

THE VANITY OF SELFISHNESS

Introduction:

1. The book of Ecclesiastes records the “wisdom” of Solomon as he sought for meaning and purpose in life without the wisdom of God.
 2. It was the great experiment of his life – and serves as a powerful warning to all mankind.
 3. Without God, all is vanity and vexation of spirit...
- I. The Selfish Live Animal Lives (Ecclesiastes 3:16-22)
 - A. In a world without God or godly wisdom, Solomon concluded that man should live for himself alone (vs. 22).
 1. There is no true justice nor righteousness in this world (vs. 16).
 2. Man dies just like the animals (vs. 18-21).
 3. Therefore, Solomon concluded, men should live for themselves for the time they have on earth.
 - B. The problem with living for self is that man begins to behave like an animal (cf. Romans 1:18-32).
 1. If we believe we came from animals, we will live like animals.
 2. If we believe we die like animals, we will live like animals.
 - C. “Unless above himself he can Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!”
 - D. God and His wisdom allow man to see himself accurately – as more than an animal (cf. Genesis 1:26).
 - E. Even Solomon that true justice and righteousness could be found only with God (vs. 17).
 - II. The Selfish Live Empty Lives (Ecclesiastes 4:1-3)
 - A. Solomon saw that the world was full of those who were oppressed and unable to find comfort.
 - B. By excluding God, he concluded that it was better to be dead or never to have been born than to be alive on the earth.
 - C. When one lives only for self, he becomes an oppressor of others.
 - D. When one lives only for self, he loses purpose, perspective, and hope.
 - E. God is a God of all comfort – and He instructs His followers to do the same (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
 - III. The Selfish Live Lonely Lives (Ecclesiastes 4:4-12)
 - A. Solomon saw that when a person tried to live right and do well, it only produced envy in the hearts of his neighbors.
 - B. In contrast, the fool who lives a lazy life with no ambition gets by and has flesh to eat.
 - C. He concluded that it is better to have one handful of rest (quietness) than two handfuls of toil (labor) and vexation of spirit.
 - D. However, the selfish life of the fool is a lonely life – for he cares only for himself.
 1. The wealthy man is alone because he loves money more than all else.
 2. The poor fool is alone because he provides only for himself.
 - E. Yet, “Two are better than one,” and, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18).

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- IV. The Selfish Live Cynical Lives (Ecclesiastes 4:13-16)
 - A. Solomon saw that the old only live to be replaced by the young.
 - B. Even good kings are to be forgotten by generations that follow.
 - C. Thus, one should live for himself alone.
 - D. However, Solomon again excluded God from the picture.
 - E. With God, the righteous “being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4).