

(Through the Bible) Ecclesiastes 1-6

by Chuck Smith

The book of Ecclesiastes teaches that living life on the human plane apart from God leads to emptiness, frustration, and guilt, but Jesus Christ and the Gospel offer redemption and fulfillment.

Duration: 1:26:12

Topics: "Vanity Of Life", "Eternal Perspective"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the futility of human labor and the repetitive cycles of life. He observes that no matter how much effort we put into our pursuits, there is ultimately no profit or lasting gain. Life moves in monotonous cycles, with one generation passing away and another taking its place. The preacher emphasizes the transient nature of wealth, highlighting that when we die, we cannot take any material possessions with us. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of companionship and the strength that comes from unity, highlighting the value of relationships over worldly success.

Transcript

The book of Ecclesiastes begins, The Words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. So it identifies the author as Solomon. The Hebrew word that is translated preacher is a word that can mean one of the assembly or a debater.

And it is determined that the translation preacher is not necessarily a good translation of this Hebrew word, that it might be better translated the debater, the words of the debater, the son of David, the king of Jerusalem. He refers to this and in Ecclesiastes is the only time this Hebrew word is used and it is in the feminine form. And it is used seven times here as Solomon is referring to himself and really a debater or one who is searching, the searcher, the son of David, the king of Jerusalem.

And the book of Ecclesiastes is indeed a search. Vanity of vanities, saith the searcher or the debater. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

Now he starts out with the conclusion of his search. After searching through everything, this is his conclusion of life. Now it is important that we note that the book of Ecclesiastes is a book that deals with the natural man searching for meaning in life.

The word Jehovah is not used in this book. He does refer to God, the Elohim. But not unto Jehovah, God in the personal sense that a person can know God.

But God as a worldly man speaks of God, just a force, a power, a title, the Elohim. Those who truly know God in a personal way know God as Yahweh or as Jesus Christ. But this is that worldly and personal concept of God.

As he is searching for the meaning of life, he searches through all kinds of natural experiences. But there is throughout the book the denial of the spiritual. It is putting man on the level of animals.

It is looking at man as an animal. And it is trying to find the reason or the purpose for life on the animal plane. And it must follow that life on the animal plane is totally empty.

It is totally frustrating. Looking at life on the animal plane sees man as an animal possessing a consciousness and a body. But the spirit is not related to God.

So man as an animal is aware and conscious of his body needs. And he is living to seek to satisfy his body needs. And a person who lives on the body level seeking to only satisfy his body needs, denying the spiritual aspect of his nature, is going to end up ultimately with this feeling of emptiness and frustration.

The word vanity literally means that which vanishes. It's nothing. You go to get it and it vanishes.

It's not there. It's an emptiness. The vexation of spirit is that frustration of the spirit.

Now, man is a threefold being. And one of the problems of our whole educational system today is the denial of the spiritual nature of man. Our whole humanistic educational system embracing the evolutionary theory sees man as a highly developed form of animal existence.

So it sees man as a highly developed animal living in a body, possessing a consciousness. And the denial of the spirit is the basic flaw in the educational system. For unless you see man as a threefold being, unless you see man with his spiritual nature, then you are going to only have life on the human level, a life that is filled with emptiness and frustration.

So, we have today men who make excellent livelihoods trying to help people deal with their frustrations. Because people feel that life is worthless. Life is not worthwhile.

Life is empty. Life is meaningless. And they just feel despairing and discouraged and despondent.

They go to someone who just talks to them about life. And they pay money to try to understand why it is that I feel like life is just not worth living at all, you know. Well, that's because you haven't come into the third dimension of life, life on the spiritual plane.

There is where life takes meaning. It all comes back to the threefold nature of man. Living in a body, I have certain body needs.

God created the body. Marvelous instrument. Fantastically designed.

With my little hypothalamus and my pituitary and the various glands that are excreting the different chemicals into my system that give me my different feelings. Numbing my pains or telling me that I'm thirsty as it is monitoring my blood system telling me that I need oxygen and all of these functions that are going on in the body. Keeping the balance.

The homeostasis. For the body balance is important. It's important that I have enough sugar.

It's important that I have enough oxygen. It's important that I have all of these things within the body. So this body balance, my body drives, my air drive, my thirst drive, my hunger drive, my bowel and bladder drive, my sex drives.

All of these have been created by God, a part of the body in which I live. But I also have a consciousness. And in the area of my consciousness there are also needs, drives.

I have a need for security. I have a need for love. I have a need to be needed.

These sociological drives. Now that's about as far as your psychologists and sociologists take you. But what they are denying in the denial of the spiritual nature of man, they are denying the fact that there is deep down inside of me, in my spirit, in this part of my nature, a drive that also exists.

And this drive in my spirit is for God. My spirit thirsts after Thee, O God, David said. As the heart paneth after the water brook, so paneth my soul after Thee, O God.

There is within man that desire to know God, that desire to have fellowship with God. There is within man a vacuum that only God can fill. And if you deny the spiritual nature of man, then man can never be satisfied because this deep down spiritual thirst will always be haunting him, telling him there's something more, there's something more, there's something more.

And I feel this dissatisfaction with life. I have a thirst that I can't define. I know it's there.

