

Message #7

Ecclesiastes 2:18-23

Solomon was an achiever, a hard worker, an accomplisher. Solomon would get up and get things done. He didn't lie around. He worked hard, he played hard and he drove himself. He built homes, he built a temple and he was a success story. But there was a thought that kept haunting him—someday he would die and turn all of this stuff over to someone else. That thought haunted him and that is what these verses are all about.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE ACCOMPLISH BY OUR WORK, WITHOUT GOD BEING AT THE CENTER OF IT, WE WILL WIND UP HATING IT BECAUSE IT WILL TURN OUT TO MEANINGLESS AND WE WILL WIND UP TURNING EVERYTHING OVER TO SOMEONE ELSE.

If our total focus of life is “under the sun,” it will wind up empty. If our focus is “above the sun” on that which is eternal, things we accomplish will last and stand.

Every one of our enterprises on this earth, sooner or later, will flip out of our control. The more one has worked, the more one has accomplished, the more one will hate turning it all over to someone else; but that is eventually what everyone will do.

Now the main statement of the section is found in the first part of verse 18—“I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I labored under the sun.” That Hebrew word “hate” means he actually considered things he accomplished to be his enemy (Gesenius, p. 792). The word “labor” which shows up eight times in these six verses, is one that means to toil to the point of being weary (Ibid., p. 369). Solomon was a hard-working man. No one outthought him and no one outworked him.

He actually came to the point where he hated everything he accomplished “under the sun.”

REASON #1 – We all die and leave everything to someone else . **2:18b**

A person can work long hard hours, he can plan, he can strategize, and he can sacrifice. A person may give up vacation time and personal time so he can achieve and accumulate. A man can work, risk, invest and accumulate, but in the end he will die and leave it all to someone else.

REASON #2 – We do not know if we will leave everything to one wise or one foolish .
2:19-20

When we read Proverbs, especially the first nine chapters, which is the “my son” section, it is obvious that Solomon did not believe there were any automatic guarantees with his own son. His own sons could turn out to be wise men or they could turn out to be fools.

Truth is we may select who we give it all to, but once we are gone we have no control over whether it is used wisely or foolishly.

Even though Solomon had made right moves and wise decisions, he would turn it all over to someone else. It was all empty.

Solomon was so depressed by this that he “completely despaired.” The word “despair” is one that means Solomon was completely cast down in his spirit, to the point of being without any hope (Gesenius, p. 326).

The Hebrew text indicates this was what was really in his heart. Solomon was hopelessly depressed. Quite frankly he was putting far too much emphasis on the “fruit of his labor.”

He should have been thinking about how God had blessed him, but instead he was thinking like a man “under the sun.”

REASON #3 – We will work diligently and wisely to accumulate and then turn it over to a freeloader who did not labor. **2:21**

If God isn't in it, this is a depressing, empty evil. In fact, the words “great evil” literally means it is a great evil, wicked calamity (Gesenius, p. 773).

I don't care who we are, where we work or what we achieve. If God isn't at the center of it, it won't make much sense. We'll get everything all set up and turn it all over to someone else who didn't earn any of it.

If we can't walk away from it and say I did this for the glory of God, then we will wind up as depressed as Solomon. Solomon hated the fruit of his labor.

REASON #4 – We won't find peace and tranquility in what we achieve if God isn't at the center. **2:22-23**

One commentator said pain and grief and sorrow are “the real results of life-long efforts” under the sun (W. J. Deanne, Vol. 9, p. 37).

If God isn't at the center of things, life is futile. One may go after this and another may go after that. But eventually we all will die and leave it all here. Unless what we do counts for God, life doesn't make sense and what we do really doesn't matter.

We have one life to live. We get one chance to live life. Don't waste it on things “under the sun”; invest it on things “above the sun.” Use your life for the Glory of God!