

Ecclesiastes- Chapter 5 Part 2

If you would please be turning with me in your bibles over to the 5th chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes. We are continuing in our march through this wonderful book of wisdom written by Solomon more than 2900 years ago, yet the wisdom that exudes in this book is as timeless as time itself and it's timeless because man's nature has not changed.

True the world has changed. Solomon never saw a skyscraper, an airplane, or a rocket bound for space. Knowledge in many ways has increased. We have the answer to most questions these days at our fingertips. Comforts have increased. The things we take for granite have increased. But man, man at the core is still the same. He is still full of vanity. Man is still chasing after the wind and never fully able to grasp what seems to always be slipping through his fingers.

In this book Solomon examines that nature of man and where that nature takes him. And when I say man, remember, we are talking about man who is living his life under the sun- that is apart from God. In this book, we are slowly finding that there is no lasting value in the things of this earth. Things go away. People go away. Apart from God all we have seen in this book is enjoy what you have while you have it and hopefully you have got a friend to share it with. That's it. That's the best we can hope for.

It almost goes along with what the Epicureans would say some 500 years later when they proclaimed to eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. And that is the exact way that many live their lives today whether they identify themselves with the Epicureans or not. They live their lives without thought or worry of their own expiration date.

But the eternal question is always, but then what? What about that day when we die? What

about when as Solomon put it- dust shall become dust again? Because God has placed eternity in the heart of man, man will always wonder is the end really the end or in the end did anything really matter in the first place.

Solomon is getting to the point of showing us how to have life with meaning. Last week, we saw a snippet of that ultimate conclusion that is to come at the end of this book as he gave us directions about how we should come into the house of the Lord by guarding our steps and guarding our mouths as well or another way to say it- watch our steps and watch our mouths that we might be pleasing in the sight of God.

I began to think about that this week a little more. Watch our steps and watch our mouths. You know the Bible teaches for us that are saved that we are children of God. We should go to him like a Father. The scripture teaches that Jesus is a friend indeed, but sometimes I think we forget the fact that though he is our friend and though he is a loving heavenly father that we are also coming together to worship an all holy, righteous, and sovereign God and he is to be more revered than our greatest of friends on this earth and more worthy of adoration than the best dad on this planet.

He is a God whom the angels declare his holiness around his throne day in and day out. He is a God whom the elders bow in his presence day in and day out declaring his worthiness. Does he expect less out of us? No. He's worth more than a high five folks or a fist bump. He is worthy of praise and honor above all. He is worthy of our worship!

Now let's get into our verses for today. We are looking into the familiar subject of the vanity of wealth.

Let's read our section.

Ecc 5:8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that

is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

Ecc 5:9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

Ecc 5:10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

Ecc 5:11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

Ecc 5:12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

Ecc 5:13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

Ecc 5:14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

Ecc 5:15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

Ecc 5:16 And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

Ecc 5:17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

Ecc 5:18 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 his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.

Ecc 5:19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

Ecc 5:20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

Let's look back to our first verse of this section.
Ecc 5:8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in

a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

Now Solomon was a rich man. Actually, Solomon really never knew what it was like to be poor did he? He grew up as the son of King David. There was nothing that wasn't within Solomon's reach. Solomon never knew what it was like to work as a slave. Solomon never knew what it was like to try to provide for a family with a field and plow or shepherd sheep as his father did.

However, Solomon did seem to be able to look at life through the eyes of the people. He seemed to understand what people were thinking when they looked out from their fields and saw the officials coming to collect their taxes by taking a portion of grain or wine or whatever it might be.

Just as you aren't happy to pay taxes to the government people weren't necessarily happy then about sending their goods to support the king, but they did because they needed the king's protection.

Here's the thing though- throughout history, often those in charge exacted more than they should. So that they too might have a slice of the action. Or maybe a king might seek more than his share. That is the perversion of justice that Solomon speaks of here.

Solomon says don't be amazed when you see one perverting justice over you because someone is over him probably doing the same thing and this pattern goes all the way to the king. Injustice after injustice at times all the way up to the king.