I know that life hasn't yet brought me fulfillment. I know there's got to be more to life than what I've yet experienced. And I have this frustration.

And this is what Solomon went through. That's what he is describing. Emptiness, emptiness.

All is empty and frustrating. He's talking, and the phrase is used some nine times, life under the sun. It is a frustrating existence.

Now, according to the psychologist, frustration leads to inferiority complex, which is the rationale by which I explain to myself why I still feel unfulfilled and empty. Why is it that I'm not satisfied? Why is it that I've not been able to achieve and attain that which I feel there must be? And I say, well, if I only had a better education then, if I only had more money, if I only were better looking, if I only had hair, and I am explaining to myself why I haven't been able to achieve this some intangible something that I know must be there in life that somehow is passing me by and I can't quite grasp. And so I feel this emptiness because I can't quite get hold of it.

And I am explaining to myself in the inferiority complex the shortcoming that causes me not to be able to grasp that which I know must be there. Now, this in turn leads to escapes. I feel the emptiness.

I feel this dissatisfaction. I feel that there must be more to life than what I've yet experienced. I can't seem to find it and so I'm going to escape.

And I can escape overtly or covertly. In the inverted escapes, I escape within myself. I start building walls around myself.

I get to where I don't want to open up to people. I start closing off myself from people. I don't want them to know the truth about me that I know about myself.

So I make this facade and I project this image and they see this out here but they don't know the real me. I'm not going to let them get through to know the real me. And more and more I get within myself.

More and more I begin to disassociate myself from people. In its final form, it's manifested as a hermit, a man who just goes out and lives in the desert by himself. So he doesn't have to see people, talk to people, nothing to do with people.

That's the extreme form of escapism in the inverted way. Or if I go to overt escape mechanisms, I may go to compulsive eating behavior patterns. Start eating all the time.

I'm escaping. Or I might become a compulsive gambler. Or I might turn to drinking.

Or I might turn to drugs. Or I might look to a variety of sex experiences. All escaping or nomadism.

Start moving from job to job or from place to place. Oh, if I were just in San Francisco, that's where I'd be happy. Oh, I just lived in Hawaii.

It's interesting, more suicides in Hawaii than almost any place else because you get over there and where can you go? No, this is it. This is paradise. This is heaven on earth.

But the problem is you had to take yourself. And the same emptiness is that you feel here, you feel there. And you find out that Hawaii didn't do it.

It didn't satisfy. It didn't meet that deep cry that is within you. If it's not here, it's nowhere.

Emptiness, emptiness. Now, when a person gets into these escape patterns, it develops a guilt complex. Because I know I shouldn't be eating like this.

Why do I eat like this? I hate myself looking so fat. Why do I eat these chocolates? I can't stop. But yet, I'm escaping and I get guilty.

I start feeling guilty over the things that I'm doing. I know it's not right. I know it's not helping.

I know it's destroying me. I know it's destroying my family or my relationships. But I can't seem to quit.

It has a hold on me. And so, I'm feeling guilty. And the guilt complex then leads to a subconscious desire for punishment.

It goes inward then and underground. And I can't follow it at this point from the conscious level. But subconsciously, I get a desire for punishment.

And I start a neurotic behavior pattern that will bring punishment to me. And neurotic behavior patterns usually stem from a subconscious desire for punishment. I'm feeling guilty over what I've been doing.

I want someone to punish me so that I can feel like I'm not guilty anymore. Now, when you were a child, your parents took care of your neurotic behavior patterns. And they took you in and spanked you.

The healthiest thing in the world for you psychologically. Because it made you feel free of your guilt. I've been punished.

There's something about the guilt that I desire punishment in order that I might be freed from that feeling of guilt. Once I've been punished, then I feel, Oh, I'm innocent now. I'm free from the guilt feelings because I've been punished.

I'm free to go back to my frustration and start the cycle over again to my inferiority complex, to my escape, to my guilt, to my punishment, to my frustration. And so life moves in a cycle. And Solomon will point out here in a little bit the cycles as we get in the first part of the chapter here.

Life seems to move in cycles. And this, according to psychologists, is the cycle of life. And you think, my God, is this all there is? Stop this crazy merry-go-round.

I want off. I'm tired of it. And that's what Solomon came to.

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity and frustrating. And it all comes from the denial of the spiritual nature of man. It is living life on the human plane apart from God.

For the gospel of Jesus Christ comes into this cycle. And the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to me. Now, when I'm in the neurotic behavior pattern, it is so often that people say, Hey, man, you better go see a shrink.

You're crazy. You're doing nutty things. You better get some help.

And so I go to a head shrink. And he sits me on the couch. And he gives me a series of tests.

And he seeks to determine what I'm feeling guilty about. And then he starts to talk to me. Now, when you were a little boy, did your mother tell you that you shouldn't tell lies? And did she teach you that it was wrong to cheat? Well, you see, these are a part of the old Puritan ethic.

They're part of the old Victorian system. And everything is really relative. You've got to face the fact that there are certain situations in which it is perfectly proper to tell a lie.

You shouldn't feel guilty about this, you see. And he tries to remove your guilt by telling you that it's not wrong, it's not guilty. Everybody's doing it.

So you've just got to join the crowd and realize that the part of that old Puritan ethic by which you were trained is the thing that's your hang-up today. But Jesus Christ comes to me and says, Hey man, you are guilty. That's bad news.

