

# The Secret to a Satisfied Life

Lesson for Sunday, June 2, 2024

TEXT: Ecclesiastes 3

## INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Everyone is searching for something. What are the big issues of life that people are constantly searching for? *Purpose, identity, significance, relationships, etc.*
  - Follow up with a discussion about how the world goes about this search.
  - Take one example such as “identity”. How does the world tell us we discover our identity? Where do we find it? How does this mesh with God’s Word?
- ⇒ As Christians, we believe that all those things we are searching for are found in a relationship with our Creator.
- ⇒ In Ecclesiastes, Solomon is looking for the answers to life’s big questions “under the sun”. He is looking to see if there is any lasting meaning in the things of this world when God is removed from the search.
- ⇒ In chapter 2, Solomon looked at pleasure, wisdom and work. Without God, there is no lasting meaning. It is all vanity.
- ⇒ At the end of chapter 3, we begin to see what gives life satisfaction. Remember, Solomon is not teaching that there is no meaning to pleasure, wisdom or work. He is teaching that it is the Creator God Who gives these things eternal significance and provides the Christian with joy and contentment in life.

## OUTLINE:

1. God **controls** the times (3:1-15)
  - a. In chapter 2:12-23, Solomon has already pointed out the certainty of death. It’s a point he will remind us of throughout Ecclesiastes (4:8; 5:15-16; 6:6; 8:8; 9:2-3; 12:7-8).
  - b. Life and death are the ingredients that make up our experience in this world, and we would do well to give them proper attention. We ought to strive to make our life count!
  - c. Last week we looked at the poem that makes up verses 1-8. There is a cycle to the events of life. People come and people go. Seasons come and seasons go. Outside of miracles (when God invades our world suspends the laws of nature) life seems to just happen.
  - d. But Solomon is trying to make a point that he summarizes in verses 14-15. *God controls the times*. For us, life happens and we live within its events. There is much that we cannot control in life. But God can and does!
  - e. This should provide great comfort and confidence to the believer.
    - i. Discuss: How does the fact that God controls the times provide us comfort? *Most days, the world seems out of control – even hopeless. But being reminded that God is in control gives Christians a different perspective. There is hope! God is our Hope!*
    - ii. Discuss: How does this truth provide us confidence? *Our confidence is not in the times, or the people who rule this world. Our confidence is in the One who controls the times*. Read Daniel 4:34-35 to reiterate this point – esp. vs. 35 – “and He does according to His will.”
2. We are **accountable** to Him (15-21)
  - a. This point flows from point 1 and Solomon clearly states this truth at the end of verse 15, “*and God requireth that which is past.*”
  - b. We are accountable to God! What a thought! God – Who controls the times – has given us time – and we are accountable to Him for what we do within that time!
  - c. The literal translation of this phrase in verse 15 says “God seeks what hurries along.”

- i. Solomon is saying that time goes by fast and often gets away from us. But God keeps track of it all and will, at the end of time, call into account what we have done with time.
    - ii. See Ephesians 5:16 & Ecclesiastes 12:14 to support this even more.
  - d. This ties in with verses 16-17 where Solomon witnessed the injustices of his day and wondered why God's divine judgment seemed to be delayed. (Sound familiar?)
    - i. Solomon is asking the oft-repeated question: "How can God be in control where there is so much evil in our world, with the wicked prospering in their sin and the righteous suffer in their obedience?"
    - ii. Vs. 17: The God Who controls the times has a time set for **judgment**. See also Ecc. 8:6.
  - e. Even with the promise of God's future judgment, verse 18 points out that God is judging even **now!** In the experiences of life, God is testing man.
    - i. The word "manifest" means to sift or to winnow.
    - ii. God is revealing what man is really like; He is sifting men.
    - iii. Vs. 18b: When a man leaves God out of his life, he becomes like an animal. He lives like a beast and dies like a beast (see also Psalm 32:9).
  - f. We have to be careful not to misinterpret verses 19-21 and draw the wrong conclusion that there is no difference between humans and the animal kingdom. Solomon is making the obvious point that the two have two things in common:
    - i. They both **die**.
    - ii. After death they both return to **dust**.
- 3. Submit to Him and be **satisfied** (vs. 22)
  - a. What are we to do in light of Solomon's teaching?
  - b. First, we are to **accept** life from God's hand and **enjoy** God's good gifts.
    - i. No one knows what a day may hold. Even if we did know, we only get to experience today once.
    - ii. Knowing that God is in sovereign control of life, we can submit to Him and be at peace.
  - c. Second, Solomon calls us to accept the life God gives us and be satisfied.
    - i. We must never be satisfied with **ourselves**.
    - ii. We must be satisfied with what God gives to us in this life.

#### APPLICATION/DISCUSSION:

- ⇒ Discuss how we can work to develop a biblical way of thinking about our times. Example: It's easy to sit in church on Sunday and say "God is in control!" It's something else completely not to react to the events of life with anger, stress, depression, etc.
- ⇒ Discuss what things ought to be at the front of our minds when it comes to redeeming the time.
  - Our walk with God; bringing God glory in all things; etc.
  - This idea begins to help us find the meaning in the ordinary things of life such as pleasure, work, etc. When we keep God at the center of our lives, God infuses meaning into even the ordinary. Everything becomes sacred.
- ⇒ Discuss: How can we slow down so that we find joy and happiness in the smaller blessings that God provides?

NEXT WEEK: Chapter 4