

Wasted Labor!

Ecclesiastes 2:18-26

Observations

- There are some sports events designed for individual athletes (golf, tennis, snow skiing)
- However there is one that requires both an individual effort and a team effort

Relay Racing

Each runner must focus on beating other runners on his or her leg of the race

But usually, a crucial part of any relay race is the handing off of the Baton to the next runner

Precious seconds can be lost if the handoff is not smooth

So, while individual speed is important, teamwork is crucial

Solomon Is Talking About The Mandatory Race Of Life!

Observations

- Solomon is somewhat frustrated and disappointed at looking back at his lifetime of work
- Passing the baton can be disappointing in life
- Giving up something we love can be a difficult season for us, but especially to see someone mess up the project, the business, or tear down what we put so much energy in, leading to resentment, or even depression
- Toward the end of Solomon's life he became disgusted in his works and concluded that all of man's work "under the sun" is futile or meaningless

Observations

- He searches for the meaning in life and death, in work and wealth, in wisdom and foolishness, in pleasure and pain
- Here is a man, in whom it seems, the more he had, the emptier he felt, “grasping for the wind.”
Ecclesiastes 1:17
- Solomon admits ***“I denied myself nothing.....I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward of my labor. Yet, when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 2:10-12***

Observations

- It is not as if all Solomon's work was for personal pleasure
- He had built vineyards, gardens, palaces, and parks
- He constructed reservoirs and planted forests.
- Many of these projects were built for the benefit of the Israelite people for generations to come

Observations

- I believe that Solomon's big issue here in chapter 2, is that he didn't want to relinquish control of these projects that **he himself** had conceived
- Part of his frustration was having to pass the baton or give over the control of his hard work to someone else
- Solomon is having to come to grips with his own finality and mortality in these passages, and we will too
- I believe that he concludes that we labor in vain **if our motives are wrong.**

Observations

- Notice how many times he uses pronouns like “I,” “me,” or “my” between verses 18-20 (ten, I think)
- Solomon says he studied, he read, he built, he acquired, oftentimes to excess but always in pursuit of excellence
- Solomon, as we know, was not lazy, and in Proverbs, he disrespects “the sluggard” or lazy person (6:6)

Observations

- Towards the end of Solomon's life, he seems to disrespect his own achievements

Why did he change his opinion?

- **He realized that his motives for his achievements were wrong, and if your motives are wrong, your labor is wrong too (Hebrews 4:12)**
- **Giving up control or not having “a say” anymore in how things are done is a problem for Solomon**
- **His motives were self-initiated, self-serving and acting as one chasing self-gratification, which as you know, can be a form of vanity**

What Is Solomon Saying Then?

- Our work should have a spiritual means to an end and not be the end itself
- God bestows upon his children certain gifts and talents . There is a calling that goes with that
- Hopefully we are now figuring out how we can use our gifts to the glorification of Christ
- If we insist only on pursuing selfish goals then we will be inevitably disappointed, because we have finality
- The phrase “under the sun” is used three times in verses 18, 19, and 22 and throughout Ecclesiastes, showing the difference between man’s perspective (tunnel vision) and God’s providence
- Because of our mortality there can be no sense of permanence. Our goals and dreams die with us

Observations

- Solomon wants us to be satisfied with what God has given us—talent, time, resources—and take advantage of them, not taking them for granted
- Remember Solomon could have been expressing doubts about his own son, Rehoboam, and his ability or lack thereof to succeed him as king
- Remember that the kingdom of Israel was divided during Rehoboam's reign, and much bloodshed followed
- Rehoboam failed to take advantage of his father's wisdom in ruling the people of Israel

In Closing

- Our work can be meaningful if our motives are right
- We must realize that meaningful labor, skilled or unskilled, has spiritual ramifications
- We have to be able to see the higher values present in “whatever your hands find to do.” (Eccle. 9:10) Enjoy the fruit of your labor; it too is a gift from God
- If we really believe that honest work is a gift from God, then we must conclude that the only important legacy is that which belongs to God (not ours)
- Use your gifts and talents wisely, for sooner than later, you must pass the baton to someone else

The Plan Of Salvation

Hear the Gospel	Acts 15:7
Believe the Gospel	Acts 15:7
Repent of Sins	Acts 17:30
Confess Christ	Acts 8:37
Be Baptized	Acts 8:38