That's wrong. But I love you. And I took your guilt and bore your guilt when I died on the cross.

I took all of your sins, all of your guilt, and I paid the penalty for it. Now if you'll just believe in me and trust in me, I'll forgive you. Hey, that's something no psychologist can do.

Is totally erase that guilt feeling. Take away this haunting feeling of guilt. But Jesus Christ and the Gospel does.

It's the greatest thing in the world for removing the guilt complex. If that's all the Gospel did, it would be fantastic. But it does much more than that.

It comes back to the very beginning frustration where it all started. And we hear Jesus on the last day of the great day of the feast as He is standing there in the temple mount crying to the crowds, If any man

thirst, let him come unto me and drink. For he who drinks of the water that I give, out of his innermost being there will flow rivers of living water.

And John said, this spake he of the Spirit. That third dimension of man, that man in his educational processes today is seeking to deny and by his denial has created all of this confusion in our society today. All of the frustration that people experience results from the denial of the Spirit.

And Jesus is saying, you have a thirst for God in your spirit. Come to Me. Come to Me.

And drink. And so this frustration where the whole thing started, Jesus comes to me and not only does He fill my life, does He fill that spiritual void, but He keeps pouring in until it begins to pour out from me and my life is no longer just a sponge thirsty seeking to grasp or to draw, but my life now begins to flow out with that love and that grace of God's goodness that He has bestowed upon me. And now, as David said, my cup runneth over.

My life is an overflowing cup. No longer going around with this cry and thirst and frustration within, but now the fulfillment and the fullness of God within my life as my life overflows with God's goodness and grace. So, you look at life on just the human level as Solomon is looking at it.

You look at man like an animal as Solomon does. You deny the spiritual dimension of man. That which places him apart from animals and above the animal kingdom.

And you're opening Pandora's box to all kinds of psychological ills. You're opening to a life that can never be filled. A life of vanity and vexation of spirit.

And so, we are looking now through the eyes of Solomon at the world under the sun. Apart from God, man on the animal plane and man at the highest on the animal plane is hopeless. It is not until you interject the spiritual plane and bring man into the divine plane that man can have any hope for a fulfilling, enriching, complete life.

So, verse 3, What profit hath a man? And I promise we won't take so much time on the rest of the verses. What profit hath the man in all of the labor which he taketh under the sun? Looking at a man and all of the things he's doing, all of the pursuits, all of the labor. What profit is there? And now he turns into the cycles of life.

It seems that life just moves in cycles. Monotonous cycles. You can't escape it.

You're in the cycle and someday you're just going to pass out of the cycle. One generation passes away, another generation comes. But the earth abides forever.

The sun rises, the sun goes down and it comes back around to the place where it rose from. The wind goes towards the south, turns about, comes to the north. It whirls about continually.

The wind returns again in its circuits. All of the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

All things are full of labor. Man cannot understand it or utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear with hearing.

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be. And that which is done, is that which shall be done. There is no new thing under the sun.

Life just moves in cycles. History repeats itself. And the cycles of life go on.

The cycle of one generation following another. The earth actually in its orbit and spinning on its axis and its relationship to the sun. The wind, the rivers.

Life just moves in monotonous cycles. Is there anything wherever it may be said, look, this is new. Hey, it's already been from old time which was before us.

There's nothing really more discouraging than to think that you've got some new inspiration and revelation from God. Oh, this is great. No one's ever seen this before.

Oh, what an understanding. And then you pick up some old commentary written by one of the saints back in 1849 and he says the same thing that you just discovered. There's nothing new.

Life moves in cycles. There is no remembrance of the former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of the things that shall come with those that shall come after. Life just moves in cycles.

Now I, the preacher, the debater, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek out and to search out by wisdom concerning all of the things that were done under heaven. And this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

And I have seen all the works that are done under the sun. That's one of your key phrases now. Life on the human plane.

Not on the divine. On the human plane under the sun. And behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

That which is crooked cannot be made straight. And that which is wanting cannot be numbered. Now, this is life on the human plane.

If it's crooked, if a man's life is crooked, it can't be made straight. It is interesting that the Greek philosophers concluded that redemption of man was impossible. That once a man had gone wrong, gone bad, that there was no way of changing him.

And that which is crooked cannot be made straight. It is also very interesting to read of Jesus Christ in Luke's Gospel chapter 3 as He is proclaiming the new kingdom. Actually, it is the words of the prophet proclaiming the things of the kingdom as John the Baptist was declaring concerning the ministry of Jesus that was to come.

He said, Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and every hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough made smooth. The redemption through Jesus Christ, Luke 3.5. But on the human level, no. On the divine level, you bet.

I commune with my own heart. I wasn't communing with God. I wasn't seeking God.

I was communing with my own heart. I was using now and exercising now earthly wisdom. He was in Tim.

Saying, Lo, I am come to a great estate. I have gotten more wisdom than all of them that have been before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

And I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. And I perceived that this also is frustrating or vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief.

And he that increases knowledge increases sorrow. Now, it is very interesting to me today as we study the evolutionary processes of the philosophical systems of man. A history of philosophy is an interesting course to take.

