

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Timothy 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

“No teacher should strive to make others think as he thinks but to lead them to the living Truth, the Master himself, of whom alone they can learn anything, who will make them in themselves know what is true by the very seeing of it.”

Those words were written by George McDonald, a Scottish minister, in his third book of “Unspoken Sermons” published in 1889 and are as applicable to us today as they were for the people of his time.

Many people often use their persuasive powers in striving to make others think as they think and whilst the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans the church at Corinth and Philippi urges the believers to have one mind when it comes to living the Christian faith he does not indicate that their mind must be like his but rather as he points out in 1 Corinthians 2:16...we have the mind of Christ.

For us to be able to determine what the mind of Christ is in relation to living out our faith we need to closely study Scripture and seek the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit as to what the mind of Christ is calling us to.

Jesus clearly points us in the right direction to discover the way that we should live our lives if we profess to be His disciples, the words Jesus speaks to us today and to people of all time through his written word in John 14:6 that He is the way, the truth, and the life. We need not seek anywhere else, He is all in all.

A further thought is that we need light to clearly see the way wherein we should walk; this applies not only to our physical existence but also to our spiritual life. Again Jesus speaks to us and points us to the light that we are to use, recall his words in John 8:12, Jesus says I am the light of the world, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

The Apostle John makes a statement which we could take as an encouragement that as long as we follow Jesus, the light of the world, we will not experience any darkness at all; John unequivocally declares that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

So in our teaching of others, whether by word or deed, we must always point people to discovering the mind of Christ for their life rather than endeavouring to force them to think and act as we do.

Jesus did not use coercion and nor should we if profess to have his mind, He continues to call people to follow him by choice not compulsion. *J.v.L.*



From the Pulpit

*Number 2 of 12 expository messages from:
The Book of Ecclesiastes by:
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The Pursuit of Pleasure

I invite your attention to Ecclesiastes chapter 2, we have the preacher here, probably King Solomon, in his later years after he has had time to reflect on his life and the way things have gone, we see that this book is a search for meaning and purpose in life and so we need to take heed, all of us, that we learn the lessons that the preacher wants us to learn.

One of the first things he says here is that everything is vain, everything is vanity, but he qualifies that by saying it is vain, it is vanity under the sun, so in the terms of an earthly perspective all this stuff is pretty vain it is fleeting, it is like chasing the wind, it is like you know on a cold frosty morning and you blow and you see your breath and trying to catch that and keep it, you just can't do it, it is that fleeting.

So we have vanity all is vanity says the preacher, everything under the sun that is without God is worthless in the end.

And so the preacher starts on this quest to find out what really does make the world go round, what really is that which satisfies and he gives us some hints along the way about what real true satisfaction is and we are going to look at that today.

I invite you to turn now to Ecclesiastes chapter 2, I'll actually start at the end of chapter 1 to give us a bit of a context,

We will start with verse 16 of chapter 1.

[Ecclesiastes 1:16-18](#) ¹⁶ I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷ And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is

but a striving after wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-26 ^(ESV) I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity. ² I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?” ³ I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. ⁴ I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man. ⁹ So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰ And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹ Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. ¹² So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. ¹³ Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. ¹⁴ The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. ¹⁵ Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶ For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! ¹⁷ So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁸ I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, ¹⁹ and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun.

This also is vanity. ²⁰ So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labours under the sun, ²¹ because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. ²² What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³ For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. ²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Let's pray.

Father this is your word to us, it is a word that we need in this time in this day and age, we pray that you would work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit that you would break this word to us, feed us and give us of your pleasures for evermore.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Now this morning I'm going to do what the preacher does in this chapter. The preacher here gives you the thesis or the main point right up front he tells you what it is he is going to do and then he does it and he tells you how it works, okay, so that's what I'm going to do right now.

He says he is going to test with pleasure, he is going to test this thing if it works and then he says it is all vanity. So we know it isn't going to work, right?

So what is the main point of this chapter? Well the main point comes at the end when he sums it all up in verses 24 and following and says it is best for man to do things that would be pleasurable, it is good for man to enjoy his work, his food, but doing pleasurable things and seeking after pleasure for pleasure's sake cannot be enjoyed it is going to be vain it can be a striving after the wind, only God can bring enjoyment, only by serving God and pleasing God can we find true satisfaction in life.

That is the message of the whole book of Ecclesiastes and particularly this chapter.

