

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

STUDY 18 - ECCLESIASTES 1:1-18

In our last study Solomon was honored as being very wealthy and the wisest king alive. That was impressive. His base salary was \$872,000,000 per year. We have been concerned in the last few studies that his life has been on a gradual slide and things are beginning to fall apart; although, it seems on the surface everything is fine.

(Storms of Perfection: In Their Own Words by Andy Andrews)

I have always maintained that a person needs only three things to have a stable life—someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to. I had all of those things.

KENNY ROGERS
(Entertainer)

I just wrote under that: Kenny you can have all of those in Jesus. Because in Jesus you have somebody to love, someone to serve, and you have someone to look forward to seeing in the future. That's the message we have to give. Too much of this world around us causes us to compromise in the critical

areas where we should stand. Many believers fail to really come to grips with Romans 12:2

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

We are switching over to Ecclesiastes today

J. Vernon McGee, speaking on the Book of Ecclesiastes says:

The key word is "vanity", which occurs thirty-seven times in twelve chapters. That gives you an idea you are going to see it at least three times in every chapter. The next key word is "under the sun". There is life above the sun with the SON and there is life under the sun without the SON living here as though this is all there is. That occurs twenty-nine times in the book. So those phrases along with one other little phrase "chasing after the wind" are kind of the pregnant phrases that are going to jump out a lot as we look into the text. We are going to look at the first 18 verses.

p. 10

Do you remember the "Titanic"?

Did you know there were eleven millionaires on the ship?

Out of those eleven millionaires their net worth was \$200,000,000. If you were interviewing them after they struck the iceberg, do you think that any of them would be willing to hold on to that and give their lives? See, all of them would have given everything they had to have survived it.

There is a Colonel from Toronto who had \$300,000 of securities, cash and jewelry down in his cabin and instead of going down and getting it he decided that three oranges would be better and he survived. He made the right choice.

Many people in our culture feel that the bottom line has to be big enough to take care of all of our needs before we can relax. We build into our lives security and trust into our bottom line rather than a sovereign God of the universe who has promised to supply all of our needs. This does not give you a excuse for physical irresponsibility but, you see the subtlety of it. It can cause you to neglect your marriage, your children, and ruin your health because of the stress and the demands to drive to accumulate. When that insatiable desire gets a hold of you, you begin to write some things like you are seeing in the first eighteen verses of this Book of Ecclesiastes.

The other thing that gets you about Solomon in this Study he has the “same old” “same old” disease. Tony Evans described that for us a few weeks ago. “Why do you go to work?”, to make money. “Why do you make

money?" So you can buy food. "Why do you buy food?" So you can get strength. "Why do you need strength?" So I can go to work and make money - it's the cycle. Solomon talks about it in this Study. It's a life of quiet desperation.

It is like Solomon has everything going for him but he hits the wall in the marathon of life today. What you are hearing from his lips is what happens when a man, for the first time, recognizes he is not going to be here forever and he is living for the wrong objectives and goals in his life.

Revelation is coming to him and, as a result of it, this man is going to say some things that are going to be just a little bit shocking, but let's look at them carefully.

v. 1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

This man is introducing himself as the author of this book. There are three things that are said about him. He is a teacher, he is the son of David and he is the king of Jerusalem. All three of them point to who? Solomon.

v. 2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

That word "hebhel" which means "meaningless" occurs five times in that verse. Your counting, you got four! The reason you have four is because of the word

“utterly”. The translator, rather than put it in there again, put “*Utterly*” which means intense meaningless. That is the way you translate it. If I translated that Hebrew text word for word for you it would sound just like this:

Meaningless, meaningless says the teacher; meaningless, meaningless everything is meaningless! What would the message be? It is MEANINGLESS!

Herbert C. Leupold Greek Scholar says:

“Oh how utterly transitory, how utterly transitory are all things!

p. 41

I could remember when I was a kid; one of the things I loved about the State Fair is to get “Cotton Candy”. You think man, I have enough to last me for the day. You begin to lick on it and it stopped doing anything and it just disappeared as soon as you touch it! In essence, that is what this word really means.