Because as you follow the history of philosophy and see the development of the philosophical thought, we come finally to this present state of the philosophical thought expressed in existentialism that there is no universal base of good or evil. Every man must experience truth for himself. But there is no universal truth.

The philosophers have concluded with all of their study that in reality is only despair. And reality will lead you to despair. Thus, the philosophers being brought to despair by their philosophy declare that it is necessary for each man to take his own leap of faith into unreality in order to escape the despair that only exists in reality.

So you have to take a leap of faith hoping to have some kind of an experience that there is no way of rationalizing or explaining. That's why TM is so popular today. It's the leap of faith into a non-reasoned religious experience.

That's why your Eastern religions are so popular today and gaining popularity. Because they are a leap of faith into non-reasoned religious experience which philosophy has taught us is necessary because with much knowledge is much sorrow. They've come to the same conclusion that Solomon came to years ago.

Years ago, before the whole history of philosophy ever began, Solomon had gone through the whole system of thought that has brought philosophy through its whole history to this final conclusion that Solomon reached 3,000 years ago. That in much wisdom is much grief and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow. Now as kids we used to understand a certain aspect of the futility of education.

We used to write in our textbooks the more you study, the more you learn, the more you learn, the more you forget, the more you forget, the less you know. So what's the use of studying? Solomon said, hey, with much understanding increasing your knowledge is only going to increase your sorrows. So, I said in my heart, go to now.

I'm going to prove thee with pleasure, with mirth. Therefore, enjoy pleasure. But behold, this was vanity.

So, we read in the New Testament, the epistle of John, all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. These are the aspects of the world by which man is seeking to find an answer, a fulfillment. These are the things that Solomon searched out.

As you follow his search, it was in the lust of his flesh, the lust of his eyes, and the pride of life. He came to the conclusion that these things are all empty. First of all, the lust of the flesh, giving myself over to pleasure.

But behold, it was empty. I said of laughter, it is mad. And of the joy, the pleasures, the mirth, what does it do? I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom until I hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men that they should do under the heaven all of the days of their life.

So, he got into the lust of the eyes. I built me great works, beautiful homes. I planted vineyards.

I made gardens and orchards. I planted trees with all kinds of fruits. I made pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth the trees.

All of these beautiful gardens and buildings and all. And then the pride of life, I got servants and maidens. I had servants born in my house.

I also had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. Great abundance of cattle. Do you realize that every day in order to feed his household, his family and his servants, that it took 10 prime beef and 20 commercial grade beef every day, 100 lambs a day? That's 36,000 a year.

That's over 10,000 beef that he slaughtered just for his servants and his family needs every year. Plus all of the fowl and the deer and the roebuck and so forth that were killed just to take care of the appetites of his family and of his servants. Well, to have 1,000 wives, you've got to feed them.

You know, and they've got kids they've got to be fed. Then they each have to have their servants. 30 beef a day.

So, he was right when he said I had cattle more than anybody who was in Jerusalem before me. I gathered also silver and gold. In Chronicles we read that he made silver as common as the stones in Jerusalem.

Now you that have been to Jerusalem know what a stony place that is. And he made silver as common as the stones in Jerusalem. There in Chronicles 4th chapter it tells about that.

The second Chronicles 9.27 is where he talks about the silver. I brought treasures of the kings and of the provinces. I developed choirs, men and women singers, the delights of the sons of men, great orchestra, all kinds of musical instruments of all sorts.

So I was great. Pride of life. I was great.

And increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. He was a botanist, a zoologist.

And whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy for my heart rejoiced in all my labor and this was my portion of all my labor. Now notice that.

Who could say this? And whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy. Very few people can make that kind of a statement.

You have to have really the wealth of Solomon and all to be able to say that. It seems to us there's always that if I only, if I only, if I only. And we aren't able to fulfill all of the desires of our eyes.

We go down and we see a beautiful yacht and we think, oh my, I only had that yacht. It's Solomon. But, I mean, he didn't withhold anything.

Whatever he desired, whatever he wanted, he had. Very few men can say that. Oh, I would be so happy.

Oh, man. I would be so satisfied. Was he? Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, on the labor that I had labored to do and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit and there was no profit under the sun.

No profit in any of it. It was empty. I was still empty.

I was still frustrated. You see, this is life on the human level. This is the denying of the spiritual nature.

It is trying to live your life apart from God. Trying to find satisfaction and meaning apart from God. You'll never do it.

So, I turned myself to behold the wisdom and madness and folly. For what can a man do that cometh after the king? What can anybody do after me? I mean, I've done it all. Even that which hath been already done.

There's nothing left. I did it all. And then I saw that wisdom excels folly as far as light excels darkness.

The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And I perceived also that one event happens to them all. I said in my heart, as it happens to the fool, so it happens even to me.

So, why am I any wiser? With all of my wisdom, I can't prolong my life. With all of the understanding and knowledge I have, I can't prolong life. I'm going to die just like the fool out there who doesn't know anything.

He's going to die. I'm going to die. And when we die, it's all over.

So, what good is it to have all of the wisdom that I have? Because we're coming towards the grave. Both of us together. We're both going to die.

My wisdom is going to keep me from death. How dies the wise man? As the fool. Then I said in my heart, as it happens to the fool, so it happens even to me.

