

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 2:24 - "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." We are tempted to look upon all we have worked for and congratulate ourselves. If we have obtained wealth and recognition, we may often credit ourselves by pointing out all the things we have done. Here is the question I ask the person that feels this way: "Who gave you the hands, mind and strength to work?" This usually puts the world back in perspective for the believer. All we have can be credited only to the goodness of our God. We have nothing to offer Him for the good things He provides, because all of our skill, intellect and motivation comes from Him. Look at the great things in life you own, then consider how God himself was involved in allowing you to obtain them. This will certainly bring you to a place of humble thanks.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 - "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him." This is a tremendous passage for those in full-time ministry. Our own efforts will amount to nothing in light of eternity, but that which we do in the Spirit, the work of God, will have lasting effects. The work God has done in my life bears this out, as all changes wrought at His hand have been permanent. It is only when I get involved that the principle breaks down. We must be very careful to free ourselves from sin, worldly thinking, and mis-placed priorities, so that we can truly walk according to God's plan, and do the work of God. You may see results of some kind when you operate according to your agenda, but lasting and true ministry is only possible in the Spirit. Remember that our power comes from God alone. Don't be enamored by your own ability, as it will bring only temporary results that are prone to decay.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 - "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter." Those without Christ can expect all the heartache and pain the world, by nature brings. The believer in Christ faces these same difficulties, yet they, being indwelt by the Comforter, have resources to face them. This world is completely void of hope and comfort without the presence of the Spirit. Evil men, and the evil god of this world have power over all within their system and provide no mechanism for encouragement in time of trouble. They can only burden, oppress, and ultimately destroy those under their influence, and apart from the new life Christ provides, eternal torment is their only future. We must understand, and act based upon these principles. Our message brings hope by offering a relationship with the person Christ himself called the Comforter (John 14:16).

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." The Bible says there will be some that forsake the assembly of the saints (Hebrews 10:25), and we know from experience that many do. This is an excellent verse to remind us of the importance of church attendance. Believers were never intended to live the Christian life in isolation. We are commanded to both be accountable to, and have a ministry in the lives of other believers. There is always a two-fold advantage to laboring together as Christians. We first provide for ourselves a network of helpers, and second become part of the help network of others. Many who forsake the assembly only return to it when they are in need of assistance. They believe that the church is designed to help them, but have little regard for their responsibility to contribute in the same way. Read this verse again with the local church in mind, observing both the benefits and responsibilities of membership.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 - "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." Most of the sins I commit are with my mouth. I find myself saying too much or too little at the wrong time or in the wrong place, and despite my justification, this is sinful. Some words are evil not for their content alone, as the content of our wrong comments are often totally accurate. They are wrong in most instances because they have been, as this passage indicates; rash in their formulation. We very often do not think before we speak, and therefore use words and ideas that displease God and offend people. Much of the problems of the Christian world could be solved if we would just consider our words before we say them. If you don't have anything Godly to say, its best not to say anything at all.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 - "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled." The stories are numerous of those wealthy men that risk everything for just a few dollars more. They work for more money not because they need it to live, but because they are trying to fill a void in their lives. The desires of their flesh beg for satisfaction, yet we know that nothing, not even riches, will satisfy them. Working to earn money that will purchase the things we need is certainly not wrong, yet many will work to obtain things they believe will bring fulfillment outside Christ. We must be very careful to understand our motives for obtaining financial resources. Do you believe that just one more promotion will make you happy? Do you think that a raise, or a few dollars more in your retirement will provide security? These beliefs will only

bring dissatisfaction and disappointment, as the whole of our security and happiness should be wrapped up in the person of Christ. Don't be another of history's sad stories, as your appetite for financial independence goes forever unfilled.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 - "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." When dealing with a person who gets angry easily I often hear the phrase, "that's just the way I am". If this is accurate, the person is indicating they are a fool. This is a harsh and sad reality, yet we know in our hearts it is true. Instead of dealing with the symptom of anger, we need to deal with the characteristic of foolishness. A foolish heart always produces foolish actions, including this hastiness to anger, and the problem with the heart is where defeating anger begins. If you are prone to anger at the drop of a hat, you need to deal with some serious internal issues. Open yourself honestly to God's working and leading in your life, putting everything under His control. Truly turn from your sin in repentance and repair damaged relationships. This is the only hope for an angry fool.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 - "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." It has concerned me for years that so many Christians fail to understand the principle of working as hard for the Lord as they work for their employer. We seem to separate our secular job from our service in the church, believing we should do our best at work, then offering God our leftovers. The whole of scripture, as represented in this verse, is clear on our effort level for all service. Whether at home, on the job, or in the church, we should put in a "mighty" effort. We do not know where we will be observed by the lost, and we should be ready to represent Christ with integrity in any situation. Let's re-examine our effort in every situation, and see if it matches up with God's command in this passage.

Ecclesiastes 10:20 - "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." We typically say bad things about others in secret. This is sometimes because we are too cowardly to confront the person face to face, or other times because our facts cannot be completely verified. In either instance, we, not the other party are in the wrong. Imagine if everything you said about another person was eventually revealed to them on video. This would cause most of us to modify our daily speech greatly. The bad news for us is that our words are being recorded by God, and even if they are not ever heard by the offended party, they are displeasing to Him. This verse indicates however, that our words are often heard by those we talk about without our knowledge. I know this to be true from experience. Let's stop relaying negative information about others, not for fear of their hearing, but for fear of God.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 - "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." You wouldn't think you could sum everything in the Christian life up in just a few words, but this is what the "preacher" says he is doing here. The fear of God is indeed a weighty subject. It includes having reverence and respect for Him, and denotes a measure of love and adoration. We are to truly understand who God is, and therefore take actions consistent with His character. This is where the commandment portion comes into play; if we fear God, we will certainly do what He commands. We do this not only because we fear what He will do if we don't, but because we believe in who He is enough to follow Him. If we know God, understanding Him through Biblical revelation, we will desire to follow Him in obedience to His commands. It seems like that really does sum it up quite well!