

Ecclesiastes 2

Verses 1- 11

I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.” And behold, it too was futility. ² I said of laughter, “It is senseless,” and of pleasure, “What does this accomplish?” ³ I explored with my mind how to refresh my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely; and how to seize foolishness, until I could see what good there is for the sons of mankind to do under heaven for the few years of their lives. ⁴ I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; ⁵ I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; ⁶ I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves, and I had slaves born at home. I also possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. ⁸ I also amassed for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers, and the pleasures of the sons of mankind: many concubines. ⁹ Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. ¹⁰ All that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. I did not restrain my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor; and this was my reward for all my labor. ¹¹ So I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold, all was futility and striving after wind, and there was no benefit under the sun.

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

Solomon sought all kinds of things that could bring him pleasure.

1. Houses and vineyards.
2. Gardens and parks with all kinds of fruit trees.
3. A forest of growing trees.
4. Flocks and herds.
5. Silver and gold.
6. Male and female singers and many concubines.

¹⁰ All that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. I did not restrain my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor; and this was my reward for all my labor.

Solomon partook of every pleasure that he desired and it seems that he was extravagant in all of his pleasures. How else can one explain a king having 300 concubines and 700 wives? However, Solomon was wise enough to hire many servants that could take his wives and concubines out shopping or he would have been too busy to complete any of his projects. ☺ .

¹¹ So I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold, all was futility and striving after wind, and there was no benefit under the sun.

During his younger days Solomon's heart was pleased because of all his labor but when he was older and he had time to look back on his labors he recognized that much of what he had done was of little consequence. This should be a warning to all of mankind that we should spend as much time as possible seeking spiritual things.

See Matthew 6:30 - 33

³⁰ **But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will* He not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith!**

³¹ **Do not worry then, saying, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear for clothing?' ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.**

A number of great men of the Old Testament served in high positions for foreign kings:

1. Joseph in Egypt
2. Moses living and leading in Pharaoh's court until he was 40 years old.
3. Daniel, a high official in Babylon and Persia.
4. Nehemiah, cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes.

All of these men had great talent and worked hard in their jobs serving a foreign king but when they had an opportunity to serve God they used those skills to benefit the kingdom of God.

Verses 12 - 17

¹² So I turned to consider wisdom, insanity, and foolishness; for what *will* the man do who will come after the king, except what has already been done? ¹³ Then I saw that wisdom surpasses foolishness as light surpasses darkness. ¹⁴ The wise person's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one *and the same* fate happens to both of them. ¹⁵ Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also happen to me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is futility." ¹⁶ For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, along with the fool, since *in the coming days* everything will soon be forgotten. And how the wise and the fool alike die! ¹⁷ So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was unhappy to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

¹³ Then I saw that wisdom surpasses foolishness as light surpasses darkness.

Solomon had already concluded that in much wisdom there is much grief but he makes it clear here that he considers wisdom much better than ignorance.

This is true because the wise man can see where he is going, and the fool cannot

¹⁴ The wise person's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one *and the same* fate happens to both of them.

It is better to be wise than foolish because the wise man knows how to live a good life but in the end both the wise and the foolish man end up in the grave. Worldly people use this fact to live as they please and spiritual people see this as a reminder that we need to be alert and use our time wisely.

¹⁶ For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, along with the fool, since *in the coming days* everything will soon be forgotten. And how the wise and the fool alike die!

When Solomon says, "everything will soon be forgotten", truer words have never been spoken. Every generation sees things differently because each generation has a different frame of reference (events that have occurred during their life time). Each generation has an opportunity to learn things from the previous generation and from recorded history but this knowledge seems to be far less relevant to most people than their own personal experiences.

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

It is interesting that a man that was so rich and had accomplished so many things during his life would come to this conclusion. However, we know that this life in the flesh keeps us occupied with day to day (physical) concerns much more than with spiritual things. Eat, sleep, work and repeat. Therefore it requires some wisdom to curb our attention to physical things in order to spend some time in God's word and reflect on what we can best do to further the kingdom of God.

Verses 18 - 23

¹⁸ **So I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, because 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 have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is futility.**
²⁰ **Therefore I completely despaired over all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.** ²¹ **When there is a person who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then gives his legacy to one who has not labored for it; this too is futility and a great evil.** ²² **For what does a person get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?** ²³ **Because all his days his activity is painful and irritating; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is futility.**

¹⁸ So I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, because 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 have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is futility.**

Solomon didn't know if his son Rehoboam would turn out to be a wise man or a fool. After his son became king it soon became apparent that he was not a wise man and the Kingdom of Israel was divided and he was left with only two tribes. It turned out that all of Solomon's great projects put a very heavy burden on the common people and in the long run it led to rebellion.

²² For what does a person get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? ²³ **Because all his days his activity is painful and irritating; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is futility.**

Solomon reveals here that there was a heavy cost to him in doing all of these projects. There was one headache after another, endless worry and sleepless nights. It seems that many people want to be the BMOC (big man on campus) in this life but it comes with a high price. Men and woman that attain a high position may wear nice clothes, have expensive houses and eat at the finest restaurants but their lives are not without a lot of pain and suffering.

Verses 24 - 26

²⁴ **There is nothing better for a person *than* to eat and drink, and show himself some good in his trouble. This too 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 futility and striving after wind.**

²⁴ **There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink, and show himself some good in his trouble. This too I have seen, that it is from the hand of God.**

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

Life can be a grind so we need to take some time to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. This is part of living a Godly life. When God gave Israel the law he provided many blessings to follow if they did as he said.

However, this teaching is not the same as the Prosperity Gospel that is preached in some of the mega churches. They believe that if someone lives a good life that this will bring financial blessings, health, and success but we know that is not always the case. This was just covered in the last chapter but is duplicated here for convenience.

Seer Hebrews 13: 35b – 38

^{35b} **and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; ³⁶ and others experienced mocking and flogging, and further, chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ³⁸ (people of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts, *on* mountains, and *sheltering in* caves and holes in the ground.**

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 futility and striving after wind.

Solomon says that people who follow God are given wisdom, knowledge, and joy but the sinner is given the chore of making money in order to give it to the Godly person.

See Matt 6.33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

It should be noted that this principle like many others should not be taken to an extreme or it will be used to teach a falsehood. Remember how Job's friends took a good principle, "a person reaps as he has sown" and by taking that good principle to an extreme it became a falsehood that meant "if a person is suffering they must be a sinner".

Abraham, King David and others were not unbelievers because they were rich and not all poor people are Godly. However, God will take the riches of the ungodly and give it to those who are good in his sight. Sometimes this takes place when an evil person dies and his wealth is distributed to others who use it to bless organizations and people who are serving God. However, God can do this in whatever ways He desires.