Now all we have to do is define the word MEANINGLESS and we are going to understand what life is, but remember life is always this way, when you are living in disobedience and when you are compromising your convictions. You’re living for material things, rather than spiritual things. That is the key. I think the greatest illustration of this is Matthew 7:24-27

Matthew 7:24-27 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

I am saying, Solomon, you are playing with sand, man. And as Tony Evans said it so well, “It is too late to pour concrete, when it is starting to rain.” The house is going to fall and great is going to be the fall of it. If you could put in your mind, because that is what the text says, to the man who does what God says, he is building on a solid foundation and when the storms of life come he is going to survive it. But the guy who is not doing these things is living like Solomon. He is building a house on sand and it is going to fall when the storms start to blow. This is exactly what is starting to happen. Solomon has spent his life on self-gratification. On the luxurious exotic apes and baboons and all the gold he can get and put in his house. We watched all of that unfold. These are the results and the kind of feelings you begin to have.

I know we all fantasize about having it all but this is

what results from that. Just take it by faith. What a testament from a man who has been there, done that and now he is telling you don't. Also recognize the greatest you can do for others is to be content with what you have and be satisfied with

the relationship you have with Jesus Christ, the one you serve and the one you are looking forward to seeing some day in the future.

v. 3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?

There are two questions in this verse. What does a man get from all of his work? From a human point of view what is all this doing for me? What's the bottom line? Paul in order to avoid that frustration Philippians 3:7:

Philippians 3:7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

I got off of that treadmill. I gave myself the spiritual things that will last forever.

The best thing you can do is to work and to work hard!

Verse 4 and Verse 11 are your two key verses.

v. 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

The earth is like the “energizing bunny” it keeps going and going and going but we don’t. We are here temporarily. Generations come and generations go. What’s wrong with Solomon? He is recognizing, for the first time in his life, that no matter how wealthy you are and how wise you are you are going to die, and are going to leave it all behind. One of the most difficult things for all of us to accept is we are going to die! None of us are going to get out of this alive. There is going to be a day when people come to our funeral. We don’t think that do we? We go to everybody else’s. We say how unfortunate and wasn’t that a wonderful service but no, no, no, don’t talk to me about mine. He’s facing it. Things are starting to fall apart and there isn’t meaning or purpose in it and he’s telling you that. Along with it, he is going to die and everything he is living for is going to be given to somebody else who didn’t work for it?

(The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs & Wacky Wit by Vern McLellan)

Let us endeavor to so live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.
MARK TWAIN

v. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

v. 6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north;

round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.

You have the earth in verse 4; the sun in verse 5; the wind in verse 6 and you have the streams in verse 7.

v. 7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full.
To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

v. 8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say.
The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

He is going through all of this and he is saying, this isn't worth it; this isn't fun and there is nothing of eternal value coming out of this. Looking for something new to do he has tried it all.

v. 9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

The first question was back in verse 3. What does a man gain from all of his labor at which he toils under the sun? Verse 10 gives you the second question:

v. 10 Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago, it was here before our time.

v. 11 There is no remembrance of men of old, and even

those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

He is back to death again. He says I am going to be out of here and nobody is going to remember me. How do I cope with this? The generations that are coming are going to do the same thing.

You know the difference between a Christian facing death and somebody like this who has been living for the wrong goals and objectives are worlds' apart.

In other words, realize it just keeps getting better and better because every day gets us closer to that encounter we are going to have with Him personally.

When you confront these things and you continue progressing with a definite passion and purpose in mind, age means nothing as far as what the calendar has to say.

But to Solomon it is shaky, isn't it? He is really dealing with some stuff that is getting close to him.

v. 12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Now, in essence that is what he told you back in verse 1. He is coming back to it. Now he is going to confess something. In verses 13 to 18 he says this:

v. 13 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom

all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

A man with wisdom which is a gift from the Lord studies life down here under the sun and he is saying, “Life down here with nothing above the sun will be a heavy burden on man because it is not the life that God intended.”

