

**Ecclesiastes 5: 10; "He who loves Silver", A Bible Study prepared  
for the Evening of May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and presented at  
the Rendall Home by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

As we think about this verse tonight, I want to make 2 observations concerning silver. The first is that the love of silver is related to the love of the world, and thus it is a sin. The 2<sup>nd</sup> is that there are things which God gives which are better than silver. Let's briefly consider each one of these points and contrast them with what God will bring to the soul of the one trusting in Him.

**1<sup>st</sup> – The love of silver is related to the love of the world, and thus it is a sin.**

There are a number of commentators who do not believe that Solomon wrote this book of Ecclesiastes in relation to his departure from God during his reign. They do not believe that it was written in relation to his repentance from his own sins, which sins he repented of after his heart had been turned away from God by his foreign wives. Rather, they believe that Ecclesiastes is simply about the emptiness and a vanity of life in a general existential sense, without any reference to any particular sin which he committed. They don't see him explicitly confessing any sins, or repenting of any particular personal sin in this book. In my opinion they have missed the point of the book altogether. Vanity or emptiness in the soul of any man, Solomon included, is always related to placing too great a value on our experience of life in this material world and not thinking of God and spiritual and eternal things very much at all. This is sin. Worldliness, vanity, and emptiness come from only pursuing the satisfactions and pleasures which are passing away. Turn with me to 1 John 2, verse 15. Here it says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world." "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." "And the world is passing away, and the lusts thereof; but he who does the will of God abides forever." Here in this verse the will of God is set over and against the sole pursuit of the world's lusts. Having silver (or moneyed investments), and spending that money wisely and seeing those investments grow, can be good for us if we use them to reasonably provide for our family needs and further the kingdom of God. Abraham, it says in Genesis 13: 2, "was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold," and yet he was wisely rich toward God we find out by reading that passage. But when we love silver, and love abundance with increase just because we want to feel rich and feel secure, or feel pleased with ourselves at our accomplishments; this is called vanity in our text. There are desires in our hearts to be satisfied with these things that only last for a time. They are here called lusts. Lusts of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life. These lusts says John Trapp are "man's pleasure,

profit, and preferment". His having personal pleasures related to the body; these are the lusts of the flesh. His personally having much money and many possessions or trying to get satisfaction out of them; these are the lust of the eyes. And his being seen as someone important, powerful, and great; this is the pride of life. Since we are talking about silver (which is representing money) and the obtaining of an abundance of possessions, we are speaking of the lust of the eyes primarily, but not to the exclusion of the other two mentioned. They are often all linked together.

These desires; these lusts; are sinful, because they do not lead to a person's knowing God or walking more closely with God. They do not necessarily have a regard to God at all. And as a result of leaving God and His word out, these lusts have no lasting substance and satisfaction which God can build upon, to bless and prosper that person in their heart and mind. They are desires that exist apart from God in that person's heart and mind, and they actually run contrary to the will of God and His commandments. Having silver and an abundance which comes from it, produces a temporary high. And this feeling of temporary satisfaction deceives that person into thinking that they have found something that will bring them lasting satisfaction. But that satisfaction is not being found in God Himself. And the problem that comes to the mind of the person who loves silver is that that this "high" that he experiences has to somehow be sustained in a continual fashion. The desire for more money, more pleasure, more possessions never ceases; rather, it builds off of itself. And true and lasting satisfaction, and peace of mind, cannot be obtained through this means. This is the subtle sin of covetousness, and this sin needs to be repented of just as much as any other sin. It is a sin because these desires for more and more material things and earthly and worldly pleasure are being pursued to the exclusion of what God would have us to pursue with all of our heart and all of our mind.

I want you to see what Solomon did to break the commandments of God, the commandments which God had given to him as a king. Turn with me to Deuteronomy 17, and verse 14. "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother." "But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you 'You shall not return that way again.'" "Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself." "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites." "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all of the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the

commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel." It is pretty obvious, is it not, that these words were written some 500 years before Solomon lived and became a mighty king, so that he would not fall into this sin, and his heart be turned away from the only true and living God. They are saying in effect to him: "Solomon do not love the world or the things in the world." "Do not cause the hearts of your people to return to Egypt (which is the type of the world)." In all of the great things that Solomon did, to build the temple of the Lord and to show forth the wisdom which God had given to him, we do not find it written of him that he wrote for himself a copy of this law in a book. We do not find it recorded anywhere that he read from his own copy of the book of the law all the days of his life, or that he was careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that he might be humble and not turn aside from the commandments of the Lord. But we do find something else written in 1 Kings 10: 23 – "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom." "Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart." "Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year." "And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem." "The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland." That sounds like direct disobedience to me. In fact, if you look down at Chapter 11, verse 4, you see the conclusion of the matter. "For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David." Part of Solomon's downfall was his love of silver which was based upon what? Wanting to be rich in silver and the things silver could buy, but not being rich toward God. Solomon had great wisdom from God, but He did use that wisdom to pursue what God wanted him to pursue. The love of silver did not bring him satisfaction. Indeed it was a root of evil to him, in him, and through him in relation to others. If it were not for the mercy and grace of God, bringing him to repentance, he would have lost his soul.

Turn with me to Luke Chapter 12, and verse 13. "Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'" "But He said to him, 'Man who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?'" "And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'" "Then He spoke a parable to them saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.'" "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'" "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops, and my goods.'" "And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat drink, and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose

will those things be which you have provided?" "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." The lesson here is not that a person should not attempt to plan wisely for the future. The Lord does not reprove that in his statements. What he reproves is the idea that this man's having many goods for many years led him to believe that he was wise in living to himself and being rich for himself, rather than being "rich toward God". The man was laying up his earthly treasure for himself as though the object of living life was to have silver; or in this case, "many goods for many years", when he did not have a day longer to live and enjoy them. He never gave a thought to what God would want him to do in relation to these things. He was satisfied with silver and goods, and not with God.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> observation that I would have you to consider is this: There are things which God gives which are much better than silver.**

What does God want us to pursue then? Turn with me to Deuteronomy Chapter 6, and verse 5. He wants us to pursue Himself. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart." God has placed eternity in the heart of man, and man must study to have God in His heart and not the love of the world. It doesn't mean that a person cannot love the good things of this life that God gives. It means that they must never be allowed to take the place of God, or infringe upon the right of God to have our highest affections and best thoughts come from Him to us through His Word, and be given back to Him in our words and actions which show our love of Him above all other things. The whole book of Ecclesiastes is nothing other than a confession by Solomon of his mistakes in judgment and his sins in loving the World too much. He allowed it to take the place of God. Solomon used his own great wisdom to expose his own great vanity. And this book of Ecclesiastes proves that Solomon did leave the vanities of the world behind him, when he grew old, in the later part of his life. The conclusion of the whole matter of this book of Ecclesiastes is found in Chapter 12, verse 13 – "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all." Pursuing the vanities of the world is sin, and leaving them behind, confessing them for what they are; this is true repentance. This is what Solomon finally did, when he grew old. He had not been satisfied with silver, but he was satisfied with a true and thorough repentance.

I wonder if Solomon, when he had come to this sincere repentance, if he did not have a book of the law written up for his own personal use? I wonder if he came to wisdom by reading some of his own father's writings and then writing some of his own? Look at Psalm 12, verse 6. "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." "You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." David is commending the Word of God as being of the highest value to the godly man in times of persecution and oppression of spirit. God by the strength of the promises of His word, promises to preserve his faithful ones forever. He promises to

preserve them from ever being finally and fatally harmed by the generation of oppressors that are mentioned in the other verses which came before. Those words apply to all generations of believers who read them. The words of the Lord are pure, they are like refined silver; of great value spiritually to make one rich toward God and to bring true and lasting satisfaction and strength to the heart of the believer. Silver cannot do it; but God has something better than silver if we will only search for it. Look over with me, at Solomon's own writing in Proverbs Chapter 8, verse 6. These are the words of wisdom, coming from God and encoded in His written word in order that we might be truly rich. "Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; for my mouth will speak truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips." "All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them." "They are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge." "Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than gold; for wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her." So receiving wisdom and not silver is what is commended here. Receiving the wisdom which comes from the Scriptures, (which is called knowledge here) is that which a person will find, will do them in good stead, in every situation. It is that also which will glorify God. Because the fruit of righteousness comes through this means of storing up the wisdom which comes through the knowledge of the Word of God.

Look at verses 18-21 of this same Chapter. "Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness." "My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver." "I traverse the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries." You see, in the final analysis there is real satisfaction in storing up the true riches of the pure word of God in your heart. There is nothing lost and everything gained. Your soul is saved and is satisfied. There is nothing vain and empty that comes of it. The person who finds it like Solomon did can confidently say in the words of Proverbs 16: 16 – "How much better to get wisdom than gold!" "And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver."