

“For What is Your Life?”

By John Morris

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon recounts his past achievements:

“I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-9).

God looked upon His work of six days, and observed that it was “very good” (Genesis 1:21). Solomon looked upon what may have been a life’s work, and concluded that it was but “*vanity and grasping for the wind*” (Ecclesiastes 2:17). “*I hated life,*” he said, “*because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind...I hated all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun...*” (Ecclesiastes 2:17-18). Concerning earthly endeavors, in general, the wise man concluded: “*“Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless”*” (Ecclesiastes 1:1, NIV).

It is a meaningful message plainly put. And Solomon could put it across it with credibility. God had given him riches and honor such that he had no peer in his lifetime. As God had said: “*there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days*” (1 Kings 3:13). Due to God’s blessings, Solomon had been able to ‘live life to the fullest.’ He speaks of how he spared no expense in pursuing his pleasures: “*Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure*” (Ecclesiastes 2:10). And, yet, after he’d ‘had it all,’ he said of his pursuits: “*all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 2:11). Solomon learned from experience, and we should learn from his words: in and of themselves, the activities and accomplishments of this life are ultimately investments which yield no return. Nothing that ‘life has to offer’ offers anything at all of lasting value.

Scripture teaches us that someday “*...the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10). The works of our hands are going to go up in smoke. Our pet projects, our diplomas, our possessions, etc. are going to disappear from existence. And after this, the judgment: “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*” (2 Corinthians 5:10). When all is said and done, the only thing that will matter is whether we did “*good*

or bad,” whether we lived our lives for God, or for ourselves.

This reality calls us to expend effort in meaningful, eternally significant ways. “*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*” (James 4:14). Time is ticking. Moment by moment, our lives are passing away. Daily we are dying. Judgment draws nigh. What have we done, and what are doing, with the time? The world beckons and begs us to fritter it away in fruitless pursuits that will bring passing pleasure, but eventual emptiness. They and their “god” (2 Corinthians 4:4) long to see us major in the minor, and immerse ourselves in the thick of thin things that will bring no joy to our meeting with the Maker. Will we resist their summons?

Jesus said that “*...whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated*” (Matthew 15:17), yet Solomon found that “*All the labor of man is for his mouth...*” (Ecclesiastes 6:7). Man allows his abilities, his energies, his resources and his time to be consumed with the inconsequential, with works destined for destruction. And, of course, after his labors finds that “*...the soul is not satisfied*” (Ecclesiastes 6:7). As the man who yearns for a hearty supper only hours after a plentiful lunch, so is mankind’s search for satisfaction. Eternal beings cannot be satisfied by temporal things.

But there is food available which will satisfy. Jesus feasted on it: “*My food is to do*

the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). Submitting to the will of God in obedience has eternal value, and thus feeds the inner man and doesn’t leave him hungry. It satisfies the spiritual appetite in a way that nothing else, and no one else can (Ecclesiastes 12:13). “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life...” (John 6:27).*

Living a life of this sort will mean some major personal changes, though. It will mean “*seek[ing] first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). It will mean denying, and dying to, oneself (Mark 8:34*). Life will no longer be focused on pursuing pleasure, acquiring possessions, climbing the corporate ladder, or whatever else the unsaved live and die for. Doing the will of God, with all the sacrifice that involves, will become the driving force. Such a life will come with hardship (Matthew 7:14*), but it will be a life with meaning, filled with actions possessing eternal significance, preparing you for a place of eternal security. ▪*

Scriptures cited:

- Ecclesiastes 12:13- *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.”*
- Mk. 8:34- *“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”*

- Matthew 7:14- *“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

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