Ecclesiastes 2 (ESV)

[1] 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 labors 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.

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[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.