There are some KEY PHRASES that stand out in these verses:

- 1) “All things are wearisome, more than one can say” (verse 8).
- 2) “there is nothing new under the sun” (verse 9).
- 3) “There is no remembrance of men of old” (verse 11), and now,
- 4) “WHAT A HEAVY BURDEN GOD HAS LAID ON MEN!” (verse 13).

Why does Solomon deliver the verdict, life is a heavy burden? It is his pride and material achievements and he is not willing to let go of it. He is hooked and he will not come unhooked. He loves being in the center of everything as the wisest and wealthiest king in the world and he isn't going to let go of it. That is the burden he is carrying! He would have to humble himself. He would have to come with a spirit of brokenness and he doesn't

want to assume the responsibility.

Listen to this statement:

**LIFE BECOMES A BURDEN WHEN
WE TRY TO ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT!**

I wrote under this “when all else fails! Do it His way!” If Solomon would do that there would be a major turn around in his personal life and in the life of the kingdom. It would begin to move back to the place of praise and worship of God that we saw under David’s leadership.

Now the significant thing about the next verses are all three key phrases are in them. This is the only verse in Ecclesiastes that all three of them are together.

v. 14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

There they are: MEANINGLESS; UNDER THE SUN; CHASING AFTER THE WIND. If life is like that and if Solomon has rendered a right verdict than I have to write a little word out beside each one of those phrases:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Under the Sun | - Materialism |
| Meaningless | - Materialism |
| Chasing After the Wind | - Materialism |

All of those things create what he has just said in verse 14. The bottom line, he is frustrated and living under this burden because this is what he has chosen to live for!

When you and I do it, we have the same frustrations and the same verdict to render eventually because, we too, must face our own mortality. Just to prove it to you I want to pull out a couple of passages from Psalms to show you the difference between Solomon and David:

Psalm 34:1-3 I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.

I am one of those who believe that David did not write the 23 Psalm when he was a young boy throwing rocks at lions and bears as a shepherd. I think, because of a key phrase, in that Psalm he wrote this just before he was ready to check out! I think this is the end of his life down here because of what he is saying. Have you read it like that:

Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want; He makes me lie down in green pasture, he leads me beside quiet waters; he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my

head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever.

That's the difference. He is going to go with you through it and take you into His presence. Solomon has let all of that go by the wayside in the process of trying to accumulate wealth.

That is determination when we face courageously our lives and our relationship to God.

v. 15 What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

This tells you when you start living "life like this" it is going to be twisted and you're going to be the loser. You're going to have a subtraction in the bottom line. You're not going to have all your needs met. But isn't it good that GOD is famous for taking the twisted and making it straight, and that His grace in our bank is adequate upon which to draw for all of our needs. When we live for the secondary things eventually it becomes twisted and there is nothing left in the bank to draw on.

What is crooked, can't be straightened, and there is not going to be cash in the bank! That's the way Satan works.

Snared by the devil with these kind of goals create this kind of a writing. You see, what we can't do GOD can!

He makes the crooked straight and he adds His Grace to our account so we have all of what we need but we live for that which is an illusion.

(In the Grip of Grace: You Can't Fall Beyond His Love
by Max Lucado)

From where I sit I can see a cardinal every morning. He would just sit up on the roof next to my study and go, Chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp,” and he would listen but nobody would answer! After he had gone through this ritual for a while he would fly down on the patio and he would immediately attack his reflection in the window and he would come back dazed.

He would do it four or five times and would just lay there practically knocked out. He would do this day after day, after day. Lucado finally said, “you know I wonder whether he will ever learn what he is flying into is an illusion. Then he describes a guy who comes into his study who was compromising in his personal life.

He says I wonder if the guy will ever wake up and realize he is living a fantasy. He is living in a world of illusion. He ends it like this.

