

Welcome To Sunday Night Bible Fellowship

Every word inspired.



Every word proclaimed.

“We proclaim Him, warning every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man mature in Christ.” Col 1:28

“From Vanity To Deity”

Eccl. 2:18-26

April 5, 2020

Ecc1 2:18-26

- 18 Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.
- 19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.
- 20 Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.
- 21 When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.
- 22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?
- 23 Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.
- 24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.
- 25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?
- 26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

18 Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

17 So *I hated life*, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

18 Thus *I hated all the fruit of my labor* for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

- Solomon “**hates.**” Strong word. **שנא** saw-nay. Lot of personal emotion.
- He hates the way life works and he hates all that he accomplished because in the long run it just didn’t amount to a “hill of beans.”
- To work this hard, to put in all of the “blood, sweat, and tears” that Solomon (type “A” personality) did and then have nothing to show for it of any lasting significance, Solomon says, “I absolutely hate it, ALL OF IT!”
- Life “under the sun” is just worthless toil of worthless pursuits, with worthless results.

3 grim realizations Solomon comes to at the end of his life:

1. Inheritance. “**for I must leave it . . .**” Why? Because we all die. Doubly frustrating is the fact that all that one has accumulated will go to someone.

- Solomon realizes, that when you die, you can’t take any of that material wealth with you. When you’re still alive you can spend it for food, for water, for clothes, for cars, for houses, for land, and so on. But when you die that’s it. If you didn’t spend it, it’s going to go to someone else.

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19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

“who knows” - Solomon doesn't have a clue nor does he believe anyone else does either.

2. Inheritor.

- Will he be wise?
- Will he be savvy?
- Will he be “street smart?”
- Will he be able to make the hard and tough decisions?
- Will he have management and leadership skills?
- Will he have entrepreneurial drive and talent?

OR

- Will he act like a fool?
- Will he be wasteful?
- Will he be lazy?
- Will he do only the minimum?
- Will he make bad decisions?
- Will he quit during difficult times?
- Will he mispend the wealth he inherited?

3. Absolute Control.

- Solomon is giving over to someone the control of everything he had accomplished.
- It was achieved with wisdom, it may be spent in foolishness.
- Just the thought of it piles on another “vanity.”

This happens to Presidents, Corporate CEO's, and to everyone who has a successor or an inheritance to leave someone.

Study by Ohio State University on inheritances revealed 2 things:

1. One in every 3 people who receive an inheritance blow through it quickly.
2. On average, an inheritance is gone in five years.

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- Now Solomon's hate turns into despair – no hope.
- He plunges below the “line of despair.”

1. Passive/Complacent/Preoccupied
2. Search for meaning.
3. All areas explored.
4. Conclusion: Life is meaningless.
5. "I hate life."

Everyone living "under the sun" is somewhere on this arrow.

LINE OF DESPAIR

DESPAIR

No longer any hope due
to the exhaustion of all solutions.

“Is That All There Is, My Friend?”

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21 When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

- Notice that Solomon lists 3 attributes that he employed to do his work:
 - **“Knowledge”** is the raw material one acquires.
 - **“Wisdom”** is the application of knowledge.
 - **“Skill”** takes the application and fits it to the situation.
- These have made him successful.
- However the successor does not possess these and is not all that concerned to obtain them. He may want to go in a different direction.
- So it all ends up worthless and a “real shame.”

1 Kings 12:12-16

- 12 Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."
- 13 The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him,
- 14 and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."
- 15 So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn of events from the Lord, that He might establish His word, which the Lord spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
- 16 When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying,
- "What portion do we have in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse;
To your tents, O Israel!
Now look after your own house, David!"
- So Israel departed to their tents.
- 17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.
- 18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.
- 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM



Lake
Galilee

ISRAEL

Samaria

Mediterranean Sea

Jerusalem

JUDAH

Dead
Sea

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- 24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.
- 25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?
- 26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?

- So again Solomon asks, after realizing the whole inheritance gamble, what do I get?
- Where is the payoff?
- I can't find it.
- Listen to the frustration in the song by Travis Tritt.

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Solomon wants us to get the picture here –

- During the day he is working hard, building capital, making and negotiating deals, training and supervising those under him, settling disputes, cutting losses, planning and organizing.
- It is painful. It is agonizing.
- If that isn't enough when he goes home at night he is tossing and turning in bed. Can't sleep. Mind goes from one worry to the next. Who is out after my wealth? What are my enemies plotting against me? Must get some sleep. Try real hard. Doesn't work. Even more uptight. Next day real tired.
- This is a miserable way to live.
- All this for what? Nothing, it's worthless.

