

Ecclesiastes 02 - The Futility of Wealth; The Certainty of Death; Yet, Enjoy Life!

II. Solomon's search for meaning in wisdom, hedonism, prudent living, and labor (Eccl 1:12—2:26)

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Ecclesiastes 2

(2) Pursuit of hedonism (2:1-11)

- (A) Preacher determines to seek pleasure (2:1a)
- (B) Vanity of hedonism (2:1b-2)

1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility.

1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility.

1 I told myself, "I will test you with pleasure, so enjoy yourself." But this was pointless.

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

2 I said of laughter, "*It is senseless,*" and of pleasure, "What does this accomplish?"

2 I said of laughter, "*It is madness,*" and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

2 "*Senseless,*" said I concerning laughter and pleasure, "How practical is this?"

2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

(C) How the preacher sought hedonism (2:3-9)

(a) Intoxication (2:3)

3 I explored with my mind *how* to refresh my body with wine while my mind was guiding *me* wisely; and how to seize foolishness, until I could see what good there is for the sons of mankind to do under heaven for the few years of their lives.

3 I explored with my mind *how* to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding *me* wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives.

3 I decided to indulge in wine, while still remaining committed to wisdom. I also tried to indulge in foolishness, just enough to determine whether it was good for human beings under heaven given the short time of their lives.

3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

(b) Works (2:4-6)

4 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself;

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4 With respect to my extravagant works, I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself.

4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

5 I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;

5 I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;

5 I constructed gardens and orchards for myself, and within them I planted all kinds of fruit trees.

5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

- 6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.
- 6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.
- 6 I built for myself water reservoirs to irrigate forests that produce trees.
- 6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

(c) Possessions (2:7-8)

- 7 I bought male and female slaves, and I had slaves *born* at home. I also possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.
- 7 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.
- 7 I acquired male and female slaves, and had other slaves born in my house. I also acquired for myself increasing numbers of herds and flocks—more than anyone who had lived before me in Jerusalem.
- 7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:
- 8 I also amassed for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers, and the pleasures of the sons of mankind: many concubines.
- 8 Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines.
- 8 I also accumulated silver, gold, and the wealth of kings and their kingdoms. I gathered around me both male and female singers, along with what delights a man—all sorts of mistresses.
- 8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

(d) Fame (2:9)

- 9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.
- 9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.
- 9 So I became great, greater than anyone who had lived before me in Jerusalem. Throughout all of this, I remained wise.
- 9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

(D) Vanity of hedonism (2:10-11)

10 All that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. I did not restrain my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor; and this was my reward for all my labor.

10 All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

10 Whenever I wanted something I had seen, I never refused that desire. Instead, I enjoyed everything I did, and this became the reward in what I had undertaken.

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.

11 So I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold, all was futility and striving after wind, and there was no benefit under the sun.

11 Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.

11 Then I examined all of my accomplishments that I had brought about by my own efforts, including the work that I had labored so hard to complete—and it was all pointless, like chasing after the wind, and there was nothing to be gained on earth.

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.

(3) Pursuit of wise living (2:12-17)

(A) Preacher compares wise and foolish living (2:12)

12 So I turned to consider wisdom, insanity, and foolishness; for what *will* the man *do* who will come after the king, *except* what has already been done?

12 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what *will* the man *do* who will come after the king *except* what has already been done?

12 Next I turned to examine wisdom, insanity, and foolishness, because what can a person do who succeeds the king except what has already been accomplished?

12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

(B) Conclusion (2:13-17)

(a) Wise living is superior to foolish living (2:13)

- 13 Then I saw that wisdom surpasses foolishness as light surpasses darkness.
13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.
13 I concluded that wisdom is more useful than foolishness, just as light is more useful than darkness.
13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

(b) Universality of death strips wise living of its advantage (2:14-15)

- 14 The wise person's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one *and the same* fate happens to both of them.
14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.
14 The wise use their eyes, but the fool walks in darkness. I also perceived that the same outcome affects them all.
14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also happen to me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is futility."
15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."
15 Then I told myself, "Whatever happens to the fool will happen also to me. Therefore what's the point in being so wise?" And I told myself that this also is pointless.
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.

(c) Neither the fool or wise are remembered (2:16)

- 16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, along with the fool, since *in* the coming days everything will soon be forgotten. And how the wise and the fool alike die!
16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man *as* with the fool, inasmuch as *in* the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!
16 For neither the wise nor the way as the fool, does he not?
16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

(d) Preacher hates life (2:17)

17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was unhappy to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

17 So I hated life, because whatever is done on earth causes me trouble—it's all pointless, like chasing after the wind.

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.

(4) Pursuit of labor (2:18-26)

(A) Foolishness of leaving the fruit of one's labor to someone unknown (2:18-19)

18 So I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

18 Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

18 Then I despised everything I had worked for on earth, that is, the things that I will leave to the person who will succeed me.

18 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.

19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is futility.

19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

19 And who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Either way, he will take possession of everything that I have done on earth, especially where I have excelled. This also is pointless.

19 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.

(B) Foolishness of leaving the fruit of one's labor to someone who did not earn it (2:20-22)

20 Therefore I completely despaired over all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

20 Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

20 So I came to be in despair about everything I had accomplished on earth.

20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

21 When there is a person who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then gives his legacy to one who has not labored for it; this too is futility and a great evil.

21 When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

21 For sometimes people who strive to obtain wisdom, knowledge, and equity leave everything as an inheritance to a person who never worked for it. This, too, is pointless and greatly troublesome.

21 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.

22 For what does a person get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?

22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?

22 For what does a person gain from everything that he accomplishes and from his inner life struggles that he undergoes while working on earth?

22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

(C) Foolishness of work without play (2:23)

23 Because all his days his activity is painful and irritating; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is futility.

23 Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

23 Indeed, all of his days are filled with sorrow, and his struggles bring grief. In fact, his mind remains restless throughout the night. This is pointless, too!

23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

(D) Conclusion: laborer should enjoy the work of his hands (2:24-26)

24 There is nothing better for a person *than* to eat and drink, and show himself *some* good in his trouble. This too I have seen, that it is **from the hand of God**.

24 There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.

24 The only worthwhile thing for a human being is to eat, drink, and enjoy life's goodness that he finds in what he accomplishes. This, I observed, is also from the hand of God himself,

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.

25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

25 for who can eat or enjoy life apart from him?

25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?

26 For to a person who is good in His sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is futility and striving after wind.

26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

26 After all, to the person who is good in God's sight, he gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner he gives the troublesome task of acquiring and accumulating in order to leave it to someone who is good in the sight of God. This also is pointless and chasing after the wind.

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.