

Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:9

January 5, 2022

II. Human Effort (1:2-6:9)

F. Enjoyment instead of Greed (5:8-6:9)

Our passage this morning wraps up the first major section of Ecclesiastes, in which Solomon thinks through the gain of human toil (1:3). This passage is a chiasm dealing with the lack of satisfaction and permanence of wealth. At the center of the chiasm, though, is one of Solomon's most significant statements on how to live life with a proper worldview (5:18-20).

1. No Satisfaction in Wealth (5:8-12 and 6:7-9)

Solomon begins this sub-section with a rather intriguing thought, one that we would do well to take to heart: we ought not to be surprised or shocked when high-level officials look after high-level officials at the expense of the everyday citizen (5:8). It's an evil thing for those in human government to pervert *justice and righteousness* in this way. It's also foolishness when *the profit of the land is used for all* (5:9).

When *high officials* – or anyone for that matter! – chase after material wealth and gain, it's going to leave them unsatisfied. The more they have, the more they'll want, and it is *vanity* (5:10). *The sleep of a laboring man is sweet*, regardless of how much or little they have. Putting in an honest day's work and enjoying whatever we have in front of us is a much preferable circumstance!

2. No Permanence in Wealth (5:13-17 and 6:1-6)

As we move on to the second level in the chiasm, Solomon teaches that there's no permanence to wealth, either. Riches easily *perish* (5:14), or God can make it so that the rich man doesn't have the *power to eat of it* (6:2).

Not only that, but we can't take our wealth with us when we die. We return *naked*; we can *take nothing from our labor* (5:15). As the saying goes, you can't take it with you when you go. It doesn't matter how much we have, if we can't enjoy it, or be *satisfied with goodness*, we're better off having never been born (6:3).

3. Permanent Satisfaction with God (5:18-20)

Standing in stark contrast to these two conditions is the one who finds satisfaction with all God has given to him. The answer to *What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?* (1:3) is found in v. 18: *Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one...*

- *to eat and drink* – Enjoy life! God has given us creation to enjoy it and rejoice in it!
- *to enjoy the good of all his labor* – It's still going to be *toil*, Solomon doesn't deny that. But God created us to steward His creation well, and that inevitably includes *toil* because of sin. Yet, it is our *heritage* (5:18).
- *to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor* – Everything comes from God, and He also gives us *power to eat of it* (5:19). This stands in stark contrast to 6:2, where God gives those *riches and wealth and honor... yet does not give them power to eat of it*. It's the gift of God to sit down at the end of a long day and rejoice in His provision and be satisfied with it!

In this way, Solomon tells us in 5:20 that we won't fret or murmur or complain, *because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart*. Do we want a biblical way of viewing life and all that God has given to us? Take a step back, take a deep breath, and take in the view! It may not be a success in the world's eyes, but it will provide great satisfaction in ours!