“A study of 4,126 male business executives reveals widespread dissatisfaction with the corporate experience. Forty-eight percent of all middle managers said that despite years spent striving to achieve their professional goals, their lives seemed “empty and meaningless.” 68% of senior executives said that they had neglected their family lives to pursue professional goals, and half said they would spend less time working and more time with their wives and children if they could start over again. The question that men are asking today is: “What am I doing all this for?” Before, the payoff was security and long-term employment. But corporations don’t return loyalty as they used to, and men today are saying they don’t see the investment as being worth it.”

- Jan Halper

Palo Alto Consulting Center

Survey - San Francisco Chronicle

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24 *There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.*

- **FINALLY, FINALLY** we get beyond the sun!
- “**nothing better**” – Solomon is saying, “here it is . . . the answer to all of the vanity.”

Ecc1 2:1

2 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So **enjoy** yourself." And behold, it too was futility.

- God is here introduced into life “under the sun.”
- Does that make a difference? Absolutely! Let’s look at 2 areas:

1. Eating and drinking. Basic necessities of life. Small pleasures.

1 Cor 10:31

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

- Even in relatively mundane things, they become meaningful when God becomes a part of them.
- Do you pray a meaningful prayer before your meals?
- Do you thank God that from His hand He has brought you food from the farmer and from the supermarket and from everything in between?

2. Labor is good.

“tell himself” – cause your soul to see the good in all of your labor.

Col 3:23-24

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Heb 6:10

10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name,

1 Cor 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

- God infuses our eating and drinking and work with meaning, purpose, fulfillment, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

- Enjoyment of our work is a gift of God. It doesn't come from having the right employer, it doesn't come from having the right employee, it doesn't even come from being in the right profession, it doesn't come from making a lot of money; enjoyment comes as a gift from God. God gives the gift to enjoy labor in this life.

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25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

- Excellent question. Answer: No one.
- Solomon has taught us that everything is empty without God. He had learned so much. God is deep in His sovereignty.
- Forget trying to find any meaning or satisfaction in anything. It just isn't there.
- Our sovereign God is the One who decides with what each one of us is entrusted. Enjoy and be content with what He has given you.

Rom 8:28

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Prov 3:5-6

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

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- All of the extra "stuff" adds nothing to a person's life. After your basic needs are met, the overage is just a responsibility to take care of and a burden to add to a person's worries. What makes a person content and free of worries is to have just enough and to enjoy it.
- And here are additional gifts as well - Your family. Your friends. The ones who love you and support you. SNBF and the teaching, and prayer, and fellowship, is all a gift to you from God. Enjoy!

“Oh, what a happy child I am,
Although I cannot see.
I am resolved that in this world,
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy,
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot and I won't.”

- Fanny Crosby
8 years old

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“For to a person who is good in His sight . . .”

- How are you good? Born that way? Good because you do good works?

Mark 10:18

18 No one is good except God alone.

Rom 3:12

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

2 Cor 5:16

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- “He has given wisdom and knowledge, and joy . . .”
- Notice that these are gifts from God:

Wisdom

James 1:5

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Knowledge

Col 1:9

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

2 Peter 3:18

8 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Joy

John 15:11

11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Gal 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control;

“while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.”

- In contrast to what He gives the believer, here is what he gives the unbeliever – “gathering and collecting,”
- The sinner (unbeliever) is given the task (this is their assignment from God) of working, producing, manufacturing, operating, constructing, assembling, storing, marketing, displaying, selling, transporting, all of the goods and services of this world for **YOU** to enjoy!
- Think of it - the great majority of people in this world (unbelievers - Matt. 7:13,14) are here to provide for and serve you. Enjoy!

James 1:17

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

1 Tim 6:17

17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

- Why is it that the believer can enjoy them? Because he sees them for what they are – not as an end in themselves where no purpose and meaning are found, but as a means to enjoy whatever, in a limited sense, they provide. God is our end where meaning and purpose are found. So we sit back and relax and are content to enjoy the things of this world for what they are.
- For the believer there is no meaningless work; there is no unimportant labor. All is seen, all is noted, all is rewarded, all is blessed in and by Him; but outside of God, there is no blessing, there is no meaning, there is no satisfaction, there is no reward. There is only emptiness and futility.
- Therefore, the outcome of a person's hard work is determined by what God decides, not by how hard that person works.
- The man who doesn't know God may think that he's living life on his own. But he is being guided by an all-wise, sovereign God Who has a purpose. His efforts in life are ultimately futile. He is laboring for the believer and he doesn't even know it! In God's all wise providence, all of his gathering and all of his storing will ultimately be for the believer; and it will be ultimately be for the glory of God.
- God has chosen you. You have not chosen Him. He has chosen you for a purpose; to bring glory and honor to Himself. And He has chosen you because He wants to delight in you.

Are you living under the circumstances (under the sun)?

Our circumstances don't determine our joy.