So I have 3 sections to this chapter.

The 1st one I have titled “The itch that cannot be scratched”.

Another way of saying it would be “I can’t get no satisfaction” the Rolling Stones came out with that song in 1965 and it became one of the most popular rock ‘n’ roll songs of all time and besides bad English it is bad in other ways, but the song is an accurate portrayal of this chapter, there is no satisfaction, I can’t get it, I can’t find it.

The 2nd part of this chapter is “A goose chase with no goose.”

The preacher pursues permanence and he finds death, he pursues something that will last and he finds nothing lasts under the sun so he chases after this goose and when he gets to the end he finds there is no goose, it was all a mirage, it is all in his imagination.

And 3rd and most importantly the last few verses talk about solid joys and lasting treasures which none but Zion’s children know.

You want to know what true joy and true satisfaction is, if you want to find satisfaction in life then Zion’s children are the only ones who know that, people who please God are the only ones who can be satisfied.

So let me ask you a question starting in here: When will you be happy? What is it going to take for you to be happy? What is it going to take for you to be satisfied?

May be a better question or another question to ask is: Are you satisfied now? If not why not?

But ask yourself this question, What would it take to make you happy?

So finish this sentence for me, don’t do it out loud do it in your head, I will be happy when.....

When what? What is it for you? What will make you happy?

So I wonder what your answer might be right now, I’m not going to ask for any volunteers but would \$1000 do it? 10,000? 1 million? Would that make you happy?

Maybe you want a new iPod or iPad or an iPhone or an i something, would that make you happy?

Maybe you just want a new job, maybe you want a new girlfriend or boyfriend, maybe you want a child, what is it that will make you happy right now?

Then let me ask you a 2nd question: Have you ever answered that question with anything that you've actually gotten and it made you happy, anything?

Have you ever said if only I get to be 16 years old and can get my driver's license I will be happy. Did it work? For a while yeah, for a little bit, it didn't last very long though did it? That's the way these things work.

Now we are getting to the point of this passage, we have an itch that cannot be scratched, we desire something to make us happy, it is how we are wired it is how God has made us we have this built-in pursuit of pleasure that which will make us happy and satisfied.

Now here we have a man, the wisest man who ever lived according to God, I mean we need to take God's word for it right, the wisest man that ever lived and he is going to demonstrate for us he's going to test this and find out if there is anything that can make you happy and he has every resource at his disposal. You see we think "Oh you know if I had \$1 million I would be happy with that!" Well we don't have one million and there is no way to get it for most of us, okay, so we could always say yeah but I could never get it so I really was never able to find out if it was going to work or not.

But Solomon is not that way, he can do it he can find out, he's got the resources. Will it make me happy? I don't know I'm going to find out. That's what he is basically saying I'm going to test this.

So first of all it says that he tries comedy, he tries laughter to see if that will help, if that will be satisfying to him, and his conclusion is that is just mad, it's crazy, that's not going to get you any lasting satisfaction.

Now we like to laugh don't we, I mean that's pleasant far more pleasant than crying many times but laughter just for the sake of being light is not going to satisfy very long and so he turns next to something else he turns to the bottle.

He says I tried cheering myself with wine. Again this is not a whole lot different than laughter actually except that laughter it says in the Scripture is

good medicine, right, and the New Testament says a little wine is good medicine and fixes what ails you or it can.

But you see the point is that there is something wrong with us that is why we need medicine, there is something wrong with us and we try to fix it with medicine whether the medicine is laughter, a merry heart doeth good like a medicine, or whether it is wine trying to escape the realities of life kind of go off into another world escape somewhere where it's all beautiful and happy and there is no problems.

So he tried doing this and it says he that even in the trying of this he was still guided by wisdom.

Now let me tell you something and especially this part of the chapter falls into the category of "do not try this at home" because you are not wise like Solomon was, you're not going to pull this off, I'm not going to pull this off, if you or I tried this what Solomon tried here in this chapter we are going to self-destruct because we are not going to be able to retain enough wisdom in this whole experiment.

So you need to take Solomon's word for it he managed somehow to maintain this wisdom. Remember I told you he was the wisest man that ever lived and it takes that kind of person to do this and not self-destruct.

So he tried laughter, he tried wine, the bottle, next he turns in verse 4 to property.

