



## INTRODUCTION

In his latter days, King Solomon recalled his former deeds:

"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 his life's work, and perceived that it was but "vanity ("emptiness"<sup>1</sup>) and grasping for the wind" (Ecclesiastes 2:17). "I hated life," he recalled, "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 Solomon (1 Kings 3:12) concluded: "Vanity

of vanities, **all** is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

It is a meaningful message plainly stated. And Solomon could state 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, still, 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 can learn from his words--few activities and/or accomplishments in this life possess any real (eternal) significance, and little of what life has to offer offers anything at all of lasting value.

## LIVING WITH THE END IN MIND

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). It also teaches that "the things done in the body...whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10) will *not* be burned up, but will be brought to bear on our eternal destinies. We ought, then, to live with the end in mind.

We can so live by making sure our activities are consistent with our confession (those who are Christians)--that is, that we

are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). The old hymn rightly says that we're "just a passing through." We're campers, lodging in temporal *tents* of flesh (2 Corinthians 5:1), hopefully preparing--and being prepared--for a *permanent* place, a "city which has *foundations*..." (Hebrews 11:10), a locale we can consider our "*hometown*" (Hebrews 11:14). And there's no place like home. Yes, we're campers, and *competent* campers don't put as much money, or material, toward their campsites as they do their homes. Sensible. After all, somewhere along the line, time comes to "break camp."

## TIME IS TICKING

James asked and answered an ever-relevant question: "**For what is your life?** It is even a vapor that appears for a *little time* and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). Life is short, in other words, equivalent to the momentary passing of a wisp of steam rising from your grandmother's kettle. "[L]ife is a breath" (Job 7:7). None of us is long for this world. Time is ticking. Moment by moment, our lives are passing away. Daily we are dying, and judgment is drawing nearer (Hebrews 9:27).

### ***What are we doing with the time?!***

The world beckons and begs us to fritter it away in fruitless pursuits that *may* bring passing pleasure, but which will *certainly* yield eventual emptiness. They, and their "god" (2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV), 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?

## A HUNT THAT ALWAYS LEAVES HIM HUNGRY

Most of humanity does not resist. Man largely allows his abilities, his energies, his resources, and his time to be consumed with the eternally inconsequential, with works destined for destruction. Most of humanity is engrossed in expending effort for emptiness, "grasping for the wind." And, of course, "...the soul is not satisfied" (Ecclesiastes 6:7). Like a laborer hungry for a hearty supper only hours after a plentiful lunch, so is man's search for satisfaction--it's a hunt that always leaves him hungry.

## "THE FOOD WHICH ENDURES"

Jesus said that "...whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated" (Matthew 15:17). Solomon observed that "*All* the labor of man is for his mouth..." (Ecclesiastes 6:7). Again, we come face-to-face with 'the futility of it all.' Man works to eat ("In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread," Genesis 3:19), what he eats is eliminated, and the cycle starts all over again. No lasting satisfaction...and the work is sometimes very hard.

But such a system makes us hungry for something that *won't* be eliminated, for food that *will* satisfy. And so we are prompted to pause at Jesus' words: "Man shall not live by bread *alone*" (Matthew 4:4). We are lead to listen to His declaration: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). We are

encouraged to consider His command: "Do not labor for the food which *perishes*, but for the food which *endures* to everlasting life..." (John 6:27).

Yes, we are blessed to have bread (food). It is a gift from God, and "the good" of our labors (Ecclesiastes 3:13). But there's *better* bread, a *heavenly* bread (John 6), to be had. And if ever there was food worth working for, this is it! He who eats this bread, Jesus said, "shall never hunger" (John 6:35). Lasting satisfaction...guaranteed.

**Let us then "labor" to keep the soul from starving.**

## SOME SELF-ASSESSMENT

And let the labor begin with some self-assessment. It may be that we have more in common with the mass of humanity than we realize. It may be that we, like Israel, are passing days "consumed in futility" (Psalm 78:33). Such a lifestyle would certainly seem normal enough. All around us are souls meandering through a maze of meaninglessness; they are enamored with entertainment, accustomed to apathy, comfortable with complacency. So many souls are sinking in sin, drowning in destruction (1 Timothy 6:9). Many are sick and don't know it. And the cancer is contagious. Each of us should "examine himself" for signs of infection.

## "TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS"

And if there *is* infection, well, there's a cure! Like the bronze serpent lifted up in the wilderness for the dying Jew to look upon for healing (Numbers 21:6-9), *Jesus* was "lifted up" on a cross for *your* healing (John 3:14-15). Turn your eyes upon Jesus. He'll cure your cancer (that spiritual "cancer" mentioned above). He'll enlighten "the eyes of your understanding" (Ephesians 1:18), and permit you to see life for what it really is--to see reality. In Jesus, everything comes into focus; the meaning of life is clear, and life is meaningful.

## A LIFE IN CHRIST

A life in Christ will allow you to look back on years spent in His service, and say of your past what Solomon could not say of his: "It was time well spent." A life in Christ will have you rejoicing that life *is* passing--after all, *eternal* life awaits! A life in Christ will have you working, but for something satisfying--"food which endures to everlasting life." It will be a life of meaning, filled with actions possessing eternal significance, preparing you for a place of eternal security.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, James Strong, #1892

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# For What Is Your Life?



by

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