

The Wearisomeness of Life is Introduced.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Introduction:

The book of Ecclesiastes is the musings of a man that apparently had all that a person could want only to find he was not satisfied with all that he obtained or fulfilled by all that he had done.

Ecclesiastes 1:1 (ESV) The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Ecclesiastes 1:2 (ESV) Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Eccl 1:2 (NIV) "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

The 5 fold repetition of the word "vanity" shows the intensity or emphasis of the thought. In other words, it can not be stressed enough - all is vanity.

Key Question for the entire book:

Ecclesiastes 1:3 (ESV) What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

It must be remembered that the term "under the sun" speaks of life viewed purely from a human perspective. The term is used 27 times in the book of Ecclesiastes

"Under the heaven" speaks of life viewed from a heavenly perspective from God's point of view. That term is found 3 time in the book.

There are two important elements in the question raised in 1:3.

The first is, "What is meant by the word toil?"

Ecclesiastes 1:3 (ESV) What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

The word toil is not referring to any particular occupation that we may hold in life.

Rather, it refers to the hardships, energy expended and efforts that we have put forth in living our lives.

Note how this word is used elsewhere.

Genesis 41:51 (ESV) Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.”

Therefore, the question is about work in general. Why labor hard at anything at all?

The second element is the word gain?

Ecclesiastes 1:3 (ESV) What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

What lasting meaning or value is there to our lives? When it is all said and done what have we accomplished? What has all of our hard work gotten us?

Was it worth it?

His conclusion is basically there is no benefit to all our work.. Life is meaningless.

Application:

This is of great value in recognizing the hopeless and meaninglessness of life when it is lived apart from God.

This helps us to understand the despair of non-believers.

It also demonstrates how futile our lives as believers seem to be when we take our focus away from God.

This is statement of the ultimate mid-life crisis.

The book opens with one effect among many that futility has upon our lives.

Theme of the first section: Life is tiresome.

Key Verse: Ecclesiastes 1:8 (ESV) All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

I. The statement of the fact that life is tiresome.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 (ESV) All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

- A. Weariness - to be fatigued, weary, emotionally and physically tired.
- B. In the context of Ecclesiastes it deals primarily with an emotional exhaustion.

Ecclesiastes 8:16 (ESV) When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep,

- C. All things speaks to all endeavors of life. No matter what one's work is ultimately it comes to be viewed as meaningless.

II. Just how tiresome is life?

Ecclesiastes 1:8 (ESV) All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Eccl 1:8 (NASB) All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing.

- A. Man cannot express or put into the words the wearisome nature of life.
- B. It is difficult to explain how emotionally tired and drained that we really are. We get frustrated with life and just want to quit. Get away from it all.
- C. We push ourselves to go through the motions. But life has lost its joy and freshness.
- D. Rather there is an endless pursuit of something better.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 (ESV) All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

- 1. That which one works so hard to get is never satisfying.
- 2. Therefore one has to work even harder to get the next thing.
- E. All of our accomplishments are not lasting or satisfying.

- F. What we think will be our ultimate joy and satisfaction, never satisfies after we obtain it.

Ecc1 1:8 (NASB) All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 (ESV) He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.

III. The reasons why life is so tiresome.

- A. Life is tiresome for life goes on just as it always has.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 (ESV) A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

People come and go but life just continues on.

1. Nothing ever changes illustrated by the rising and setting of the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1:5 (ESV) The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.

The Sun goes up and down, up and down just to do it all over again.. Life continues on just as it always has.

2. Nothing ever changes illustrated by the blowing of the wind.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 (ESV) The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.

The wind goes around and around. It is compared to life's endless cycle. People are born, live and die. Only to be followed by those who are born, live and die.

3. Nothing ever lastingly changes illustrated by the constantly flowing river.

Ecclesiastes 1:7 (ESV) All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.

Though every generation does its work and makes its contributions, the work never comes to an end.

4. Application:
 - a. Illustration of my work that was done in association with Biblical Seminary.
 - b. I chaired a committee that rewrote the doctrinal statement of the seminary,
 - c. I chaired a committee that evaluated and reworked the curriculum and various degree programs.

B. Life is tiresome because nothing is really new.

1. Life simply consists in doing the same old things over and over again.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV) What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

- a. We are simply doing what myriads of generations have done before us.
 - (1) We wake up, go to work, and go to sleep, wake up and go to work.
 - (2) You make a bed only to make it again the next day. You cook a meal only to cook another one a few hours later.
- b. Here we must stop to clarify two things.
 - (1) When it says that there is nothing new under the sun it is not denying the realities of inventions or technological advancements.
 - (2) But even with the new inventions and technological advances life's work is never done. They do not bring about lasting change.

- (a) For example innovations in travel. Someone invented the wheel, the carriage, the bicycle, the car, the train, the spaceship.
- (b) But there will always be more advancements. The problem for which the invention was made never goes away.
- (c) The computers, need to be faster, smaller, more energy efficient, they will always be in need of improvement.
- (d) One cannot say, I have done it. It is finished.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV) What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

- (e) The work is never truly completed.
 - i) The poor we will always have with us.

Matthew 26:11 (ESV) For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.
 - ii) Despite all the medical advances we will always have disease with us.

c. But the more things change, the more they turn out to be the same. In their new guise the old ways go on.

- (1) We can put a man on the moon but we cannot end war.
- (2) We get advanced degrees but marriages are still in shambles.
- (3) We have great advancements in training but we still have cheating in sports.
- (4) Man's major problems are still with us.

2. That which seems to be novel or new really isn't novel at all.

Ecclesiastes 1:10 (ESV) Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.

- a. Much of what seems to be new is simply the old in a repackaged form.
- b. We think that life is so different when in reality life is just the same as it always was.
- c. Perhaps our job did not exist a 100 years ago. But a 100 years ago people were going to work and going home to their families.
- d. It is the very fact that life does not change that makes the book of Ecclesiastes, that was written well over 2000 years ago, still so relevant and practical today.

- C. Life is tiresome because the joy of fame is fleeting.

Eccl 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. If we have striven for fame or honor and have obtained a measure of notoriety, the reality is that we will be soon forgotten.
2. Oftentimes this is experienced in our own lifetimes.
 - a. Our work is forgotten.
 - b. Our contributions go unnoticed.
 - c. So many elderly people experience this identification crisis.
 - d. They are no longer consulted or appreciated.
3. Succeeding generations are not aware of our hard work and contributions that we have made to the church, to work or even our own families.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 (ESV) What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

4. Even very famous people are forgotten.

TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

by A. E. Housman

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before the echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

A record is set, only for someone else to break it.

D. Application:

1. What meaning is there to our lives?

2. The world will continue on with us or without us. If we die tonight the sun will still rise in the morning.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 (ESV) A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

3. We really aren't indispensable. So what really is the point of all of our hard work?

IV. Conclusion:

- A. Life apart from God is depressing.
- B. Life with all of its improvements and inventions is not really better,
 1. In seeking to make life easier have we really made it harder? Is life any less frustrating than it once was?
 2. The farmer used to work from sun up to sun down. With the intervention of electric lights, farmers can continue to work past dark.
 3. There was a time one could go home from work and leave work behind. Now, you go home from work, the phone rings, the text dings, the email arrives. You go on vacation but you can still be reached.
 4. People looked forward to being able to work from home. Now the problem is you can work from home.
- C. What's the point? Where has all our success gotten us?
- D. It is quite easy to become, pessimistic, cynical, disgusted, disillusioned and fed up with life.