

Introduction: There are many polar opposites in life on this earth, and a spectrum of positions between the extremes. People have no control over some of life's poles, such as: birth and death, parents, place of birth, natural disasters, good fortune, genetic illnesses. *** However, there are many choices people get to make that reflect their true character: whether they are wise or foolish, good or evil. What will they do with the fruit of their labor? What is in their heart toward their neighbors? How will they respond to tragedy? Do they tear down or build up? Who or what will they serve? What do they value? And, most importantly, how will they respond to God and His Word? *** The words we have heard from Solomon, the Teacher, cover all these extremes and hint at the choices we all must make. And, these choices include how we respond to things that are out of our control. *** Jesus explicitly spelled out some choices, especially whom we decide to serve, what we supremely value, how we respond to God and His Word of instruction (Torah), and how much we exert ourselves to live as faithful servants to The King of kings in His Kingdom. *** Let's find God's answers for all people, and us, in these passages.

I. The vanity of wealth as a fruit of skilled labor going to a fool who has not labored is offset by the gift of joy from God in the heart to eat, drink and see the good of one's labor. (Ecclesiastes 2:18-26)

- A. It is triple vanity and grief to the heart that well-earned wealth may go to a fool who has not labored with wisdom. (Verses 18-23)
1. I hated all my labor which I laboring under the sun, which I will be made to leave to the *adam* who will be after me; who is knowing whether wise he will be or fool, and he will have dominion in all my labor which I labored and acted wisely under the sun: this also is vanity. (Verses 18-19)
Heir: Solomon hates that the wealth of his wise and toilsome labor done under the sun must be left to his heir.
Character: He is not sure if his son will administer his fortune with wisdom, seeking God, or based on his foolishness.
Vanity: Solomon says the possibility his son will be foolish with his inheritance is vanity, unfair and meaningless.
 2. I had turned about, I made to despair my heart over all labor which I labored under the sun; because, exists *adam* whose labor in wisdom and knowledge and success; and, to *adam*, not he labored, he will give his portion: this also is vanity. (Verses 20-21)
Labor: Solomon despairs in his heart because the fruit of his successful labor will go to his son.
Entitlement: His son has never done labor to show he will handle the inheritance with God's wisdom.
Vanity: It is meaningless vexation that one who never worked will inherits from one who labored with wisdom and knowledge.
 3. What is being *adam* in all his labor and vexation of heart which he (is) toiling under the sun; because, all his days (are) sorrow and grief – his occupation, even at night his heart has not laid down: this also is vanity. (Verses 22-23)
Painful labor: The labor of his occupation has been sorrow and grief, great pain!
Restless heart: His heart is vexed and restless over everything.
Vanity: For the third time, it is meaningless a foolish son will inherit his legacy.
- B. It is good to eat and drink and see good for the soul in good labor: it is a gift from God. (Verses 24-26)
1. Nothing (is) better in *adam* than he will eat, has drunk and he has been made his soul to see, good in his labor; this also I myself have seen, because it (is) from the hand of God. (Verse 24)
Simple is good: Nothing is better for the sons of *adam* than having food to eat, water to drink, and be given to see in their souls their labor is good.
Gift of God: This is a gracious gift of God. This is the first of seven such declarations in the book. The others are: being happy to do good (3:12-13); rejoicing in labor as God's portion (3:22); being humbled by the gifts of wealth, riches and power to rejoice and accept (5:18-20); enjoyment joined with labor (8:15); eat bread with joy, drink wine with good heart, because God delights in labor (9:7); fearing God and keeping his commandments, for this is all (12:13).

Wisdom is to enjoy the simple things God gives in life 'under the sun'

2. Because who will eat and who will hasten more than I; for to *adam* who is good in His presence, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy. (Verses 25-26a)
God's heart gifts: Solomon will hurry to God because those considered good before Him are gifted with His wisdom, knowledge of Him and joy in Him. These simple gracious gifts are for people IN God's greater than Solomon Son.
Application: Let's be grateful for God's simple gifts of food, drink and satisfying labor for Him so we enjoy these gifts from Him.

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3. To the one sinning, He has given travail to gather and to heap up, to give to the good (one) before God: this also is vanity and striving after wind. (Verse 26b)
God takes from sinners: Solomon gives a strong warning to those refusing to humbly accept God's gifts, continuing to pursue foolish ways, ignoring God.
Strive after wind: Their lives are meaningless. God will take what they gain for themselves and give it to others. They always strive against the wind!

II. There is an appointed time for everything under heaven; and, Jesus says all must choose whom to serve, understanding that God detests the love of money and instructs His people to correct injustice under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Luke 16:12-21)

- A. There is an appointed time for everything under heaven as expressed in fourteen pairs of opposite events and emotions. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)
1. To everything, season; and, time to every desire under heaven. (Verse 1)
Time for every desire: People have many desires and contradictions in their hearts that are only fully resolved IN The Faith of Jesus. Solomon poetically lays out twenty-eight human desires in pairs of fourteen, there is a season for all twenty-eight.
 2. A time to be born / and a time to die // A time to plant / and a time to pluck up what was planted // A time to kill (slay) / and a time to heal // a time to break down / and a time to build up. (Verses 2-3)
Life and building up: We may consider being born, planting, healing and building up to be positive.
Death and tearing down: And we may consider death, uprooting, slaying and breaking down to be negative. If death brings us to The Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23) it is a good thing! The harvest of what was planted is nourishment to our bodies.

