

**Ecclesiastes 2: 15-24; “Do You Hate Your Life?”, Sermon # 8 in the series –
“Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
January 24th, 2016, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have seen in past studies how this book of Ecclesiastes is a great search on the part of Solomon, king of Israel; a search for the meaning of life. He found that there was vanity in everything that he tried to pursue. He had tried to pursue the accumulation of worldly wisdom and found that there was much pain in the acquiring of it. And, there was increased sorrow and grief which was attendant upon having it. So he thought that he would pull back from such a strenuous pursuit of wisdom and try mirth and pleasure for a while. He had the riches and the time for this. After all, was this not what most people in the world thought was the greatest thing in life; to please one's self with pleasures of various sorts? And yet, even though he guided himself skillfully in this pursuit and made many great houses and gardens and vineyards and water pools, and “made his works great” in order to satisfy himself and to get a great name for himself, still, he did not find what he was looking for in those pursuits either. The thing that he was looking for was lasting satisfaction. He was looking for happiness and the ultimate meaning in life. But after all this, he still had not found it.

However, he had found this: In comparing wisdom and folly, he saw that wisdom excelled folly as light excelled darkness because the wise man's eyes were in his head. There was some real benefit to earthly wisdom; at least in a temporary sense. He was convinced of that. Then, as he compared his life with the fool's life, he saw that it was going to happen to him as it did to the fool. They were both going to die, and neither he nor the fool was going to be remembered. So he then began to question why he had tried so hard to be wise. And so he comes to a conclusion which may at first seem quite radical to us. It says in verse 17, “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.” This was his conclusion: He hated life. He had come to what one commentator has called, “a rational despair” in relation to life. He was not suicidal, but he was very unhappy about life itself, in regard to the reward of all his labors. It was distressing to him. He had searched and searched for the meaning of life, and had sought for satisfaction in many ways, and still he could not find satisfaction by any earthly means. So this afternoon I want to set before you the reasons which Solomon hated his life. 1st – Let me make mention of Solomon's reasons for despair in regard to his labor. And then 2nd - We want to rejoice in his turning to God for the answer.

1st – Let's look at Solomon's reasons for despair in regard to his labor.

(Verses 18- 23)

“Then I hated all my labor which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.” In verse 17 he says that he hated life. In verse 18 he says he hated his labor. He hated his life because he hated the fact that he could not continue to work and to benefit from his own work himself. He must “leave it to the man who would come after him”. In fact, this is the key to many a person's dissatisfaction with life, whether it is related to their work or not, and whether they are a believer or an unbeliever. All men, apart from God's grace, would like very much to be able to control the outcome of their work and their life. But they cannot, without God. Let's look at a few verses to confirm this. Turn to Psalm 49 with me. This psalm is addressed to both rich and poor, low and high together; really, all the inhabitants of the world. It addresses the very subject which was bothering Solomon. In verse 6 we find the subject of concern. “Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches.” Skipping over verses 7-9 for the moment, look at verse 10. “For he (that is, the rich man) sees wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others.” “Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, their dwelling places to all generations;

they call their lands after their own names.” “Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.” This is the same problem that Solomon was having, even though he was a righteous man. Perhaps it is the problem with some of us here today as well. He was going to have to leave his wealth and all that he had labored for, to others.

Even though we are Christians we still in some ways live and think like worldlings. We think that there is wisdom in this being worldly-minded but God does not. Turn with me over to 1st John 2: 15. “Do not love the World or the things in the world.” “If anyone loves the World the love of the Father is not in him.” In other words there is an unholy competition of the World with the Christian which vies for his love and affections. Turn with me over to James chapter 4, verse 1. “Where do wars and fights come from among you?” “Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” “You lust and do not have.” “You murder and covet and cannot obtain.” “You fight and war.” “Yet you do not have because you do not ask.” “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” “Adulterers and adulteresses!” “Do you not know that friendship with the World is enmity with God?” “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the World makes himself an enemy of God.” “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’?” Now I want us to think together, of the verses that I have just read to you, in light of Solomon’s experience. “For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it.” “This,” Solomon thought, “was vanity and a great evil.” It was vanity and a great evil because the man could not guarantee the outcome of all that he labored for. What is the answer? The answer is that the man’s worldliness must go, in order that he might be able to find God’s best gifts. This applies especially to the believer. An unbelieving person will always love the world, and put it above the love of God. But God can also change the unbeliever by giving him saving grace. The person who has saving grace will see this important principle of truth, even though they may not want to see it, for a while.

We must understand that sometimes we cannot come to embrace what is lasting and most precious until we can see the vanity of what we are laboring for now. If we do come to see the vanity of it, then we may also be able to search and to find the things which are truly good; the things which will truly last. Solomon had come to hate his life, but this was a very necessary thing for him to come to, at this point in his experience, if he would find that which would truly satisfy him in a lasting sense. I want you to turn over with me now to Luke chapter 14, verse 25. “Now great multitudes went with Him.” “And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife, and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.’” You see, what happened to Solomon in his search for meaning and lasting satisfaction in this life, is that he had come to hate his own life, in the sense that Jesus is speaking of it here. He had come to see the vanity of the world, and the vanity of his trying to get his satisfaction out of it. He had come to see that God is a jealous God. He came to see that God will not tolerate, in one of His Son’s own disciples, a friendship with the World that will take their heart away from Him. The one who makes himself the friend of the World is the enemy of God. That friendship with the world could actually be the love of father or mother, sister or brother, more than Christ. It could be loving your own life of worldliness before Christ. If you heed can heed the call of an earthly person whom you love, to turn your heart away from Christ at critical times, when He is demanding obedience, and self-denial, and sacrifice, then where is your real loyalty? It cannot be with Him.

