

Biblical Soul Care
Lesson 2
Ecclesiastes: 1:2-18

Pithy and helpful quotes:

The book certainly has the flavor of life's twilight. Walt Kaiser says, "There is in the book an air of repentance and humility for past values and performance."

Ecclesiastes is the thoughts, observations, and reflections of Solomon, in later life, hopefully from the posture of repentance. Brian Borgman

We should view Ecclesiastes not primarily as literature but as a speech, a sermon, a lecture, reflections, analyses, and at times provocation. Brian Borgman

Solomon's Spirit-superintended goal purposes to help readers obtain true spiritual satisfaction that will allow them to enjoy the life God has given them - even if it is ephemeral. William Barrick

The preacher wants us to let the reality of our death sink into our bones and lodge itself deep in our hearts. But that is because he is writing a book about what it means to live. He wants the consequences of our fast-approaching disappearance from the earth to work their way out into all the realities of the way we see the world and the way we view ourselves within that world. The single question that animates him is this: If we don't live forever, or even long enough to make a lasting difference to the world, how then should we live? David Gibson

None of the texts proclaim that life is totally empty and meaningless. However, all of them do express the inability of mankind to fully understand these realities of life. Such realities produce frustration, puzzlement, and vexation, but they do not make life meaningless. In fact, the message of Ecclesiastes seems to be that the wise individual will learn how to accept such realities and live happily in the knowledge that there is Someone who really does comprehend the reasons for apparent inequities and who sovereignly controls life's enigmatic twists and turns.

The reason the Preacher shows us the weariness of our existence, making us more and more disillusioned with life under the sun, is so we will not expect to find meaning and satisfaction in earthly things, but only in God Himself. Charles

Bridges explained the Preacher's strategy: "We are permitted to taste the bitter wormwood of earthly streams, in order that, standing by the heavenly fountain, we may point our fellow sinners to the world of vanity we have left and to the surpassing glory and delights of the world we have newly found." P.G. Ryken

Ecclesiastes 1:2-18

Introduction: Utterly fleeting and futile

2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity. ESV

"Futile! Futile!" laments the Teacher.

"Absolutely futile! Everything is futile!" NET

What does the Preacher (Qoleleth) mean by this emphatic statement?

What wisdom can we take away from this verse?

How might you apply this to your life or one you disciple/counsel?

Fleeting futility illustrated in nature and life

³ What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?

⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around
goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.

⁷ All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.

⁸ All things are full of weariness;
a man cannot utter it;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.

⁹ What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said,
“See, this is new”?

It has been already
in the ages before us.

¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things,
nor will there be any remembrance
of later things yet to be
among those who come after. ESV

What observation or truths do we see the Preacher making in these verses?

What wisdom can we glean?

What are some practical applications?

The vanity/futility of human accomplishment:

¹² I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

¹³ I decided to carefully and thoroughly examine
all that has been accomplished on earth.

I concluded: God has given people a burdensome task
that keeps them occupied.

¹⁴ I reflected on everything that is accomplished by man on earth,
and I concluded: Everything he has accomplished is futile—like chasing the wind!

¹⁵ What is bent cannot be straightened,
and what is missing cannot be supplied. NET

What was the Preacher's reflection/conclusion in regards to man's
accomplishments?

The futility of man's secular wisdom

¹⁶ I thought to myself,

"I have become much wiser than any of my predecessors who ruled over
Jerusalem;

I have acquired much wisdom and knowledge."

¹⁷ So I decided to discern the benefit of wisdom and knowledge over foolish
behavior and ideas;

however, I concluded that even this endeavor is like trying to chase the wind.

¹⁸ For with great wisdom comes great frustration;
whoever increases his knowledge merely increases his heartache.

What did the Preacher conclude in regards to accumulating man's
wisdom/knowledge?

Are we to accumulate and practice wisdom and if so, whose?

Fear God and enjoy Him and the good gifts He has given you as you live this fleeting life under the sun that, because of the curse, has times of futility and inexplicable outcomes but nonetheless will be enjoyable and satisfying as we fulfill our purpose and duty, which, the Preacher concluded, is to fear God and keep His commandments.

In Ecclesiastes, we are encouraged and exhorted to enjoy the good gifts that God has given us. These gifts are manifested in work, our spouse, foods, drink and all of His provisions for life. We have the benefit of being on this side of the Revelation and Incarnation of Jesus the Christ. In Him, in our union with Him, we have been given Jesus Himself and many gifts from God the Father, who delights to give gifts to His Children. “For God so loved the World that He gave His Son...” (Only Begotten/Preeminent One) John 3:16. Under the New Covenant, those who are in Christ can enjoy God and the blessings of Christ as they live out this fleeting life under the sun.

For our meditation, worship and edification review the wonderful benefits of our union with Christ:

Spiritual blessings in Christ from Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love,

5 by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He caused to abound to us in all wisdom and insight,

9 making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him

10 for an administration of the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him.

11 In Him, we also have been made an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

12 to the end that we who first have hoped in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

God gives us Eternal life from Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God credits us with the Righteousness of Christ from 2 Corinthians 5:21

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

We have peace with God from Romans 5:1

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

We are free from condemnation and have passed from death to life through Christ from Romans 8:1 and John 5:24

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

God gives us the Holy Spirit to teach us and empower us from John 14:26 and Acts 1:8

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.”

Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ from Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God justifies us and is for us and Christ makes intercession for us from Romans 8:31-34

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who indeed did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

God remembers our sins no more from Hebrews 8:12

For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more.

God qualifies us to be saints and saves us by grace not works from Colossians 1:12 and Ephesians 2:8-9

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not of works, so that no one may boast.

God is able and will keep you from stumbling and will present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy from Jude 23-24

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, might, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