So, why am I any wiser? Then I said in my heart, this also is emptiness. For there is no remembrance of the wise anymore than the fool forever, seeing that which now is in the days to come shall be forgotten. And how dies the wise man? As the fool.

Therefore, I hated life. Now, hey, wait a minute. This is the guy that has everything.

This is the guy who has every kind of pleasure, every kind of possession that you could possibly hope to have. Anything under the sun. He's got it.

And what does he say? I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yes, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun, because I was going to have to leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool.

Everything that I've built, everything that I've amassed, everything that I've done, I'm going to die and I'm going to have to leave it to some nut. And I don't know if the guy's going to be wise or foolish. He may just go out and look at the history.

Rehoboam, his son, left the throne and all to Rehoboam. What did he do? He no sooner gets on the throne than he angers the tribes of the north and they have a revolution and he loses the kingdom and starts downhill. The whole glory that Solomon had built up his son's dumb, foolish actions blew it.

And so Solomon's worries were not really unfounded. His son was a fool. Yet he's going to have rule over all of my labor wherein I have laid it and wherein I have shown myself wise under the sun.

So it was emptiness. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all of the labor which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is in wisdom and in knowledge and in equity.

Yet to a man that hath not labor therein shall he leave it for his portion. You do all of the work. You do all of the effort.

You do all of the sacrifice. You do all of the strain. You do all of the saving.

You do all of the wise, prudent planning and everything else and you die. And if you can really amass a great fortune, a million dollars or so, the government will come in and get 70%. And you know how foolishly they're going to spend it.

This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath man of all of his labor and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath labored under the sun? What do you get for it? For all of his days are sorrows and his travail grief. Yea, his heart takes no rest in the night.

And this also is vanity. There is nothing better. Now this is the conclusion.

Earthly wisdom. I've done it all. It's empty.

So there's nothing better for a man than he should eat and drink. That he should make his soul to enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw was from the hand of God.

For who can eat? And who else can hasten here into more than I? For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy. But to the sinner he gives travail to gather and to heap up that he may give unto him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Now we get into the weary monotony of life. This has been used poetically as something that is very beautiful. A time to love.

And it's been made very beautiful. But in the Hebrew idea it was monotony. Life is just monotonous.

There's a time and a season. A time and a purpose under heaven. To everything.

There's a time to be born. A time to die. A time to plant.

A time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to kill. A time to heal.

A time to break down. A time to build up. A time to weep.

A time to laugh. A time to mourn. A time to dance.

A time to gasp. And that's the idea of the Hebrew. It's just a monotony.

Life seems to be ordered in these things. Just a time, a time, a time, a time. And the Hebrew idea is that of the monotony of life.

It isn't, oh, the glorious time to love and a time to plant. As we make it very romantic today, it was really being expressed in a very life gets so tedious, don't it? Therefore, he concludes, what profit hath he that works in that wherein he has labored? What profit you get out of your labor? I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made everything beautiful in his time.

Also, he hath set the world in their heart. Now, the word translated world there in the Hebrew is eternity or the ages. God has actually set the ages in every man's heart.

There is a consciousness within every man of the eternal. Now, some men seek to sublimate that consciousness. Some men seek to deny that consciousness.

They seek to deny God. But there is within every man, God has placed it in the heart. Eternal.

The eternity in the heart of every man that is seeking out after that which is more than just a part of this monotonous routine of life. I'm grasping and reaching for that which is eternal. God has placed the awareness of the eternal in the heart of every man.

And that's that deep spiritual drive that every man has that can only be filled by coming to Jesus Christ and drinking of the water that He gives so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of his labor, it is the gift of God. I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever.

Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. For God does it that men should reverence Him. Now, I know this about God.

My works are going to pass away. My works are going to be forgotten. But whatever God does, that's forever.

And you can't add to the work of God. You can't take away. Now, I love this because I think of the work of God in my life of imputing the righteousness to me through my faith in Jesus Christ.

I can't add to it. I can't get a set of rules and start doing all these nice little things and be more righteous. Nor can you take away from that righteousness that I have that perfect standing that I have before God in Jesus Christ.

You can't add to it. You can't take from it. The work of God is complete.

The work of God is eternal. And God has worked in me His righteousness by my faith in Jesus Christ. Now, one of the problems that we often have is our endeavor to add to God's work.

If I could only, you know, read ten chapters of the Bible every day, then I could be more righteous. If I'd only pray for four hours a day, then I'd be more righteous. No, no.

You can't add. You are righteous. The righteousness of Christ, which is through faith.

You are righteous in God's sight. Oh, I got so angry today and screamed at the kids. I'm so unrighteous.

No. You can't take away from that righteousness that is yours in Christ Jesus. You can't diminish.

God accounts you righteous in His sight. The work of God in imputing righteousness to me. So I don't need to go around hanging my head, saying, oh, I'm so miserable today, and I'm such a sinner, and I'm so horrible, and I'm so this and that.

God is accounting me righteous because I am trusting and believing in His work in Jesus Christ. And I can't go around and say, well, I'm so righteous, so much more righteous than you, you sinner. I saw what you did.

I wouldn't think of doing that. And I can't go around in a self-righteous mold because I have had these spiritual gifts, or I have done this or that. It doesn't make me any more righteous.

