

Daily Bible Study

“I Can’t Get No Satisfaction” Part - 2

Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

May 12– May 18, 2013

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –Well, this week we continue our study of the book of **Ecclesiastes** and take as our text, **Ecclesiastes 2:12-26**. After Solomon’s opening words which summarized life as *vanity*, meaningless and empty, he will *turn himself to consider* another couple of viewpoints to look at life from. He has spoken about the cycle of life and its monotony which seems to accomplish nothing and now he will discuss having wisdom (12–17) and wealth (18–23) in the understanding that death is certain and you will die and leave everything behind. We mentioned that Solomon mentions the certainty of death over and over in this book and it is a fact we would be wise to consider and understand. In looking at life *under the sun* it is a certainty he could not easily avoid. Montaigne (French essayist) wrote, “Philosophy is no other thing than for a man to prepare himself to death.” We also know the often heard saying, “Only the man that is prepared to die is the man that is ready to live”. Solomon needs to learn this and so do we. Read our text **Ecclesiastes 2:12-26**: *“Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king?—Only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all. So I said in my heart, as it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?” Then I said in my heart, “This also is vanity.” For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool! Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have*

enjoyment, more than I? For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.”

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Help me realize that not only will I never be satisfied without You, but I’m also not even prepared to live well without knowing & trusting You to care for me in death. Thank You Jesus for forgiveness of sin and for The Holy Spirit who gives me life, and assures, leads, and instructs me in how to live.*

TUESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 2:12-14**: *“Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king?—Only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all.”* The same event to which Solomon speaks is death. He is asking, since both the wise and the foolish man will die, what is the value of wisdom? He attempts to give us a partial answer here. The second half of **verse 12** is a bit difficult in interpreting but it seems to be saying that no subsequent king could possibly do more to investigate wisdom and folly than Solomon did. This was the wisest man to live and he could leave his wisdom for the next generation but he couldn’t be sure they would follow it. As a matter of fact his son Rehoboam did not follow the wisdom of Solomon and the prime example is found concerning taxing and oppressing his people recorded in **1 Kings 12:6-11**. Solomon now compares wisdom and folly with light and darkness. They are as different as night and day. Scripture compares them in other places also. We read *Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God* personified (**1 Corinthians 1:30**), say, ‘*I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*’ (**John 8:12**). It is also interesting to notice that when the wisdom of God is mentioned in Scripture it compares it with *the foolishness of man* (**1 Corinthians 1:20–25**). Bottom line here for Solomon is that whether your wise or foolish the *same event*, (fate- NIV) *happens to them all*. Although the context naturally leads us to see this as a reference to death, we must also remember and see the importance this has on both living and dying. Good and bad things happen in life to the wise man and the foolish man. Each man’s fate is ultimately in the hands of Almighty God but God given wisdom helps a man deal with and navigate successfully the problems presented by life. In spite of the fact that all men must die, wisdom is still of greater value than folly. The wise man knows death is coming and lives accordingly. But this understanding does not relieve Solomon of his burden about life. It takes a lifetime to learn how to live, and then it’s over, life ends. Solomon says all of this seems so futile.

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, help me to seek the wisdom you reveal from Scripture, obey You and make wise decisions. Thank You for Your Son our Lord Jesus who is Your Wisdom to us.*

WEDNESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 2:15-17**: *“So I said in my heart, as it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?” Then I said in my heart, “This also is vanity.”*