He undertook great projects, he built himself a magnificent palace took 13 years to build it with thousands of slave labourers, slaves doing slave labour, 13 years, he build houses and he planted vineyards.

How many of you like a nice house, anyone here like a nice house, raise your hand if you like a nice house, come on. Yeah. yeah we like nice houses, right.

We cast an eye over that house that's going up down the street that is the house we always wanted to build but couldn't afford it, yes we like nice houses, well Solomon had the nice house, he had the nicest house on the block, he had the nicest house in the city, he had the nicest house probably in the world at that time, so he tried it, he went all the way, he had an amazing house.

But that wasn't enough he also had gardens, he planted gardens, gardens are beautiful, gardens are places of rest and peace and quiet.

How many of you like gardens, how many of you like gardening?

I think gardens are much better than gardening myself but we like these places, whether we like to participate in creating them or not is a different matter, but we like gardens, I think one of the reasons that we like gardens is because we were created to live in a garden, when God created Adam and Eve he put them in a perfect beautiful garden and we are all trying to get back there somehow, we all like those spaces, those places.

It says here he had gardens and parks and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees, he made pools, we like to sit by the water and we like to eat the fresh fruit of the trees, enjoy the beautiful scenery and the quietness, it would be great to have our own little paradise wouldn't it, a place we could escape to.

Here is this escapism happening again a place we can escape the harsh realities of a fallen and broken world.

That still wasn't enough so Solomon in verse 7 he goes for leisure.

It says he bought male and female slaves and yet other slaves were born in his house, he had something like 35,000 people in his household according to the account in first Kings 4, I think it was about 35,000 people at his disposal, people that would do anything he told them to do. Can you imagine living that kind of life, that kind of leisure?

Would you be happy if someone would wait on you hand and foot all the time, you just said the word and they would get for you whatever it is you wanted or do for you whatever it is you wanted them to do, the sky's the limit, your imagination is the limit.

Can you imagine what kind of life that would be?

It says he also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before him. He had wealth, he had significant wealth.

Talking about herds and flocks first Kings chapter 4 tells us that Solomon had 12,000 horses.

Now how many of you like cars, automobiles, trucks, some of you don't I know that, you think of them as a necessary evil, okay, but some of us are kind of car nuts we enjoy being around that kind of transportation, some people even collect the things, you know they have a whole collection of cars sitting in the barn somewhere. We'll guess what, Solomon had 12,000

cars, I mean they used horses for cars back then so he had 12,000 of these parked in his stables he could go anywhere he wanted to go, he would pick the fastest horse, the Ferrari or the Lamborghini, take it out for a Sunday afternoon ride.

Imagine what kind of life this was.

Perhaps you think if I had loads of money if I was wealthy beyond compare I would be happy.

Well Solomon amassed silver and gold it says, he was properly rich, I mean Solomon was not millionaire rich, he was not billionaire rich, he was more the kind of “I can buy the country” rich, just buy the whole country. His income from taxes alone we are told was 23 tons of gold every year, 23 tons of gold, they said gold was so common in the city of Jerusalem that it was like stones, like rocks, it was everywhere you turned.

We cannot even fathom this kind of wealth, we would not even know what to do with it.

Wouldn't it be great if you never had to worry about money again, never had to check in the cheque-book to see how much money you had you just whatever write the check, wouldn't that make you happy?

We might think it would.

And then there is music in verse 8.

A lot of us like music we don't all like the same kinds of music but a lot of us like music, music is one of those pleasures of life that God has given us and so Solomon acquired men and women singers, Solomon owned all the top bands of his day, every one of them.

So how good would it be, how nice would it be? Now we kind of have this advantage today we can put the CD in or hook up the iPod or whatever and we can play music from whoever and whenever and wherever just like that, so we know a little bit about what Solomon could do but you see in Solomon's day there weren't any recording devices so if you wanted to hear music guess what, you needed musicians right here right now to play for you, to sing for you. You couldn't just call up the track on the CD player.

So Solomon had amassed this huge talent that he could call on whenever he wanted some music, it would be like the music camp here, it's great music by the way and all week the halls have been ringing with people

singing and so forth and it's just a very pleasant kind of sound, to me at least, it would be like if I could take these music campers home with me all 100 of them and then sometime at 10 o'clock at night when I wanted to hear some piece of music I would just ring them up and say, hey come and sing for me. That would be even better than having them come and stand around here and sing for us wouldn't it we just have our own private little concert, that might be good.