You can't add to the work of God. It's complete. It's full.

And I'm so glad. Now, verse 15 is an interesting verse because it is sort of a definition of eternity. And if you have had trouble understanding eternity before, you'll really have trouble now.

You see, we live in a time continuum on this planet Earth. Because the planet rotates on its axis about once every 24 hours, we call it a day. We measure the time in hours.

Because the Earth is in an orbit around the sun every 365 days and 9 hours and 56 minutes and four one hundredths of a second. We call that a year. We live on this Earth and thus we are spinning around in our days and orbiting around in our years in the time continuum.

Now, if you get outside of the Earth and you begin to accelerate your speed, time no longer is moving in this, but it begins to stretch out into a plane according to the speed to where if you can accelerate to the speed of light, time stands still. Now, if we could hop on a ray of light turning into the energy, get out in this long plane, you could take off on a ray of light in, what, one and a quarter seconds? Tip your hat to the man on the moon. Seven and a half minutes, race past the sun.

Fourteen minutes, button up your coat as you go past Pluto's so cold. Fourteen hours, rather, Pluto. Hundred thousand years, you could leave the Milky Way galaxy.

One million five hundred thousand years, you could arrive at Andromeda. Make a U-turn, head back to the Earth. And in three million years, you could return to the Earth on that ray of light, and you would be about a day older.

But the Earth would have gone through three million orbits around the sun, which those who were living upon the Earth would have counted as years. So you'd go to look for the house that you used to live in, and the cities, and the people, and what's going to be in three million years, you see? But you've escaped the time zone. You're into the eternal, where there is no time.

As you get into the eternal, it is the now zone. God said, I am. That is expressing His eternal nature.

You're no longer within, you're no longer bounded by time, beginning and end. You're now in the eternal, now. So, when you can escape the time zone, that which has been, is now.

And that which is to be, has already been. That's weird. God is outside of our time dimension.

God is in the eternal dimension. So with God, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day. In other words, there is no time.

You're in the eternal now. So that any event that will ever take place, is taking place. Any event that has ever taken place, is taking place.

That which has been, is now. That which shall be, has already been. And God requires that which is past.

You can't escape it. You say, well, I don't understand that. Well, join the crowd.

You see, not only are we living in this time continuum, but we're also living in this finite existence. And it is impossible, that the finite can understand the infinite. Time deals with the finite aspects.

Eternal deals with the infinite. And you can't cross the gulf. It's too great.

You can only make childish illustrations, but you can't cross the gulf, from the finite to the infinite. Moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.

For there is a time there, for every purpose and for every work. And I said in my heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. Now, this is life under the sun.

That man might see himself that he's an animal. But this is not true. Man is more than an animal.

Man is made in the image and likeness of God. He's looking at man from the purely humanistic standpoint. For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth the beast.

Even one thing befalls them. As one dies, so dies the other. Not true.

Yea, they all have one breath. The word breath in Hebrew is ruach, which is also translated spirit. There are some that say that man and animals have one spirit.

So that a man has no preeminence above the beast for all his vanity. That is not true. That is looking at man from a humanistic standpoint.

Man under the sun. That is not looking at man as God looks at man as a divine creation with eternity in his heart. The animal.

Of what animal can you say God has put eternity in his heart? All go to one place. False. All are of the dust.

Our bodies, yes. And all turn to the dust again. Our bodies, yes.

But who knows if the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ knows and He declares it to be true. Wherefore, I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion.

For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? Who knows what's going to happen after him. So just live for now. Rejoice in your works now.

This is the purely human view of life. And God has recorded it in His Word inspired by the Holy Spirit that you might see the view of life from the human standpoint that it is empty and frustrating because you don't see man anymore than just an animal. That's why the world around you is so filled with frustration and emptiness today because it views man as an animal.

So I returned and I considered all of the oppressions that are done under the sun and the tears of those that are oppressed and they had no comforter and on the side of their oppressors there was power but they had no comforter. The philosophy might be right. Wherefore, I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which were yet alive.

I looked at life and man. You're better off dead than you are alive. Those that have already died, oh, they've got it made.

You're still alive, you've got the headaches. Yea, better is he both they which have not been who have not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. Again, I considered all of the travail and every right work and for this man is envied of his neighbor this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

The fool folds his hands together and eats his own flesh. Better is a handful with quietness than both of your hands full with travail and vexation of spirit. There is a scripture that says a little righteous man has is more than the riches of many wicked.

You're better off with just a little and the Lord, the comfort than having both hands full and being frustrated. Then I returned and I saw the vanity or the emptiness under the sun. There is one alone and there is not a second.

Yea, he hath neither child nor brother. Yet there is no end of his labor. Even the man who doesn't have any children.

He can't settle down and just enjoy what he has. He's got to keep on it. He's keep laboring.

No matter how rich he is, he can't be satisfied. He can't relax and enjoy it. Here's one man alone.

He has no child, no brother, no one to inherit his wealth. And yet he can't get away from the grindstone. There's no end of all of his labor.

Neither is his eye satisfied with his riches. Neither says he, he doesn't consider what am I saving all this money for? Who am I saving it for? Why am I saving it? Who am I going to leave it to? And yet he's bound to it. He's digging for more and more and more.