For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool! Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.” Solomon is exasperated as he realizes that he wise man and the fool both die and are forgotten and he concludes those opening thoughts with an incredible statement; *Therefore I hated life...* He was not contemplating suicide as actually death was one thing he wanted to avoid. The French humanist Voltaire said, “I hate life and yet I am afraid to die!” Solomon would agree with him. Life seemed futile and empty to Solomon, and yet it is still better than death. The Christian certainly does not hate life, no matter how difficult the circumstances might be. Some great men in Scripture have said they wanted to die, Job (**Job 3:21–7:15**), Moses (**Numbers 11:15**), Elijah (**1 Kings 19:4**), and Jonah (**Jonah 4:3**), but all of these men finally changed their minds as they met and meditated on God’s wisdom. Peter speaks to those “*who desire to love life and see good days*” (**1 Peter 3:10, Psalm 34:12ff**). We should seek to live life to the full to the glory of God. We may not enjoy everything in life, or be able to explain everything about it but we live by God’s promises and remember our labor is not in vain in the Lord (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). Remember as we close that death awaits all men. For the materialist who does not know God there is no real, lasting hope. There are monuments and such left behind to honor and remember people but they too are fleeting. Gordon Keddie sums it up well, when he writes, ‘Death is the wall that under-the-sun secularism cannot climb. Even the remembrance of those who have died perishes with those who knew them personally. Beethoven may be said to live on in his music, but the truth is we know the music, not the man.’ Sadly, the Preacher Solomon has failed at the very beginning of his pursuit for meaning and purpose to life ‘under the sun’. He played all his cards now finishing with wisdom and even the wisdom of “the wisest man” has been beaten. He is warning us through Sacred Scripture to not repeat this tragedy. But we will continue to until we bow before God in faith and repentance and realize that God alone holds all the trump cards.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me humbly bow before You and not to be discouraged about the seeming futility of so much of life. Help me remember life truly has meaning and that You will show me and give me peace as long as I stay close to You through Your Word and prayer.

THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 2:18-23: “*Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.*” Not

only did Solomon hate life, but he hated the wealth that was the result of his labor. Some of the reasons he had this disgust is that he understood he couldn’t keep it. The day would come when Solomon would die and leave everything *to the man who will come after me*. Jesus taught and gave a similar warning in the Parable of the Rich Fool (**Luke 12:13–21**). We are also reminded of this truth from Paul in **1 Timothy 6:7–10**. As the old Jewish proverb says, “There are no pockets in shrouds.” We are to be good stewards of our God given wealth (**Deuteronomy 8:18**) and we have the privilege of enjoying it and using it for His glory. We will all one day give account of what we did with His generous gifts. We can’t take it with us when we die but we can invest in eternity and lay up treasure in heaven from here (**Matthew 6:19–34**). Solomon also tells us that you can’t dictate how your wealth left will be used. You may leave it all to somebody who will waste it. Solomon didn’t know it at this time, but his son Rehoboam would do exactly this thing the preacher feared (**1 Kings 11:41–12:24**). Finally Solomon shows us a man consumed with fear who then can’t enjoy what God had given him. His thoughts were preoccupied as many men are today with their retirements, IRA’s, bank accounts etc... You will live miserably if this is how you think. Solomon worked hard but needed to learn such a preoccupation with material achievement & success is harmful and damning to the soul. Our materialistic society needs this lesson as well. Jesus warned of the god-like worship of money as he stated, “*You cannot serve God and money*” (**Matthew 6:24**). Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaking of the demand of “things” said, “How they tend to grip the whole personality and affect us everywhere! They demand our entire devotion; they want us to live for them absolutely.” If you live like this, mark it down big, plain & straight, you’re really poor in soul.

Suggestion for Prayer: Lord God, save me from the pursuit of money and things. Help me to be rich toward You. Keep me satisfied and looking to You to meet my needs and find satisfaction.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Ecclesiastes 2:24-26: “*Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.*” Solomon now comes to a conclusion; the first of six “conclusions” in Ecclesiastes, each of which emphasizes the importance of accepting life as God’s gift and enjoying it in God’s will (**3:12–15, 22, 5:18–20, 8:15, 9:7–10, 11:9–10**). He is not telling us eat, drink, and party it up but rather to thank God for what you do have, and enjoy it to the glory of God. We are to trust “*in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy*” (**1 Timothy 6:17**). God had not been mentioned from **1:14 - 2:23** although all of life, death, wisdom and wealth are in His hands. Solomon now sees and points us to the fact that God wants us to enjoy His blessings, loving Him the giver and not merely His gifts as idolaters.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, thank You for being so good & wonderful. You are the giver of all things & I worship & praise You! Help me to love You & find my satisfaction in You always.