

I. Solomon's Hatred of His Labour (vv 18-23).

- A.** The Contrast in Context
- B.** What is the subject of Solomon's anger?
 - 1)** Not the work itself.
 - 2)** Rather, the conditions of his toils
- C.** The Compounding Vexation of Solomon's (and Our) Labours
 - 1)** The rigor of his toil (v 18, 1:3; Gen 3:17-19, Rom 8:20-21; Lam 3:27; 1 Jn 2:14b; Jb 7:1)
 - 2)** The success from his labours
 - a)** The success of wealth so great that it will be passed on (Pr 13:22a)
 - b)** The success of skillfulness in one's vocation (Pr 22:29)
 - c)** Why is success vexing?
 - i.** Because we may be disturbed when we have time to reflect on whether that pursuit was worthwhile.
 - ii.** Because we cannot stop working.
 - iii.** Because we do not know what to do afterwards once we have accomplished our goal.
 - iv.** Because the reward does not feel equal to the work.
 - v.** Because the reward is not able to be savoured as long
 - vi.** Because the reward is not as satisfying as we thought it would be.
 - vii.** Because we will not get to enjoy our reward forever
 - 3)** The certainty of his ceasing to work
 - a)** There are three reasons we would have to stop our work and no longer be able to enjoy the profits of our toil: *(i)* Our death, *(ii)* disability, or *(iii)* some more pressing duty.
 - b)** *Use*, Something temporary cannot be our lasting comfort.
 - 4)** The certainty of a successor
 - 5)** The uncertainty of the character of his successor, or even who that successor will be
 - 6)** The probability that the successor will be worse than before
 - a)** Solomon's skill — Wisdom (Logic), Knowledge (Grammar) Skill (Rhetoric)
 - b)** Why is there a tendency toward generational entropy?

- c)** How do we guard against generational entropy?
- 7)** The fact that the successor will not have worked as hard to get where Solomon is
- D.** The Question (v 22)
- E.** The Conclusion (v 23; 1 Cor 7:32-35; Mt 11:28-30)

II. Solomon's Love of His Labour (vv 24-26).

- A.** This passage is not a contradiction, but rather the common experience of all.
- B.** The Goodness of Work
 - 1)** Work is necessary, and yet also good — both duty and delight.
 - a)** Work is necessary, not optional (Ex 20:8-10; 2 Thes 3:10)
 - b)** *Use*, Here we are convicted of the sin of laziness (Pr 6:6-11)
 - c)** *Use*, Here we are convicted of the sin of idleness
 - 2)** The relative 'betterness' of work
 - a)** It is better to *eat and drink* than to hunger and thirst.
 - b)** It is better to do so from the fruits of your own hand, *his labour*, than to enjoy the poisonous fruits of ill-gotten gain.
 - c)** It is better to enjoy it in your soul and not just in your body, which is how one may truly *enjoy good*, than to only feed the flesh (Phil 3:19).
 - d)** *Use*, In the hour of temptation to despair or despise your work, argue with yourself, and bring even these arguments.
 - 3)** The objective goodness of work
 - a)** Work is a gift from God — both intrinsically and extrinsically good
 - b)** The Benefits of Work for the Godly — *wisdom and knowledge and joy* (Lk 2:52; Col 3:23).
- C.** Answering Objections to the Text
 - 1)** Objection 1: But surely this only applies to "spiritual" work!
 - 2)** Objection 2: But my vocation is constantly overwhelming and vexing!
 - 3)** Objection 3: But what if I no longer work or am unable to work at this time?
- D.** Concluding Reflections upon the Text (v 26a)
 - 1)** The temporal application (Psa 73:17-19; Pr 13:22)
 - 2)** The eschatological application (Heb 11:6)