

pleasure in wickedness—do they appear happy? **Mirth, what doeth it?** Mere merriment passes away and leaves no lasting benefit. 3. The only real pleasure is that enjoyed by the children of God.

3. **To give myself unto wine.** Some claimed to find pleasure in wine, and Solomon made the dangerous experiment, not as a drunkard, but as an investigator for the benefit of others. If the young man of to-day were wise, he would accept Solomon's conclusions without the risk of seeking Solomon's experience. **Yet acquainting mine heart.** Not plunging headlong into drunkenness, but seeking to try the effects of wine in a thoughtful way, and for the purpose of learning whether contentment could be gained through gratification of appetite. **See what was good.** Solomon went into the forbidden realm of worldly pleasure to see whether it contained any good. His quest was in vain; yet he suffered in his own character as the result. 4. It is dangerous to make experiments in sin.

4. **I made me great works.** Solomon was a great builder of palaces, store-cities, and fortifications, besides the temple. **Houses.** Two palaces of Solomon are mentioned, one near the temple, another, a summer residence on Mount Lebanon. **Vineyards.** His vineyards at Baal-hamon and at En-gedi are named in his Song.

5, 6. **Made me gardens and orchards.** The word for "orchards" is "paradises;" that is, parks or pleasure-grounds. **Pools of water.** The storage of water for irrigation during the dry season is necessary in the East. Pools or reservoirs may be seen on many hill-sides, and three near Bethlehem are still called "Pools of Solomon." **The wood that bringeth forth trees.** Rather, "the wood blooming with trees."

7. **I got.** Rather, "I bought," purchased slaves being referred to in this clause, and those born to such condition in the next. **Servants and maidens.** Slaves are meant, but slavery in the Hebrew commonwealth was mild, and the master's control was not absolute. A slave maimed by his master could claim freedom; all slaves were to be taught in the law, and a female slave could be the wife of her master or her master's son, and then became free. **Great and small cattle.** Oxen and sheep.

8. **I gathered me also silver and gold.** Solomon was the richest of the Israelite kings. His wealth came partly from tribute on conquered provinces and taxes on his dominion, and partly from commerce by land and sea, as the trade of the East passed through Palestine. His income from trade alone was over fifteen million dollars, when money would buy twenty times as much as now. **Peculiar treasure of kings.** That is, all the treasures and curiosities which kings can gather from their provinces. **Men singers and women singers.** Bands of choral singers, not for the temple service, but for display and pleasure. **Delights of the sons of men.** A reference to the sensual pleasures described in 1 Kings

11, 3, which constituted Solomon's great sin. **As musical instruments.** Some commentators say this should be translated "a wife and wives," or "a queen and concubines," referring to Solomon's harem. Others, that it points to the songs of revelry at the royal banquet. It is evident that Solomon sought for pleasure in every possible field, and is here giving his experience of its vanity, not as an example, but as a warning.

9. **So I was great.** His empire was the widest, his government the most powerful, his prosperity and wealth the greatest of any king in his time, and beyond any of his predecessors. The greatness of King Solomon is attested by the numberless legends concerning him, which are still related in the East. **My wisdom remained with me.** So he thought, and so it was with his intellectual wisdom. His knowledge was as extensive, his mental power, perhaps, as great as ever; but his glory was gone, for his higher wisdom in the things of God was weakened as his character was defiled. 5. The highest treasure of a soul is its knowledge of God, and this is turned into error by sin. 6. Every man who would have Solomon's experience must pay his bitter price.

10. **Whatsoever mine eyes desired.** Whatever he saw or heard of that was desirable for gratification to the senses. **Withheld not.... from any joy.** Whatever promised enjoyment he tried, as the accumulation of riches and the spending of them, splendid manner of life, delicate food, intoxicating drink, and social enjoyment. **My heart rejoiced.** Whatever enjoyment there was in these things he found, and was not hindered from possessing. Some men plant only that others may gather, and build for others to occupy, but Solomon himself saw the result of his works. **This was my portion.** That is, "This enjoyment was all the benefit from my labour, and that I received;" so that the experiment of seeking pleasure was made under the most favourable conditions. If Solomon found that it was "vanity," no man on earth can expect to find it better. 7. Let us not forget that there is a pleasure and a reward of a certain kind in sin.

11. **Then I looked.** When his great works were finished, when he had drank to the bottom his cup of pleasure, he looked calmly upon it all to see what was its true value. **All was vanity and vexation of spirit.** After all his pleasure there remained the feeling of emptiness. It had brought him no real good, no enduring enjoyment; it had turned to dust. And such is the unanimous testimony of all who seek satisfaction through worldly enjoyment. 8. Not such the testimony of those who taste the pleasures at God's right hand. **No profit.** None of these things were profitable as the purpose of life. The fact is that God has made man to meet his aspirations in himself, and no lower object can satisfy the soul's hunger.

12. **I turned myself to behold.** He set himself to compare. **Wisdom and**