOT BY **BRUTALITY**.

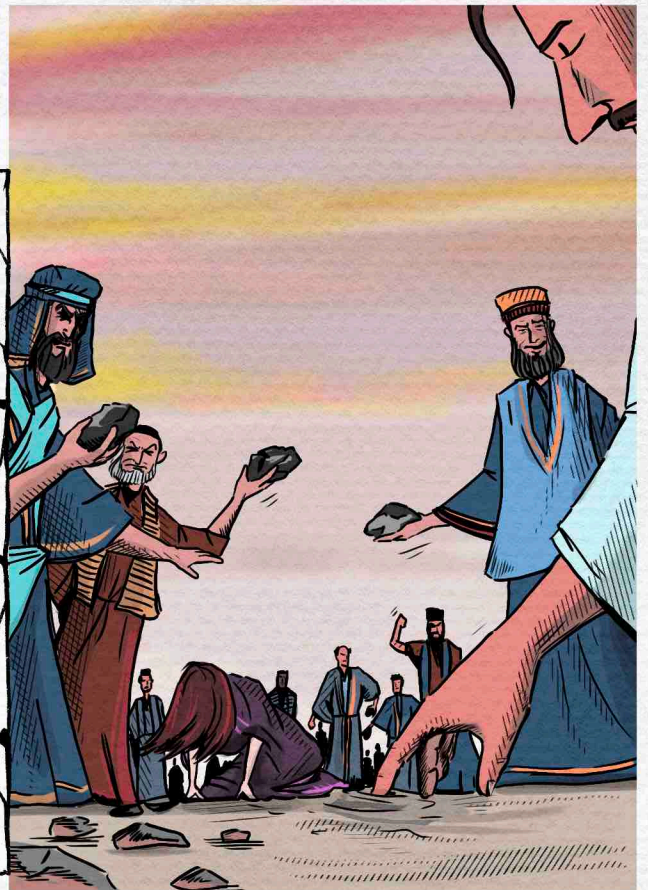


DEAD FLIES MAKE A **PERFUMER'S** OINTMENT TO **STINK**. SO A LITTLE FOOLISHNESS IS WEIGHTIER THAN MUCH WISDOM AND HONOUR" (10:1). ONE SMALL ACT OF **FOOLISHNESS** CAN RUIN YOUR ENTIRE **TESTIMONY** FOR WISDOM



"A SERPENT MAY BITE HIM WHO BREAKS THROUGH A WALL" (10:8). GOD HAS DRAWN BOUNDARIES AROUND ALL OF US AND WE MUST STAY WITHIN THEM. IF WE GO OUTSIDE THEM, **SATAN**, THAT OLD SERPENT, CAN BITE US. THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ADAM AND EVE IN EDEN AND TO KING SAUL AND KING UZZIAH (GENESIS 3; 1 SAMUEL 13:9; 2 CHRONICLES 26:16).

IF THE AXE IS **DULL** AND HE DOES NOT **SHARPEN** ITS EDGE, HE MUST EXERT MORE STRENGTH. **WISDOM** HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF GIVING SUCCESS" (10:10). YOU CAN FINISH THE JOB QUICKER IF YOU FIRST SHARPEN YOUR AXE. WE MUST KEEP OUR **SPIRITUAL** EDGE SHARP BY KEEPING OUR CONSCIENCE CLEAR ALWAYS. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT MUST ALSO BE SHARP IN OUR HAND, BECAUSE WE KNOW GOD'S WORD WELL. PREACHING WITH A POOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD IS LIKE USING A BLUNT SWORD IN WAR. THE ENEMY IS NOT DEFEATED. **JESUS** OFTEN SOLVED PROBLEMS WITH A **SINGLE** SENTENCE LIKE, "HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU, LET HIM CAST THE FIRST STONE". HIS REPLIES TO SATAN'S **TEMPTATIONS** ALSO CAME FROM A SHARP SWORD: "MAN SHALL **NOT** LIVE BY BREAD ALONE BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE **MOUTH OF GOD**", ETC.