And then he turns to something else, he turns to sex.

That's a pretty natural human pleasure and he really goes for it, I mean he doesn't hold back just like everything else so he marries 700 wives, 700, but that's not good enough yet so he has 300 girlfriends. He really could indulge any fantasy he wanted whenever he wanted.

Well he goes on, wouldn't it be great to be famous, wouldn't it be great for your name to be a household name all around the country for people to see you on the national news and to fawn over you whenever you went somewhere. Wouldn't that be great?

Solomon here says that he was the greatest man that ever lived, he became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before him and again it says his wisdom stayed with him.

You see that would not happen for us, when we get a taste of fame it tends to corrupt us pretty quickly and we tend to self-destruct. That is why you see so many athletes, so many rock stars, so many actors, so many famous celebrities their lives go down the tube.

We can't handle it but Solomon could evidently.

Solomon indulged himself in every area he could think of, it says in verse 10 he denied himself nothing, if he wanted it he got it.

That's the kind of test we're talking about here it says that he refused his heart no pleasure and what was his conclusion?

In verse 11, he considered all this that his hands had done and all the work that it took to do it and behold, all was vanity and a chasing after wind and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

All of that was empty, all of it was unsatisfying.

Now listen if Ecclesiastes is going to teach you anything you must believe the preacher, you must believe Solomon when he says it is empty, it is un-

satisfying, there is not a single pleasure that this world could offer that can really scratch where you are itching.

And believe me Solomon tried it all and it all lead to despair; it's like trying to catch the wind.

So as you look at his life and you look at your life one of the things that I want to press on you this morning is this that you must believe Solomon's conclusion, you must believe what he says when he says I've tried it all and it is all unsatisfying.

You know life is kind of like a stationary bicycle, a stationary bicycle each generation gets on it and pedals furiously, pedals as hard as they can till they die and fall off and then the next generation gets on it and says, well they didn't make it anywhere, they didn't go anywhere but we are going to go somewhere. And they get on the bike and pedal furiously.

It's been happening this way since Solomon wrote this book, every generation thinks we are going to find meaning and purpose in life we are going to find that which satisfies and it's just like driving around the cul-de-sac, it's a goose chase with no goose and Solomon's conclusion is kind of hard for some of us because we're still of a mindset that there is something out there that can make me happy, there is something if only I could experience or have I could be happy, I could be satisfied, but Solomon after he considered all of this after he considers all of these pleasures, all of these achievements, all of these accomplishments he says well, there is no satisfaction here.

So he turns to try and do something a little more noble so if I can't have any personal satisfaction maybe at least I can leave a legacy, maybe at least I can leave something of value to those who come after me but what does it say?

It says the person who comes after me he's just going to be just like me, he's not going to find any satisfaction in it either, maybe at least he can be important in his death if not in his life so people will remember him and think back fondly to remember King Solomon's time. But no it says here after he is dead people will kind of forget.

Solomon has to reckon with the cold hard reality of life and that reality is death, death is the great equaliser, no matter who you are, no matter how many wives you have or how much property you have amassed, no matter

how good a person you are in terms of worldly wisdom death comes to every man and at that point of death it doesn't matter whether you are a fool or a wise man you both are subject to the same death.

We can chase whatever it is we think that will make us happy, will make us satisfied, we can chase it all the way to the grave but when we get there we realise there never was a goose to start with. It's like trying to get to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

I saw a rainbow this week and it reminded me of this, you know you say, Oh there is the end of the rainbow! so you go over there, and I was driving up the road and it looked like the end of the rainbow was right in the road so I'm driving toward the end of the rainbow, I'm thinking this is good the pot of gold will be easy to find this time may be right in the median. I get there it's not there it has moved on further out of reach.

And that is what it's like to chase after satisfaction in this life under the sun without God, it is always out of reach and when we get there we realise it wasn't there to start with.

Life isn't fair; life under the sun isn't fair.

He talks about this in verse 18 and following, we work hard, we amass great accomplishments only to leave them all behind when we die, you can't take it with you when you go, and all the grand buildings and all the gardens and all the pools and all the great architecture, all the big businesses that we might have established will be left to someone else when we die and those people didn't even have to work for it and they probably won't appreciate it and they will probably misuse it and squander it.