Striving, struggling, can't stop working, pushing, grinding in order to gain more and yet he doesn't have anybody to leave it to. This also is vanity. It's a sore travail.

Two are better than one. Because at least they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.

But woe to him that is alone when he falls, for there's no one to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they can have heat. But how can one be warm alone? And if one prevails against him, two will be able to withstand him.

And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king. Look to those little kids.

They're better off than I am. Poor wise child than this old foolish king who will no more be admonished. I won't listen to anything anymore.

No one can tell me anything. For out of prison he comes to reign, whereas also he that is born of his kingdom becomes poor. I consider all of the living which walk under the sun with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

And there is no end of all of the people, even of all that have been before them and of all that shall come after. They shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

It seems that life just goes on. There's multitudes before me. There's going to be multitudes after me.

I'm just in the line here, but it's also empty. Keep your foot when you go to the house of God and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. For they do not consider the evil that they do.

When you go into the house of God, listen. Be more ready to hear. Don't be rash with your mouth and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God.

For God is in heaven and you are upon the earth. Therefore, let your words be few. Now he's talking about going in the house of God and making all kinds of promises and vows to God.

Oh God, I'm going to serve you. Oh God, I'm going to put you first in my life. Oh God, and making all these promises.

He said keep your mouth shut. Don't do a lot of talking. Listen.

For God is there. He's in heaven. He hears what you're saying.

So don't be hasty to utter anything. For a dream comes through the multitude of business and a fool's voice is known by the multitude of his words. Now when you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it.

For he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

Don't allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin. All of the broken promises that we have made to God because we didn't have enough sense to just listen and keep our mouth shut when we came into the house of God. And so we make these rash promises.

These vows before the Lord. And then we break them. Better not to vow.

You see, the vow always makes me feel better because I get sort of satisfied. Well, I promised God I'm going to give him everything, you know. All I have belongs to God.

God, you can have it all. And I feel relieved of my guilt of amassing things because after all, it all belongs to God. I gave it to him.

Now he never has a chance to use it. But when I die, you know, who's it going to go to? Suffer not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin. Neither say you before the angel that it was an error.

Oh, I didn't really mean that. Wherefore, why should God become angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and in many words, there's also diverse vanities. But reverence God, respect Him.

For if you see the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and the justice in a province, marvel not at the matter. For he that is higher than the highest regards and there be higher than they. God is higher than man.

You see these things, just know that there's one who is higher. Moreover, the prophet of the earth is for all and the king himself is served by the field. Now he that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver.

Nor he that loves abundance with increase. This also is vanity. Jesus said a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesses.

If you love silver, you'll never be satisfied. If you love abundance, you'll never be satisfied by the abundance. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them.

So Solomon had more goods, but he had more people eating them. And what good is it to the owners thereof? Except that you get to watch them eat, you know. I mean, I've got all of these goods, but it takes so many servants to keep all of these cattle.

It takes so many shepherds to watch over all this. I've got to feed them all. So I've got all this, but what good is it? All I get to do is watch everybody eat it up, you know.

All my wives and all my kids sitting there eating and all the servants all eating. So you have a lot, so what, you know. What good is it to you? You can only eat so much.

You can only sleep in one bed. I mean, you know, you can only take care of your own needs. And after that, whatever you have, you just watch others eat it up.

The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much. But the abundance of the rich won't allow him to sleep. Now the guy who's out there laboring hard, hey, he really sleeps sound.

But yet this guy has so many riches, he's lying there on the pillow. Now tomorrow I better, you know, take this stock out of that. Looks like it's going out.

I better invest in this. Oh, I wonder, would that be wise, you know. And all night long he's mulling over what he's going to be doing tomorrow to get more riches.

And the abundance of his possessions won't allow him to sleep. He lies there pounding the pillow all night long, figuring out. So, how sweet is the sleep of the laboring man.

There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail. And He begetteth the son, there is nothing in his hand, and as he came forth out of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came.

He shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. Man, when you die, you're not going to take anything with you. You're going to leave it all.

And this is a sore evil. In all the points as he came, so he's going to go. So, what profit has he of all that which he labored for to the wind? For all of the days he eats in darkness, and he has much sorrow and wrath in his sickness.

Behold, that which I have seen, it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink and to enjoy the good of all of his labor that he has taken under the sun all of the days of his life, which God gives him, for it is his portion. In other words, enjoy it now, because man, that's your portion. That's it.

Now, how different this is than what Jesus said concerning our riches. He said, Lay not up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and decay, thieves break through and steal. Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven.

There is a way by which you can transfer your treasures into eternal treasures. And Jesus encourages us towards that. You can exchange your currency for that which is current in heaven.

Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth and hath given him power to eat thereof and to take his portion and to rejoice in his labor, this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life because God answers him in the joy of his heart. Now there is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it's common among men.

A man to whom God has given riches, wealth and honor so that he wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires. The guy doesn't want anything for his soul. Everything that he desires he has.

Yet God gives him not the power to eat thereof. But a stranger eats it. This is vanity and an evil disease.

A guy who has everything but can't partake of it. If a man begets a hundred children and he lives many years so that the days of his years be many and his soul be not filled with good and also that he has no burial, I say that an untimely birth is better than he. The guy is better off if he was really aborted rather than to live and have a hundred children and to live a long life.