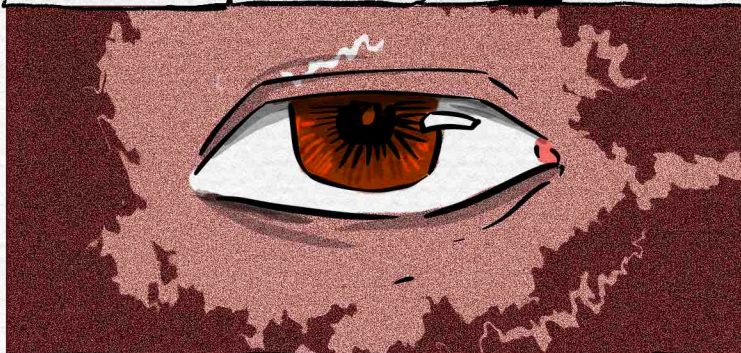
WHETHER A TREE FALLS TOWARD THE SOUTH OR THE NORTH, WHEREVER THE TREE FALLS, THERE IT LIES" (11:3). ONCE A PERSON **DIES**, HIS ETERNAL FATE IS **SETTLED**.

AGAIN WE SEE A MIXTURE OF **WORLDLY** WISDOM HERE: "MONEY IS THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING." (10:19). THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE MAN OF THE WORLD SAYS AND THAT IS WHY HE PURSUES AFTER **MONEY** WITH ALL HIS HEART. WE WHO BELIEVE THAT **GOD** IS THE ANSWER TO EVERY PROBLEM SHOULD BE **PURSUING** AFTER GOD WITH ALL OUR HEARTS.

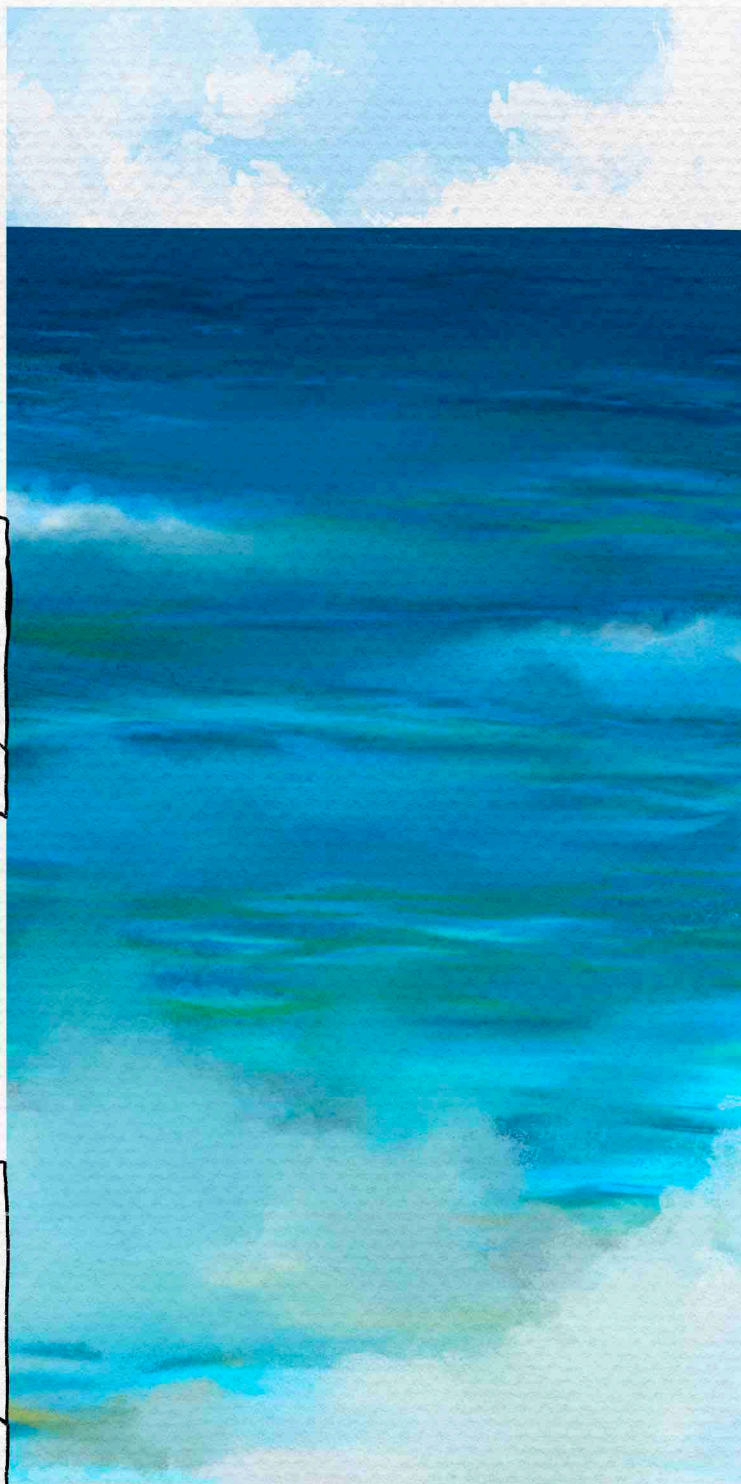
CAST YOUR BREAD ON THE SURFACE OF THE WATERS AND YOU WILL FIND IT AFTER MANY DAYS" (11:1). WE MUST DO **GOOD** TO OTHERS WHENEVER WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY --IN THE MEASURE IN WHICH WE **GIVE**, WE WILL **RECEIVE**.



