



ST. PAUL'S BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes
5:8-20

Pastor's Notes

Vs. 8-9 Solomon mentions the government again. Guess what? Government is a necessary evil. In fact, there is a pecking order among government officials. There is always a bigger fish. That is why those in places of power typically work towards self-preservation, rather than justice for the people. Yet, we must maintain that society—without government—cannot function. Without government (i.e., the sword), societies break out into chaos. And chaos? That wreaks havoc on everyone. Speaking of government, it is worth noting that those who covet seats of authority do not have what it takes for leadership. And those who shun these seats, typically are good leaders. Why? Good leaders don't covet power, for they know the heartaches that come with power—the heartaches of needing to do what is right.

V. 10 If money and material goods are one's goal in life, they will never be full and content. Solomon rightly shows us in Ecclesiastes that contentment comes from the work that one does for a neighbor, not necessarily the money that one receives. Think of it this way, if you only work for the paycheck, what joy is there in life. But work takes on greater meaning when one realizes that he or she is working to not only provide for their neighbor but also receive a paycheck to provide for one's family. That is where meaning in work comes from!

V. 11 Possessions do not make life easier—it makes it harder. Consider this for a moment. We spend our life gathering stuff, only to want to get rid of it in retirement so we can travel in an RV. The point being; the more stuff that we get the more we have to take care of. Stuff requires maintenance. Furthermore, the more stuff that one has, the more the vultures circle the person.

V. 12 Again, the more stuff one has, the more he or she will have sleepless nights worrying about stuff.

V. 13 Yes, people do not control material goods; these material goods control them.

V. 14-17 Life under the sun hurts. Too many material things hurt us. However, on the opposite end of the spectrum, when we lose everything, it hurts too. Bankruptcy hurts. Again we see the theme of Ecclesiastes emerge. Life under the sun is hard—so we cry out "Lord have mercy" when bad things happen. And when good things happen, we cry out, "God be praised." This is why we need dependence upon the Lord—not ourselves.

Notice though, that it hurts us to have too much stuff and it hurts us to lose stuff, but in the end, we lose everything anyway. Both the rich and the poor break even. And so, we begin to see that this life is lived by trusting in the Lord and using our material goods as gifts. Yes, gifts to bless our family and neighbors. And so, we hold on to these gifts lightly. We are stewards—not owners—of our material gifts. Everything is borrowed, never possessed. The same is with salvation. We are beggars. We receive everything as gift in this life.

V. 18 If you want to summarize the message and theme of Ecclesiastes into one verse, it is verse 18. Rejoice and enjoy the gifts that you have! Have fun in the simple things of life, knowing that the Lord holds the rest. Yes, death looms, life is cruel, and there is pain in this life under the sun; however, because we belong to the Lord, we mustn't fear death. The Lord holds us in life and death.

V. 19 This verse is what living faith and fear look like.

V. 20 Simply put—the Lord's got it! When we understand that we are not in control of life, there is tremendous freedom. It is like this, Solomon is showing us that life under the sun is really depraved. The entire world—without God—is hopeless. When we fully grasp this, we can break two ways. We can be overcome with depression and paralyzed with fear 'or' we can eat a cookie, praise God for the gifts that He has given, and go play. We are called to play and rejoice in gifts because the Lord takes care of the bigger problems of life—problems like sin, death, and the devil. We—by faith—can play and keep busy with work. That is the theme and hope of Ecclesiastes.