But is anyone over the king who is over all? Well the answer even to that is yes as Solomon well knows. Who is the one who is over the king? It is God.

As Solomon reminds us in his Proverbs,
Pro 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

You see even over the king. Though he may seem to be ruthless. Though he may be godless. Though he may seek more than his share he is ultimately not the one on top. The king's heart is in his hands and he himself could do nothing if God did not allow it.

Today Trump is president of the United States. It is by the will of God that he is there, and his heart is in the hand of the Lord so that his will for his people in the US might be done. Sometimes for blessings for obedience. Sometimes for cursing because we are not. That said, nothing happens outside of God's sovereign will.

And when next year comes if he should win again, then it will be God's will who brings up rulers and if he loses and Biden wins then it is still part of God's plan. Don't despair God is always in control. The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.

So ultimately Solomon is saying in this verse don't be worried when you see the farmer oppressed and the fisherman oppressed by those who are perverting justice because ultimately no one has power unless God has allowed them to have power. He's in control. He will give the people what they need. He will feed them with food convenient for them. He does not forsake the righteous and his seed should not be begging bread. He has promised to supply. Every good and perfect gift is from above right?

Let's read on,
Ecc 5:9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

The God who sees the oppression of the poor, and remember in this day and time you were

either rich or poor, will make sure that the earth produces enough to feed his people.

The verse is also a reminder that the king himself could not make it without the revenue of the fields. Without a supply from the people he couldn't feed the armies that protect the people. Without the field he has no army and a king without an army won't be king very long. See how everything is a big circle.

Everything is tied together. God is in control and God is able to remove a bad spoke from the wheel at any time. He was able to then. He is able to now.

Ecc 5:10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

It is amazing to me the difference in mentality of people. There are people who have learned to be content with what they have and they may never have a lot, but they are happy and free. The happiest people around are those that have learned contentment.

But then there is the other end of the spectrum. The lover of money. That is what is meant by silver here. A generic word for money.

Someone once said, the only problem I have with money is that I never have enough of it and that is exactly how many in this world act despite having more than enough. Seems like the more you have the more you want even though you would have a hard time ever spending it all in the first place.

But as Solomon has explored in this book already and yet will again- does all that money bring happiness? Let's see.

Look here,
Ecc 5:11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there

to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

If you want to earn more it often takes more people to earn more. The more people you hire to do a job the more income it takes to satisfy your hired help.

Let me give you an example. When I first started my chiropractic business someone told me there are two ways to practice. There is the you method where you do it all and you might have someone answer your phones part time and it doesn't take many patients to give you a comfortable income. Not big, but not bad and not much stress.

Then there is the I want a bigger income and that means you advertise more to see more patients, hire more staff to keep up, invest in more equipment, pay more taxes, see more patients, hire more staff and stay stressed much more.

Turns out that was a true scenario and what I found out is there is little room between those two thoughts. Because now I have three three billing people, three massage therapists, a personal trainer, and a transcriptionist. So I see more patients to pay more payroll and in the end the stress is higher than seeing the few when it was just me and the part time girl out front.

If only I would have read the wisdom of Solomon and heeded it long ago.

Let's read on,
Ecc 5:12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

Here we have a man who works hard for a living. He has what he has and that is what he has. When he goes to bed at night he knows he will earn another day of wage by the sweat of his brow. When he lays in bed he's not worried about the things of this world. He is not anxious over his possessions because he doesn't have

much. Not worried how much he has to sell tomorrow to pay off the money he borrowed to increase his business. He rests well.

The more you have in this life often has the tendency to cause people to lose sleep at night. For the businessman he goes to bed worried about payroll, bills, taxes, product availability. Worried about the new chain that opened up down the street that threatens to undersell everything you do till you go out of business. Or perhaps he's the kind of man who has earned a lot and therefore has bought a lot and he goes to bed still wondering how he is going to keep up the cycle.

Times may have been different in Solomon's day, but the problems all still the same. Man's nature has not changed.

Let's read on,
Ecc 5:13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

Verses 11 and 12 gave us the first side effect of the love of money and that was anxiety. The mental stress that it takes to get what one desires and keep the machine going.

