

got wisdom? Lesson 9

Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

In order to analyze the world around him, Solomon decides to conduct an experiment with his life by throwing his time, heart, and consideration into various things. In his attempt to discover a source of lasting meaning, purpose, and joy in the world, the Preacher's ultimate conclusion is that everything is vanity, a striving after wind.

After taking a brief intermission to discuss how to properly fear and worship God (Vs. 1-7), the Preacher now resumes the report of experiment by turning to the vanity of wealth. Money and the love of it are some of life's chief motivators. It drives our actions, captivates our thoughts, forges partnerships, buys betrayals, etc..

Vs. 8-9

Because the pursuit of wealth, however defined, is such a high priority it also has the capacity to breed corruption on almost every level. If money and power are so closely tied together, as the saying goes "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" then money can do the same.

Again Solomon is looking at another obstacle that keeps man from enjoying his work; seeing the fruits of his labor abused by corrupt officials. Solomon spent his life observing life and knowing that man is sinful allowed him to embrace the reality that sin could lead those in positions of power to abuse it (1 Tim 6:6-10).

It may not seem like it helps, but from his viewpoint we shouldn't worry about those who abuse their power because everyone has someone higher than themselves to answer to. Unfortunately, we are blessed to know that ultimately justice belongs to God (Deut 10:17-18). Whether we see it in our lifetime or not, He will right the wrongs that have been done.

Vs. 10-12

Solomon here is dispelling a popular, but simply untrue myth concerning money: the myth that wealth brings satisfaction in life. Instead, wealth is often accompanied by the love of money, and the love of money invariably leads to dissatisfaction, no matter how much money one has (Vs. 10).

Unrecognizable is the fact that the accumulation of money and the increasing acquiring of possessions does not satisfy the appetite, it creates it. And this is if unchecked is an appetite for destruction. As we know, money and wealth in themselves are not evil. It is the love of money that is evil, that brings ruin and misery (1 Tim 6:9-10).

Abraham was very rich, but his wealth did not bring misery. David was also rich, but his wealth did not cause him to stumble, for he found satisfaction in God, not wealth (Ps 119:57, 27:4). To be clear, God is not opposed to blessing those He loves with wealth and possessions as long as they don't become our idols. Likewise, To focus on the gifts of God, rather than on God the Giver, is idolatry.

He also points out that wealth and the pursuit of it, rather than solving all problems, brings its own set of problems (Vs. 11). First, Wealth is a people magnet, attracting human parasites. The wealthy have no shortage of people, especially those who are drawn to the wealth of friends, who are willing to spend their money for them.

Secondly (Vs. 12), the concern that acquiring, managing, and increasing wealth of a *covetous* person can create a perpetual anxiety and stress that robs us of the “ease” of living. A sure sign of the love of money is sleeplessness due to concerns that wealth brings. There is no better sleeping pill than a hard, honest day’s work.

Vs. 13-17

Solomon points out that wealth is not only unsatisfying, but it is also temporary: certainly not lasting beyond the grave; often, disappearing long before the grave (Ps.49:16–17). He reminds us of the evil vanity of selfishness and greed that can bring harm and misfortune to its owner, by either trying too hard to keep it or carelessly squandering it. It’s a lose-lose.

In essence (Vs 16-17), if we are indeed, hoping to be satisfied by living for money, with gaining wealth as the central goal of our life, then certainly we are **“grasping after the wind”**; wasting time and energy. If we don’t realize the harm that the love of money is causing, we will be blind to the futility of striving after wealth and living in misery.

Vs. 18-20

Solomon ultimately comes to a new understanding; instead of striving after more and more wealth, be satisfied with the life and lot God has given you. The world sees things differently. The prevailing view of the world is that possessions and wealth bring happiness, and God brings rules and restrictions and gloom and doom (Vs 18).

While there are three ways to get wealth: we can work for it, we can steal it, or we can receive it as a gift (Eph. 4:28), Solomon saw the blessings of life as God’s gift to those who work and who accept that work as the favor of God (Vs 19).

Solomon has now come to the momentary conclusion that the person who focuses on and rejoices in God’s daily blessings will never have regrets. It’s because of His goodness and knowing that we are a part of His ultimate plan that we do not have to worry about the days of our lives like those who place their hopes and affections elsewhere.

“If we focus more on the gifts than the Giver, we are guilty of idolatry. If we accept His gifts, but complain about them, we are guilty of ingratitude. If we hoard His gifts and will not share them with others, we are guilty of indulgence. But if we yield to His will and use what He gives us for His glory, then we can enjoy life and be satisfied.” -Warren Weirsbe