

got wisdom? Lesson 4

Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

The Preacher is desperately on a quest for what he has termed as “profit”, or what would satisfaction and fulfillment in this life “under the sun”. Unable to find it, we could say that Solomon is fluent in sarcasm as he seemingly shifts his language to a much more pessimistic and gloomy tone (2:12-23).

While he is under the conviction that the superiority of wisdom over folly is compared to the dominant trait of light over darkness; he knows that light always defeats darkness (Jn 1:5). He also knows, despite his personal grief over his temporal life, that wisdom will always defeat madness and folly.

Interestingly, he acknowledges that the wise and the fool will similarly be subject to disease, sorrow, hardships, heartaches, pain, and even death. The wise, through their accumulation of understanding, are not immune to the hardships and neither do they monopolize joys in life, yet their perspective must be different (Phil 4:10-13).

Vs. 15. Because death and the brevity of life is the great equalizer, he asks why or how was he, in fact, more wise than the fool, who would eventually meet the same fate (1 Tim 4:7-9). This is the cause of him stating that he “hates life” as the living and laboring to no “gain” or “satisfaction” under the sun.

The concern that Solomon might, in death, leave all his work and material wealth to a fool seemed to trouble him, so much that he called it an “evil”, but rightly so (Pr 13:22; 1 Tim 5:8). Validating his apprehension with leaving his labor to the whims of someone else, his son Rehoboam, who would succeed him on the throne turned out to be a fool in many ways (1 Kgs 12; 1 Kgs 14:21-31).

We’ve understood his similar disdain for labor that ends up being squandered by those who have no vested interest in what we’ve work hard to achieve or obtain; i.e. cars, houses, business, ministry, etc. What good then, do these labors do us? Outside of experiential reward; none. This is why this, too, is a grasping after the wind.

Remembering that he is looking at his life in retrospect, he considers even the vanity of restlessness caused by sorrow and burden that empty labor creates. The refreshing or rest and sleep is often lost on those whose burden to get or keep what their labors achieve. This contradicts what we know about God’s purpose for work and rest (Ex 31:12-18; Mt 11:28-30).

Vs 24. Thankfully after all of the doom and gloom, Solomon concludes momentarily with a concept that we can all appreciate; that man should partake of his possessions and enjoy them while among the living. “There is nothing better” than taking pleasure in what God has blessed us to be and to have. They won’t benefit us beyond this life.

Solomon here opens the window just a crack so that you and I can see what’s been missing. This is from “the hand of God”. In other words, human beings are designed this way by God, and if we work as He designed us, things will go better. Ultimately, doing it God’s way works. Doing it our way doesn’t.

Perhaps even more is the fact that those who follow God's way ("righteous in his sight") (Phil 3:9) are the ones who will be blessed with the truly good things of life like wisdom, knowledge and joy. Though God grants these good gifts to the man or woman who diligently searches them out they are not the gifts that truly fulfill.

Apparently this teaches us that God expects us to be industrious and enjoy the consequential success yet not to place our eternal hope in this. The very principle that will continue to be developed throughout this book is this; work hard and enjoy the monetary gains of your efforts. If, however, your labor and rewards are all you look to you will be sorely disappointed.

Understand that there is more to this life than the here and now and that those things pursued laboriously will not be profitable in eternity. Enjoy living blessed, but do so in such away that it helps us journey towards our heavenly reward and in a way that honors and glorifies God for the great things He has done.

THE TAKE HOME:

- 1. In 2:25, the teacher says that God is the source of provision and enjoyment. Why do we pursue avenues other than God to fulfill our need for this?**
- 2. What things did you once enjoy that, now in Christ, you realize was a waste of time or was self-defeating?**
- 3. In what experiences have you labored only for your efforts to be wasted or ruined by someone else's foolishness or carelessness?**