Verse 13 gives us the possibility of another side effect of the love of money and that is sometimes an increase in wealth becomes a physical hurt to one's own body.

Let's put this in the simplest of ways we have all heard. Stress kills. The stress that comes with having to deal with wealth and business leads to less sleep, more GI issues, increased blood pressure, heart attack, higher rates of alcoholism. You get the pattern? Stress kills.

Then there is the other scenario where if you have enough wealth, people may seek to break in and hurt you physically to steal what you have. Google lottery winners and read about how people have been kidnapped, beat up and

robbed. Jack Whittaker famous for winning the largest jackpot up till that time here in WV was robbed twice and has had trouble after trouble.

As long as there are people of wealth in this world there will be people that seek to take it one way or another.

Let's keep reading,

Ecc 5:14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

Not only does the love of money cause anxiety and even physical illness, sometimes right when you think you have a lot and you are set for life you might find you have nothing at all.

Here Solomon presents us with a man who has made a bad deal or a bad partnership. That happens all the time doesn't it?

Not long ago I was reading a book about a family who started a salad dressing company out of their garage. Sold to upscale hotels. Made a fortune. Then their biggest hotel chain went belly up and they were forced to invite investors in who demanded them to sell their product to discount stores and when they did they lost the other big name clients because no one at a fancy hotel wants a salad dressing you can buy at Piggly Wiggly. Wasn't long before they sell out to their investors for next to nothing.

That is what this verse is all about. Bad deals and bad partners cleaning you out and, in the end, having nothing to give to your son for an inheritance.

And again, we read,

Ecc 5:15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

People are born into wealth every day. We might all be born naked, but some are leaving

the hospital in a Versace onesie, a silver spoon in their mouth in a Cadillac Escalade. They may go through this life and hardly lift a finger and have all the wealth and possessions they could ever want and when life's over they might be buried in the nicest Armani suit, but you know what they are going to leave behind? Everything they have because we can take nothing with us when that final curtain closes and we take that final bow.

I think about those Egyptian Pharaohs who tried to carry their wealth into the next life only for that wealth to be plundered over the centuries by grave robbers and why not? Gold does no dead man any good.

Let's read on,

Ecc 5:16 And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

In our verse here Solomon is just turning the scenario into a question asking what good is it for a man to chase money for all the anxiety, for the health issues from the stress, for the gain and loss and gain again- all for it to slip out of our hands at the last moment of life. What good is all these things we have been talking about this morning? Well it's no good at all is it? Far better to be content with what we have.

Look at this next verse. This is interesting,
Ecc 5:17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

Solomon has been describing the life of one that is living life under the sun. That is apart from God. Yet here he says that the man who has fallen in love with his money eats in darkness. And here we aren't talking about how fancy restaurants are often the darkest places around.

We are talking about eating in sorrow. The man who has it all and yet never has any lasting joy. His wealth has brought him moments of

happiness, but no lasting contentment. No lasting joy. His life is filled with depression and anger.

Now, I need to say this, I want you to understand Solomon is not trying to say that money and riches are a bad thing. He is talking about the one who is living under the sun who is in love with riches.

Money has become his drug. He's sick with it.

People can have money, live under heaven, and live a good godly life with contentment.

Let's read on,

Ecc 5:18 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 his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.

Contentment is what this verse is all about. Money can't buy happiness. Money can't buy contentment. Godliness with contentment though is a great gain. Be content with the provisions that God has given us.

Ecc 5:19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

This is Solomon's advice for those that are living under heaven that have money. It is the same advice. Enjoy what God has given you knowing that God gave it all.

Good advice isn't it?

And our last verse for the day,

Ecc 5:20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

This verse is saying to the man of wealth that when we realize God is in control, we don't have to be anxious over the next payday. We don't have to worry because God is always in control.

Actually, that is just good advice for all of the saved here today. As Bobby McFerrin once sang, "don't worry be happy." Enjoy what you have it is a blessing of God that gives good and perfect gifts to his children.