And Solomon says it's a great tragedy here; it's a great evil, what good is all this anyway? Why even try?

And he begins to give himself over to despair just thinking about it.

He couldn't even enjoy his work because he realised this hard work I'm doing when I'm gone the value is going to go to somebody who doesn't even appreciate so why even work, why even try? He couldn't even enjoy the things in life that were meant to give us pleasure, the very basics of life that God has given us he couldn't even enjoy it because he could not get done thinking about how futile all this was.

You talk about a miserable position to be in, this man was miserable.

But he doesn't end there, he doesn't leave us there.

Verse 24 he says he comes to the realisation that there really is nothing better in terms of satisfaction and pleasure in life there is nothing better for a person then that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil, this is from the hand of God.

Basically what he is saying is don't pursue all this extravagant self-seeking pleasure for your own benefit but enjoy what God has given you, enjoy what God has given you to do, there is pleasure in life, there should be, there must be but it is not in ourselves, it says apart from God we can't even have any enjoyment in life there is no possible pleasure without God providing it for us.

So why don't these things satisfy, what is the deal here, why can't we enjoy ourselves enough to be satisfied? What is the way out of this wild goose chase that doesn't have a goose how do we find a way out of this cycle this endless spiral? What is really going on here and why are some of you still not quite believing Solomon? You still think there is something that will make me happy.

Well we need to we ought to turn to Romans chapter 1 and we can find the answer there.

Romans 1:18-21 tells us about God who created us, about God who gave us all of himself and these things and it says, verse 18, the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their own unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them.

So the wrath of God is being revealed because men are hard-headed and stubborn and suppress the truth.

Verse 20, For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened..

So our natural inclination is to suppress the truth, truth has a hard time getting through our thick skulls. The truth is we were designed, we were cre-

ated by God to worship him, to worship, to worship means to give ourselves to someone or something, but instead of worshipping God the one who made us, our bent because of sin is to give ourselves to all sorts of other things, to worship all sorts of other things and that could be money, it could be power, it could be fame, it could be alcohol, it could be sex, it could be laughter, it could be the amassing of great wealth, whatever it is we give ourselves to these things these pursuits.

The ironic and terrible tragedy here is that these are things that God has given us, they are gifts that He has given us that He actually made but when we worship the things that are made rather than the Maker we become foolish, we find no satisfaction, no meaning in life.

Paul goes on in [Romans 1:22-25](#), and they claim to be wise but they became fools, they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for mere images. Images, pictures of men and birds and animals and reptiles therefore God gave them over in their sinful desires to sexually impurity for the degrading of the bodies with one another and they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the created things rather than the Creator.

This is the problem, this is our problem in the pursuit of pleasure we want the stuff that God has made more than we want God. That's our problem.

It is like this, God is a loving Father we are his children and He gives us all these great things as gifts and rather than enjoying these gifts the way He has designed them to be enjoyed, rather than enjoying them as coming from his hand and finding joy in him, rather than doing that we are like rebellious children and we grab everything that He gives us, we grab it all to ourselves and we go tell God to bug off, get out of my life, and we run away with all our stuff and we foolishly think that with all the stuff that we no longer need our Father anymore just like the prodigal son in that exchange that Kenton read, just give me the stuff and then I don't need you.

But we see like the prodigal son that the stuff wears out, the stuff gets used up, the pleasure is fleeting and then we realise you know what even the slaves of my father have it better than I do!

None of the stuff makes us happy apart from God.

But God says I know you, I know how you work, I know how you should use all of this stuff, I made it for you and if you use it in relationship with me I'll show you how it works and I will give you great joy and great satisfaction.

You see this section from Ecclesiastes is not here to give us a moral lesson, it is not here to say okay well you've got to live a very bleak existence, no pleasure, just eat rice and beans and drink water all your days.

No, he is not saying that, he is not saying don't do what Solomon did just flee from everything that is pleasant and pleasurable just try to be good boys and girls.

No that is not what he is saying but that is often what Christians seem to be saying. People say oh you Christians you don't have any fun, you don't enjoy life.

Well that may or may not be true but the point is we are not created to be enjoying life apart from the Creator but when we are worshipping God, when we are pleasing God in our life he brings us great joy and pleasure and the things that He has given us for our benefit are to be enjoyed.

That is how we are designed, we are designed to enjoy things and to take pleasure in things but only when God has given them to us and we enjoy them with him.