The next day I came to the office and the bird was gone. Soon after I called the man and he was gone. I think the bird learned a lesson. I’m not sure the man ever did.

pp.143-4

v. 16 I thought to myself, “Look I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.”

He has grown and increased in it. Who gave it to him? God is never given any credit for all of this. Solomon has forgotten the source of wisdom.

v. 17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too is a chasing after the wind.

v. 18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

With much wisdom comes sorrow because wisdom gives you the right way of doing it and you have sorrow over the fact that you are doing it. The consequences of disobedience are always grief. You can just count on it. So Solomon ends this with some incredible statements.

(The Royal Way of the Cross: Letters and Spiritual Counsels of Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fenelon Edited by Hal M. Helms)

The future is in God’s hands, not yours. God will rule it according to your needs. But if you seek to forecast it in your own wisdom, you will gain nothing but

anxiety and anticipation of inevitable trouble.

p. 43

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)

The important questions is not, “Do I enjoy being a Christian?” but rather, “Do I want what God wants?”

p. 183

If I want what God wants, then I will be happy and fulfilled.

(A Man to Match the Mountain: Overcoming the Obstacles of Life by David Roper)

“No amount of falls will really undo us,” wrote C.S. Lewis, “if we keep picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. The only fatal thing is to lose one’s temper and give up.”

p. 199

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

God can’t give us happiness and peace apart from Himself because there is no such thing.

The other day I was having a little bit of “down time” and I received two notes with the same message.

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Want to be a contender in the last lap of life? When suffering strikes, I recommend the three A’s to assist in fighting the good fight all the way home. Acceptance—realize suffering is coming, accept it. Attitude—know positively that something good is going to result from your suffering. Action—anticipate the victory. The coach always picks the best players to play the hardest quarters. This may be your finest hour.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: All of life truly is meaningless without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

LESSON #2: Paul says, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (Philippians 3:7 NASB).

LESSON #3: “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2 NASB).

LESSON #4: “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Colossians 3:23 NASB).

LESSON #5: We are losing our lives for something. The question is, “For what?”

LESSON #6: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21 NASB).

LESSON #7: The key to overcoming monotony is to keep our eyes on the finish line.

LESSON #8: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18 NASB).

LESSON #9: We may grow weary in His work, but not weary of His work.

LESSON #10: The world may forget us and what we have done, but the Lord will never forget us.

LESSON #11 “Casting all your care upon Him, because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

STUDY NUMBER EIGHTEEN — ECCLESIASTES 1:1-18

Notes

1:1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

1:2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

1:3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?

1:4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

1:5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

1:6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.

1:7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

1:8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

1:9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

1:10 Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

1:11 There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

1:12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

1:13 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

1:14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

1:15 What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

1:16 I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."

1:17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

1:18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-18 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What key question is asked in verse 3?

3. In what ways is nature used in verses 4-11 to illustrate the futility of man's existence?

4. What word in verse 8 conveys an attitude that contributes to the mid-life crisis?

5. Why doesn't Solomon view his own life as making a vital contribution in the course of human affairs? (refer to verses 9-11 for your answer)

6. What are Solomon's conclusions about life as seen in verses 12-14?

7. In your own words, paraphrase Solomon's reflections in verses 16-18.

8. In your opinion, is there an answer to a meaningless existence? Please explain.

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: All of life truly is meaningless without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

LESSON #2: Paul says, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7 NASB).

LESSON #3: “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2 NASB).

LESSON #4: “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Colossians 3:23 NASB).

LESSON #5: We are losing our lives for something. The question is, “For what?”

LESSON #6: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21 NASB).

LESSON #7: The key to overcoming monotony is to keep our eyes on the finish line.

LESSON #8: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18 NASB).

LESSON #9: We may grow weary in His work, but not weary of His work.

LESSON #10: The world may forget us and what we have done, but the Lord will never forget us.

LESSON #11 “Casting all your care upon Him, because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).