3. A time to weep / and a time to laugh (Isaac – as Sarah laughed, Genesis 21:1-7) // a time to mourn / and a time to dance. (*Verse 4*)
Sadness and joy: Mourning and weeping are necessary and helpful human activities. There are many times families, especially God's family, laugh and dance with joy before God. These simple joys come from God-given wisdom.

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4. A time to cast away stones / and a time to gather stones // A time to embrace / and a time be distant from embracing // A time to seek / and a time to give up as lost // a time to keep / and a time to throw away. (*Verses 5-6*)
Draw near and throw away: There are times to embrace, seek, keep and gather; and, there are times to be distant, give up and throw away.
5. A time to tear apart / and a time to sew. (*Verse 7a*)
Tear and sew: When the material in old clothing gets a hole, it must be torn and discarded. Then a good seamstress or tailor can sew new and better clothing.
6. A time to keep silent / and a time to speak. (*Verse 7b*)
Silence and speech: Both are necessary. There are fools that should not be answered and fools that should be answered (Proverbs 26:4-5).
7. A time to love / and a time to hate // A time for war / and a time for peace. (*Verse 8*)
War and peace: All God's people should hate evil and injustice. The Church has a just war doctrine. All receiving the gift of peace of God's reconciling love offered to sinners in Jesus will enjoy the fruit of The Holy Spirit of joy. This is a fitting conclusion to the simple pleasures that come from every delight under heaven.

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- B. Jesus tells His disciples they must serve one of two masters, realizing that what men value is detestable to God, so follow His instruction and seek to correct injustice under the sun. (*Luke 16:12-21*)
 1. If in what belongs to another, faithful y'all have not been, that of your own, who to y'all will give? No servant he is being able to serve two masters, because one he will hate, and the other he will love; or one he will hold firmly and the other he will despise. Not y'all are being able God to serve and money. (*Verses 12-13*)
Stewardship: Jesus commands disciples prove faithful stewards of a master's possessions to be entrusted with their own possessions. This is what Solomon wanted from his son.
Service: People cannot serve both God and a lust for money as an end in itself. Each person must decide to either enjoy God's blessing, or come under His judgment.

Life is full of contrasts and choices

2. Hearing this, Pharisees, loving silver, having resources, were deriding Him; He said, 'Y'all are declaring yourselves right before men, but God is knowing your hearts, what by men is highly valued (is) detestable in God's sight'. (*Verses 14-15*)
Covetousness: Pharisees loved silver and accumulated resources in violation the tenth commandment.
Disrespect: They were publicly disrespecting Jesus with derisive speech.
God's judgment: Jesus said God will judge them severely because what they highly value (covet) is detestable to God.

Application: Joining this to Solomon's words, let us realize the gracious gift of God IN Jesus helps us overcome values chosen without regard to God and His Word, so we may choose wisely.

Life is full of contrasts and choices

3. The Torah and the prophets (were) until John; since then The Kingdom of God is being preached, and each man is entering into it forcefully; easier it is being heaven and earth to pass away than of the Torah one stroke of a letter be done away. (*Verses 16-17*)
Word and Kingdom: God's words of instruction to His people are eternal and firm (Psalm 119:89). This includes Jesus' preaching of The Kingdom of God which requires effort to enter by faith.
4. Any putting away his wife and marrying another is committing adultery; and, whoever she who had been put away by husband marrying is committing adultery. (*Verse 18*)
Divorce: If a man divorces his wife for anything but her unfaithfulness, and marries someone else, especially a woman put away for unfaithfulness, breaks the seventh commandment.
5. A man was being wealthy, being clothed in purple and linen, is rejoicing every day splendidly; but a certain beggar named Lazarus had been laid to his gate, full of ulcerated wounds; desiring to be fed from what fell from the table of the wealthy man, but dogs coming were licking his ulcerated wounds. (*Verses 19-21*)
Wealthy connoisseur: Jesus describes a grievous situation 'under the sun' of a wealthy man with rich and luxurious clothing, rejoicing in luxury, concerned only with his pleasure.
Ravaged beggar: Outside his gate was a man named 'whom God helps' who is starving and his skin is devastated, and only dogs show him sympathy.

Bottom line: Lazarus ends up at the side of Abraham (the father of the faithful, Romans 4:9-17) for all eternity, and the wealthy man died and was in agony in the fires of hell (verses 22-24).

Application: Let us all seek God IN Jesus for what we can do to join Him in relieving injustice under the sun until He puts all things right in the end.

Conclusion: The vanity of wealth gained from laboring skillfully potentially going to a fool is offset by the joy God gives in the soul to eat, drink and see the good of one's labor. There is a God appointed time for everything under heaven. Jesus says all must choose whom to serve. God detests the love of money, and instructs His people to work with Him to correct injustice under the sun.

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