It is a problem, the problem is that we are satisfied too easily; we are satisfied way too easily.

We quickly accept some pretty cheap thrills in exchange for everlasting joy, that's the great trade it is talking about in Romans 1 where they exchanged the glory of God, how much better can you get, they exchanged that for just pictures, not even the real thing, and that is what we tend to do with pleasure.

CS Lewis said this, "We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. We are like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased."

So our goal in life should be to enjoy the life that God has given us, to not be satisfied with our own pursuit of pleasure.

And here is another thing that comes in here you see because we are too easily satisfied because we are satisfied with cheap imitations that never last, they never truly satisfy, so we are always after the next big thing but if we could find true satisfaction we would not need to look anywhere else and so true satisfaction in God is the antidote to sin.

Are you tempted, are you tempted to use God's good gifts in ways that violate his plan, his purposes, are you tempted to do that?

It is probably because you are not really satisfied in him, you are not really satisfied with what He has given you and so you are willing to sin in order to get something or you are willing to sin because you don't get it.

That says you are not really satisfied with the right things in the right way. Satisfied people do not need to sin.

So do I like to eat? Yes but I do not need to be a glutton to enjoy the food that God has given.

You do not need to push the limits in sin when you are satisfied, in fact in the end sin is really no fun at all, yes it offers some cheap thrills but in the end it is not going to hold up it is going to be like Solomon he gets to the end of his life and he says, that was all useless.

You don't want to be there, you don't want to go there what you need is to find true satisfaction in God and God's gifts and doing things God's way.

We don't need to abstain from all pleasure, no, God has designed pleasure for our joy, for our good but you must, you must first seek God and then you will be happy, then you will have true joy instead of the fake imitation of joy.

First Timothy chapter 6 verse 17 says this, As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Do you get that? Don't set your hopes on the things that God has given you set your hopes on God, the God who has given us richly all things to enjoy. That is the key to satisfaction.

What are we to do then? We are to do good, we are to be rich in good works, we are to be generous and ready to share, storing up treasure for

ourselves as a good foundation for the future, so that we might take hold of that which is truly life. [1 Timothy 6:18-19](#).

Do you want to truly live; do you want to really live?

Then you must live God's way, you must live seeking after God not after your own selfish satisfaction.

And this itch that cannot be scratched, this goose that can be chased all the way but there really isn't any goose, all of that should point us to a Creator God, the God who has designed us for pleasure, pleasure of his kind.

Let's pray.

Our Father God we thank you that you have designed us so that we can enjoy the things that you give us but we confess Father that we far too often are enamoured by the stuff by the gifts by the good things that you have given us and our focus turns away from you and to ourselves.

So I pray that you would remind us once again this morning through the words of the preacher in Ecclesiastes that all this stuff that we think will make us happy it really wont, only you can satisfy and only in you can we really even enjoy anything in this life and so may we passionately pursue and seek after you and your ways and find true satisfaction in real life.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.



How God Forgives

Jesus Christ in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. Ephesians 1:7.

Forgiveness has both divine and human dimensions. Forgiveness is first of all a gift of God. It is a gracious act of God to pardon repentant sinners and put them into a right relationship with God through the sacrifice of Jesus. It is also the ongoing gift of God to believers. Without it our lives would be out of harmony with God and full of guilt. In the human dimension forgiveness is that act and attitude toward those who have wronged us which restores broken relationships and rebuilds fellowship. We all need for-

giveness, and often need to forgive others.

Jesus gives us a lasting example of forgiveness in this passage: [John 8:3-11](#) “The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

We have His personal appeal to His Father for His tormenters in [Luke 23:34](#) And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” That’s forgiveness!

Jesus also reminds us very forcefully that we are to forgive and the consequences of not doing so, [Mark 11:25](#) And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

Much the same warning is given in what we know as the Lord’s prayer, [Matthew 6:14-15](#) – if we do not forgive others neither will God forgive us.

Isaiah urged the people of his day and us today to: “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. [Isaiah 55:6-7](#)

The striking narrative of the woman taken in adultery is rich with meaning for us today. It exposes the sinfulness of human nature as well as the compassionate response of divine nature.

The Pharisees exposed their hypocrisy and impure motives when they approached Jesus. They were envious of His growing influence among the Jews. They were stirred with anger that He did not honour them as distin-

guished teachers of the Law of Moses.