"HE WHO WATCHES THE WIND WILL NOT SOW AND HE WHO LOOKS AT THE CLOUDS WILL NOT REAP" (11:4). WE MUST **NOT** WAIT FOR PERFECT CONDITIONS TO SERVE THE LORD. WE MUST BE **READY** TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS AND TO SERVE THE LORD AT **ALL** TIMES -- WHEN IT IS **CONVENIENT** FOR US AND WHEN IT IS NOT (2 TIMOTHY 4:2).



CHAPTER 11:9--12:7 IS A WARNING TO YOUNG MEN THAT IF THEY "FOLLOW THE IMPULSES OF THEIR HEART AND THE DESIRES OF THEIR EYES, GOD WILL BRING THEM TO JUDGMENT FOR ALL THESE THINGS". THEY MUST LIVE EACH DAY THEREFORE RECOGNISING THAT THEY ARE **ACCOUNTABLE** TO GOD FOR ALL THAT WE DO WITH OUR BODIES. SINCE "LIFE IS FLEETING" THEY SHOULD PUT AWAY EVERYTHING THAT WILL CAUSE **ETERNAL** GRIEF, AND REMEMBER THEIR **CREATOR** WHILE THEY ARE STILL **YOUNG**, FOR IT WILL BE MORE **DIFFICULT** TO TURN TO GOD IN **LATER** YEARS.



"JUST AS YOU DON'T KNOW THE PATH OF THE WIND, SO YOU DO NOT KNOW THE **ACTIVITY OF GOD**" (11:5). OUR MIND IS LIKE A LITTLE CUP THAT CANNOT CONTAIN THE **OCEAN** OF GOD'S **WISDOM**. SO WE DO NOT HAVE AN EXPLANATION FOR MANY THINGS ON THIS EARTH. NEITHER CAN WE FULLY KNOW HOW GOD WORKS IN EVERY AREA. JESUS SAID THAT "THE WIND BLOWS WHERE IT WISHES" (JOHN 3:5). EVEN SO, WE **CANNOT** **EXPLAIN** ALL THE WORKINGS OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**.



CHAPTER 12:9--11 ARE THREE EXCELLENT VERSES THAT DESCRIBE MANY OF THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD PREACHER. HE FIRST WILL **APPLY** IT WISELY IN DAILY LIFE SITUATIONS. HE WILL **MEDITATE** ON GOD'S WORD, SEARCH THROUGH IT TO FIND ALL THAT IT SAYS ON ANY SUBJECT, AND ARRANGE THE RESULTS OF HIS STUDY. HE WILL THEN BE CAREFUL TO PRESENT THE **TRUTH ACCURATELY** AND ALSO IN A PLEASANT AND INTERESTING WAY.