

Finding Joy In The Vanity Of Life

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Eccl. 2:22-24

An intriguing book of the Bible is Ecclesiastes.

Attributed by many to Solomon.

- Eccl. 1:1, *“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.”*
- Eccl. 1:12, *“I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.”*

The author described his search for meaning in life. Eccl. 1:13, *“And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.”*

His search pertains to life *“under the sun”*. A phrase used 29 times in 27 verses; and suggests a look at life from mostly a worldly point of view. Eccl. 1:3, *“What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?”*

His message may seem to be rather negative.

A major theme is the vanity of life (vanity used 35 times in 29 verses).

- Eccl. 1:2, *“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”*
- Eccl. 1:14, *“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”*

Yet he mentions such words as joy (3), enjoy (3), enjoyment (2), rejoice (4), and joyfully (1). In fact, this book provides counsel on how to get the most out of life...to find joy in a life that is vanity! Eccl. 2:22-24, *“For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.”*

To find such joy, one must first face the reality of...

The vanity of life.

The preacher's experience.

The vanity of pleasure. Eccl. 2:1, *"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity."*

The vanity of industry (labor).

- Eccl. 2:11, *"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."*
- Eccl. 2:22-23, *"For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity."*
- Eccl. 4:4, *"Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit."*

The vanity of human wisdom. Eccl. 2:15, *"Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity."*

The vanity of all life. Eccl. 2:17, *"Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."*

The vanity of leaving an inheritance. Eccl. 2:18-21, *"Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil."*

The preacher's observations.

The vanity of earthly existence. Eccl. 3:19-21, "*For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?*"

The vanity of acquiring riches over family. Eccl. 4:7-8, "*Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.*"

The vanity of political popularity. Eccl. 4:16, "*There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*"

The vanity of many dreams and many words. Eccl. 5:7, "*For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.*"

The vanity of loving abundance. Eccl. 5:10, "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.*"

The vanity of wealth without the gift of God to enjoy it. Eccl. 6:2, "*A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.*"

The vanity of wandering desire. Eccl. 6:9, "*Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*"

The vanity of foolish laughter. Eccl. 7:6, "*For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.*"

The vanity of injustice in this life. Eccl. 8:14, "*There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.*"

The vanity of the days of darkness. Eccl. 11:8, “*But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.*”

The vanity of childhood and youth. Eccl. 11:10, “*Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.*”

The preacher’s conclusion.

As stated in the Prologue. Eccl. 1:2, “*Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*”

Prior to describing his search for meaning. Eccl. 1:14, “*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*”

Many people have come to the same conclusion and fallen into despair and despondency. Yet the Preacher would have us learn and know how to find true joy in life.

The joy in life.

The preacher’s experience.

His heart rejoiced in labor. Eccl. 2:10, “*And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.*”

The reward of his labor was the joy in doing it. Eccl. 2:10, “*And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.*”

The preacher’s observations.

Nothing is better than to enjoy simple things and what you do. Eccl. 2:24, “*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.*”

The ability to enjoy what you have and what you do comes from God. Eccl. 2:24-25, “*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?*”

God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to the man good in His sight. Eccl. 2:26, *“For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”*

The wicked may acquire many things, but it will eventually be given to the good. Eccl. 2:26, *“For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”*

Man should rejoice and do good. Eccl. 3:12, *“I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.”*

Every man should enjoy the good in their labor, which is a gift from God. Eccl. 3:13, *“And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.”*

The joy in one’s work is his heritage, not what may happen after he is gone. Eccl. 3:22, *“Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?”*

Again, this is one’s heritage, and it is a gift from God. Eccl. 5:18-20, *“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. 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. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.”*

So in the day of prosperity, rejoice; and in the day of adversity, contemplate. Eccl. 7:14, *“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.”*

Thus he commends enjoyment of the fruit of one’s labor. Eccl. 8:15, *“Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.”*

The preacher’s conclusion.

Eat and drink with a merry heart. Eccl. 9:7, *“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”*

Express your joy in how you live. Eccl. 9:8, *“Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.”*

Live joyfully with your wife whom you love. Eccl. 9:9, *“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.”*

Enjoy your youth, yet remember you will be accountable. Eccl. 11:9, *“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”*

Therefore remove sorrow and put away evil, for youth is short-lived. Eccl. 11:10, *“Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.”*

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Eccl. 12:1, *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them,”*

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is your reason for living. Eccl. 12:13, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”*

Conclusion.

Life “under the sun” is vanity. Without God, there is no meaning in life. Without God, you will not be able to truly enjoy your time on earth.

Life “under the sun” can be filled with joyful experiences and joyful memories. With God to guide us in keeping our priorities in life straight. With God to bless us with the wisdom and ability to enjoy what good there is in life.

To find joy in the vanity of life, remember your Creator, fear God, and keep His commandments. Today, that especially means to pay heed to His Son and our Savior. Heb. 1:1-4, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”*