In their haste to expose some fault in Jesus, they brutally dragged this sinful woman into the public gathering. They were rudely imposing upon the crowd and demanding of the attention of Jesus. By custom they had no right to publicly disgrace her, regardless how guilty she was, before giving her a careful hearing before the Sanhedrin.

They approached Him with feigned respect, and then showed their insincerity by presenting only the "woman ... taken in adultery, in the very act" without mentioning the man involved. Both parties to adultery were condemned to death by the old law ([Leviticus 20:10](#); [Deuteronomy 22:22](#)). They were not concerned about truth but about cornering Jesus.

It is significant that Jesus graciously avoided looking into the eyes of the accused until the accusers were gone.

Jesus stooped to the ground in response to their challenge. Wouldn't we love to know what Jesus wrote on the ground? Did He write the Ten Commandments? Did He write words that directly disclosed their hidden sins? Jesus caught them off guard when He stood up and carefully concluded, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And then He resumed writing in the dirt.

Customarily the oldest person was to cast the first stone in an execution. Now, beginning with the oldest, the woman's accusers furtively slipped away one by one. Perhaps it was a kindness in Jesus that He avoided looking as each man turned away with a guilty conscience.

At this point, Jesus' attention shifted to the woman. He knew her heart ([John 2:25](#)). She could have gloated in apparent victory, but she didn't. She could have made excuses for herself to rationalize her behavior or shift the blame to someone else. She didn't do it. She no doubt could have counter-charged her accusers to make them look bad. She didn't. (Did she forgive them? See [Mark 11:25](#).) The narrative only gives her response to His question, "Has no man condemned thee?" She said meekly and to the point, "No man, Lord." We can imagine her weeping with relief at being freed from her accusers, weeping in humble sorrow for her sinful life, weeping in awe of Jesus' wisdom, weeping in deep respect for His judgment of her.

Jesus did not lecture her for her sin, neither did He minimize it. "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." He showed divine mercy. As Lord, He abundantly pardoned her. As a father, He counseled her to cease from sin, implying repentance as taught in [Isaiah 55:6-7](#). Perhaps she was later

one of the thousands converted and baptized on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus made an astounding statement when He said that if we do not forgive others, God cannot forgive us. We do well to remember that God's forgiveness is not a permissive disregard of sin. We cannot approach God for forgiveness and be unforgiving in our spirit. The psalmist revealed his understanding that this was true even under the old law when he said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" [Psalm 66:18](#).

The portion of Scripture taken from Isaiah is rich in gospel truth. It teaches the loving nature of God and His desire to forgive and heal. It also clearly teaches that we must meet the following conditions if we are to receive His forgiveness and healing:

(1) We must seek the Lord. We naturally stray from God, so we must "draw nigh to God" so that He can "draw nigh" to us ([James 4:8](#)). Even Christians tend to stray from His presence and again need to draw nigh and seek Him.

(2) We must acknowledge that, inasmuch as we have sinned, we are "wicked."

(3) "Let the wicked forsake his way." Not only are we to admit our sins, but we must forsake our "way." Following our way is the reason we sin and stray from God.

(4) Our thought life needs to be forsaken because it is born of our inner carnal self. Our thought patterns can only be changed as we submit our heart and mind to God for the renewing of our mind ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).

(5) Having turned from our self and our own ways and mindset, we can return unto the Lord as yielded and moldable clay.

Let us not forget that it is God's power and grace that enable us to return to Him. Though we are undeserving and only understand in part, God has mercy and bestows abundant pardon. It is not reluctant pardon—it is wholehearted. He not only forgives the sin but subdues the sinful nature and cleanses the soul. He delivers us from the root causes of our sins. He imparts grace to walk in fresh obedience and in newness of life. He initiates and perpetuates the process of inner healing. He brings us into the fellowship of a healing community, the church. Yes, He abundantly pardons.

May we never take for granted God's gift of forgiveness. Without it there would be no hope of salvation. There would be no healing from the

wounds, hurts, and bruises inflicted by sin and sinful people. May we enjoy discussing it, praying about it, singing about it, and leading as many as we can to experience its blessing.