For he comes in with vanity and he departs in darkness and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover, he has not seen the sun or known anything. This hath more rest than the other.

Even though he lives to be a thousand years twice or two thousand years old. Yet he has seen no good. Do not all go to one place.

All of the labor of man is for his mouth and yet his appetite is not filled. All you do, all your labor just to feed yourself, but yet you're always hungry. All of the labor of a man for his mouth and yet he's not full.

For what hath the wise more than the fool? What hath the poor that knoweth to walk before the living? Better in the sight of the eyes than the wondering of the desire. This also though is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which hath been is named already.

Nothing new. And it is known that it is man. Now, neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

Yet we find so many men seeking to contend with God. The Prophet said, Woe unto him who strives with his Maker. And yet people are striving with God.

Our striving with God usually results from a tragic experience in life where we do not understand why God allowed a certain tragedy or grief to befall our lives. And because I cannot understand why God allowed

this to happen, I become bitter against God. There are a lot of people today who are fighting with God.

They're angry with God. They're bitter against God. It's because their lies have not worked out to their desire.

It's because God hasn't given to them all that they want or all that they feel or that God has allowed something to happen to them which seems to be tragic. Now, somehow I think that God should only allow good things to happen to me. Somehow I feel that God ought to keep me healthy all the time, never sick.

I believe that God ought to make me a very prosperous person. I believe that God ought to make me very beautiful. And if I am flawed in any of this area, then I blame God.

God, why did you make me so ugly? God, why did you allow this to happen to me? God, why? And I am blaming God and finding fault with God because He hasn't followed what I feel to be the ideal pattern for my life. So, a man contends with God. But, verse 12, who really knows what is good for man in this life? Who really knows whether it's better that you be rich or poor? Do you really know what's best for you? Now, you think it would be best for you to be rich, but is that so? If you are rich, will that take your heart and mind away from God? Will it cause you to trust in your riches? Will it diminish your trust in Him and your love for Him? Will you be drawn away by the diver's lust that they that are rich fall into? Will your heart be turned from God to your possessions? Who knows? Do you know what riches would do for you? And yet, you're striving with God, you're contending with God because you're not rich.

Because you have these financial woes. But, God may know. I don't know.

Maybe God has to keep me poor so that I'll continue to trust in Him. I'll continue to rely upon Him day by day for my provisions. Who knows what is good for man? Is it better for me that I be healthy or I be sick? Evidently, for Paul the Apostle, it was better that he be sick.

When he asked God to remove his infirmity, God said, hey, Paul, My grace is sufficient for you. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness. So Paul said, I glory in my weakness that the power of God might be revealed in me.

Is it better for me that I be weak so that I have to trust in God, that I don't have the reliance in myself, but I've learned to just trust in God completely and thus I know the strength of God? Or is it better that I feel strong and self-sufficient and then get wiped out because I'm really very weak when it comes to my flesh and things of my flesh? What is better for me? Who really knows? I don't know my own heart. It's deceitful and desperately wicked. God knows.

God knows what is best for me. That is why it is so wrong for me to contend with God when He doesn't do for me what I think He ought to be doing. When He doesn't give to me those things that I feel I need and desire.

And so I begin to contend with God. Because God, You know how I desire that little portion. It's not fair, God, that You don't give it to me.

Oh, I think that would be so good for me. And God knows that it would wipe me out. It would swell me up in pride.

It would make me think that I was really something that goes cornering and everything else and probably get in a fatal accident trying to show off. And God knows what's best for me. But I would desire this, God.

And oh, I'm angry with God. I'm contending with God because He doesn't do for me the little goodies that I want Him to do. But He knows what's best for me.

I don't. I don't. Who knows what is good for man in this life? All the days of his vain life which he spends as a shadow.

Life is short. Days, measured by days. Life apart from Christ is empty.

Life apart from Christ lacks real meaning or substance. It's a shadow. All of the days of his vain shadow.

And who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? Who knows what's going to be after you? Who knows what's going to follow? Who knows what tomorrow is going to bring? Who knows what the future holds? Who knows what the result of it is going to be in your life? Only God knows. Therefore, rather than contending with God, I need to submit myself to God who knows all things. And rather than fighting and contending because He's not doing things my way, I need to just submit and yield my life into His hand, into His wisdom, for He knows what is best for me.

And even the sorrow or the tragedy that I might be experiencing today, God is using for my good. Even the sickness or the suffering that I might be experiencing now, God is working His eternal purpose through it. The day will come when I will bless God for this hardship rather than cursing Him as I am prone to do when things don't go right.

The day comes when you bless God and thank God for the disappointments because you see how God was working out a plan that you couldn't understand. Best that I just yield and here is my life, God. As you see fit, you know what's best.

Work in me your perfect plan. Shall we pray? Father, we thank You that we have Thy word as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path and may we walk in its light, Lord, that we might be instructed in the ways of righteousness and truth and that we might come into Thy fullness. Lord, hide now Thy word in our hearts.

As we see life under the sun, the emptiness of it, the futility of it, may we seek to experience life in the sun. That eternity that You have put into our heart, may we find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ as we drink of the water of life. In His name we pray.

Amen.

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