Sometimes we do not learn these things all at once. We do not learn them in a day or month or even a year. Sometimes it takes us many years to be brought to the place where we will give our all to Jesus. But the true disciple will give Christ their all, and thus they will come to hate their own life in this holy sense that we are talking about. Thomas Boston says in one of his

sermons on this place, “Christ must be dearer to his disciples than what is dearest to them in the world.” “The dearest persons are father, mother, and etc.” “The dearest thing is life.”... “He who taught us in the law to love our neighbor as ourselves, does not contradict this here, but speaks out what was implied there, that we must neither love our neighbor nor ourselves, as God.” Boston then quotes the disciple-like resolution of Jerome... “If my father should stand before me, my mother hang upon me, my brethren press about me, I would break through my brethren, throw down my father, tread under feet my mother, to cleave to Jesus Christ.” And Boston also uses the example of a Dutch schoolmaster who was asked if he loved not his wife and children? “Yes”, says he, if all the world were gold, and mine to dispose of, I would give it all to live with the Lord, though but in a prison; yet is my soul and my Lord Christ dearer than all.” Boston says, “That no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.” This is why God ordained that Solomon would not be able to find lasting pleasure and satisfaction in all of his own great works. He loved his life, and his own works, more than God. God brought him to conviction over it. Verse 23 and 24. “For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest.” “This also is vanity.” God knew that all of Solomon’s pleasure in his work would have to go if he were to come to find his greater satisfaction in God. Is this the case with you, my beloved brother, my beloved sister? Is there something that God will have to pry your hands off of, in regard to this world? You should understand that He will be faithful to do it, so that you will learn this great lesson; so that you will find Him to be all your hope and stay, all your joy and happiness. This is a part of His great faithfulness.

Listen to Thomas Boston again: “When the heart is loosed from what we have in the world, it is easy parting with it, by what it is when the heart holds by it till it be forced from it. – Nothing is ever parted with so honorably as when it is parted with for Christ.” “No thanks to you that you part with what you have, when God takes it from you whether you will or not.” “It is honorable to forsake the world at Christ’s call, for Christ’s sake, before we be forsaken of the world.” “You will be no losers at Christ’s hands.” “If you quit with them now to Christ, He probably will let you keep them, and accept of your will for the deed.” “This was the case with Abraham, when called to offer up Isaac; and with David when it was in his heart to build a house to the Lord.” “Thus you will have them with His blessing and favor.” “If He take them from you, without them you will get a throughbearing (that is – He will bear you through it): Psalm 37: 3 – “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” “A little served up to you from the promise, and brought to your hand by a particular providence, will have a double sweetness in it.” “That bread will not be lost which is thrown upon these waters; after many days you shall find it.” Matthew 19: 29 – “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit eternal life.” “He Himself will be to you instead of all, and better than all here; and heaven will fully make up all hereafter.” Can you see the wisdom of these truths my brethren? If you do, you shall find the strength that you need to face any trial, and you will come to have true and heavenly spiritual joy in living your life to God.

Now 2nd - Let us rejoice in the fact that Solomon finally did turn to God for the answer to his predicament. (Verse 24)

I will expand upon this more in my next sermon to you, but let us grasp the fact that in these two chapters God’s name has only been mentioned twice. The first time was in Chapter 1, verse 13 where he describes God as having given him and all the sons of men “this burdensome task by which they are exercised under the sun”. That task was to “search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven”, to find the meaning of life and lasting happiness and satisfaction. Now here in verse 24, we find the 2nd reference to God. Solomon had something revealed to him, which he saw was from the hand of God. “Nothing is better for a man than he should eat

and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor.” “This was from the hand of God.” I hope that you can see here that what Solomon is saying is that it is the simple every-day pleasures of eating and drinking and work that bring us satisfaction, by God’s blessing upon them. It is the blessing of God that a man should enjoy good in his labor, and that it will bring him happiness. And, we can also say that will bring him eternal happiness; that is, if he has faith in Christ, and thoughts of thankfulness to Christ in all that does.

When you have Christ, you have all lasting happiness and joy in everything that you do, if it what you are doing is being done to God’s glory. The Christian does not have to despair of all his labor, or hate his life which God has given him, if he comes to see that it is God’s hand giving him everything that he has. He only needs to remember that if he is not thanking God for what he has, without glorifying God in the way that he uses what God has given to him, that every good gift will turn to vanity without the blessing of God upon it. The way to find His blessing is to praise Him for all that He gives, and hold it with a light hand. Your labor will be good and profitable to yourself and others if your soul has Christ in it. When you learn from Christ how to be crucified to this world you will understand that you should “use this world as not misusing it”, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7: 31. “For the form of this world is passing away.” The lesson for us to learn is found in 1 Corinthians 10: 31. “Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.” The Lord was bringing Solomon to grasp the reality of that statement in his experience. Are you grasping it in your own experience?