We are living in a world where people are becoming more and more self-serving, and many have become obsessed with what they consider to be their rights. The gospel takes us the opposite direction. It causes us to be willing to suffer wrong (1 Corinthians 6:7), to be nonresistant under assault (Matthew 5:38-39), and to render good for evil, which includes forgiving others (Romans 12:17-21). In doing these things we are a testimony of God's divine love and forgiveness operating in our heart. We forgive because we know forgiveness.

Even in being forgiving ourselves we are responding appropriately to the forgiveness of God. It is possible to get so focused on mistakes we have made that we hinder the blessing of forgiveness in our own lives. Forgiveness does not erase the past, but it enables us to find healing for the past. It opens the way to turn negative experiences into good, and from them we learn humility and reliance on God.

Nothing withers the soul like being unwilling to forgive. Many a person suffers mental and emotional anguish because he has not learned to forgive. People will live for many years with a grudge or a "chip on the shoulder." They are miserable whenever in the company of certain people. They may take medicine daily to sleep at night or to cope with everyday life. No one can be truly happy or healthy with ill will stirring within. No one can give his best service for the kingdom with resentment in his heart. Offense is a common cause of spiritual backsliding and failure among believers, and it is a result of pride and an unwillingness to forgive.

We do ourselves and others a great service if we learn early in life the grace of forgiving.

Are you a good forgiver?



God Our Forgiving Father

Love Goes in Front of Forgiveness.

God's divine forgiveness creates our forgiveness, and therefore can do so much more. It can take up all our wrongs, small and great, with their right-

eous attendance of Greaves and sorrows, and carried away from between our God and us.

Christ is God's Forgiveness.

God is forgiving us every day – sending from between him and us our sins in their fogs and darkness. Witness the shining of his son and the falling of his reign, the filling of their hearts with food and gladness, that he loves them that love him not. When some sin that we have committed has clouded all our horizon and hidden him from our eyes, he sweeps away a path for his forgiveness to reach our hearts, that it may, by causing our repentance, destroy the wrong and make us able even to forgive ourselves. For some are too proud to forgive themselves, until the forgiveness of God has had its way with them, has drowned in their pride in the tears of repentance and made to their heart become again like the heart of a little child.

Eternally Loving Fatherhood.

Think, brothers, think, sisters, we walk in the air of an eternal and a loving and forgiving fatherhood. Every uplifting of the heart is looking up to the Father. Graciousness and truth are around, above, beneath, yes, *in* us. When we are least worthy, most tempted, hardest, unkindest, let us even then commend our spirits into His hands. Where else would we dare send them?

How the earthly father would love a child who would creep into his room with angry, troubled face, and sit down at his feet, saying when asked what he wanted: “I feel so naughty, papa, and I want to get good.” Would he say to his child: “How dare you! Go away, and be good, and then come to me”?

Shall we dare to think God would send us away if we came thus? Would we not let all the tenderness of our nature flow forth upon such a child? And shall we dare to think that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, God will not give us his own Spirit when we come to ask him? Will not some heavenly dew descend cool upon the hot anger? Some genial raindrop on the dry selfishness? Some glance of sunlight on the cloudy hopelessness? Bread, at least, will be given, not a stone; water, at least, will be sure, and not vinegar mingled with gall.

For the Spirit of God lies all about the spirit of man like a mighty sea, ready to rush in at the smallest chink in the walls that shut him out from his own – walls with even the tone of the fire linen of float on the wind of that Spirit is sometimes enough to rend from battlements to base, as the blast of

ram's horn is rented the walls of Jericho. He only awaits the turning of a face toward him.

Nor is there anything we can ask for ourselves that we may not ask for another. We may commend any brother, any sister, to the common fatherhood. And there will be moments when, filled with that Spirit which is the Lord, nothing will ease our hearts of their love that the commending of all men, all our brothers and all our sisters, to the one Father. Nor shall we ever know full response in the Father's hands, never shall we be able to rest in the bosom of the Father, till the fatherhood is fully revealed to us in the love of the brothers. For God cannot be our Father except as He is their Father; and if they do not see him and feeling me as their Father, we cannot know him as ours. Never shall we know him aright until we rejoice in exultation for our race that He is the Father.

An extract from "Discovering the Character of God" by George Macdonald, Compiled, Arranged, and Edited by Michael R Phillips. Used by permission.



Jesus spoke to them, saying,
"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
But will have the light of life."
John 8:12 (ESV)

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.
The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.
While you have the light, believe in the light,
That you may become sons of light."
John 12:35-36 (ESV)

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