

THEOLOGY II: Wisdom Literature

Session 4 - Ecclesiastes Part 2 - Dr. Chris Miller

You can't begin to find a cure for the curse while on earth (under the sun).

He says this because he tried three "cures" (sensuality, intellectualism & work) and ultimately found them useless. None of these will cure the pain of the curse.

*What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.
Ecclesiastes 1:15*

Main argument: Obey, God wants you to enjoy your life, Ecclesiastes 1:11

Sensuality (the pursuit of pleasure) is ineffective, Ecc 2:1-11 (feel away the curse)

*I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be **vanity**. **Laughter**, (good clean fun) I said, is foolish. And what does **pleasure** accomplish? Ecc 2:1-2*

I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly - my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. Ecc 2:3

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. Ecc 2:4-5

I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well the delights of the heart of man. Ecc 2:8

*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I survived all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was **vanity**, a chasing after the wind; **nothing was gained under the sun**. Ecc 2:10-11*

Intellectualism is ineffective, the pursuit of wisdom is fruitless, Ecc 2:12-17

(think away the curse)

***Then** I turned my thoughts to consider **wisdom**, and also madness and **folly**. What more can the king's successor **do** than what has already been done? I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; **but** I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. (they're both going to die)*

*For wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die! So **I hated life**, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is **vanity**, a chasing after the wind. Ecc 2:12-17*

The pursuit of labor is ineffective (empty) , Ecc 2:16–6:9 (work away the curse)

*I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is vanity. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. **This too is vanity** and a great misfortune. Ecc 2:18-21*

*A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without Him who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. **This too is vanity**, a chasing after the wind. Ecc 2:24-26*

Although there is no immediate “cure” for the pain of the curse, God wants you to be deeply satisfied in life so when you feel the curse closing in, and you’re tempted to run...

Every one of us feels the pain of the curse in different ways: loneliness, rejection, failure, guilt, or not getting what you want...

you will only find that satisfaction if you turn **to** Him not **away** from Him toward your own “cure” (pleasure, work, ect)

*There is a time APPOINTED for everything and season for every activity under heaven: a time to be **born** and a time to **die**, a time to **plant** and a time to **uproot**, a time to **heal** and a time to **kill**, a time to **build** and time to **tear down** a time to **laugh** and a time to **weep**, a time to **dance** and a time to **mourn**, a time to **gather** stones and a time to **scatter** them, a time to **embrace** and a time to **refrain**, a time to **search** and time to **give up**, a time to **keep** and a time to **throw away**, a time to **mend** and a time to **tear**. a time to **mend** and a time to be **silent**, a time to **love** and a time to **hate**, a time for **peace** and a time for **war**. Ecc 3:1-8*

You can’t simply “choose red” and avoid the blue! The curse will find its way into your life in significant ways because it is appointed.

I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil; this is the gift of God. Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is subject to the curse. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. Ecc 3:12-13, 19-22

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed and they had no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors... And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. Ecc 4:1-2

*Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and **be happy in his work, this is a gift of God.** (4th time) He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. Ecc 5:18-20*

- **There are 2 things that will keep you from enjoying life so watch out for them.**
 - Even though the curse makes it hard...1-6
 - Even though Man does not know... God intends that the man enjoy life as a gift 6:11

Introduction, Ecc 6:10-12

*For who knows **what is good** for a man in life, during the few and vain days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him **what will happen** under the sun afterwards? Ecc 6:12*

Man does not know WHAT IS GOOD, Ecc 6:7-8

Are you having a good or a bad day? Are you sure?

You may not really know. God might be working a bad day for good.

Do we care more about who we are or how we look?

Man does not know THE FUTURE, Ecc 6:9-11 (but we worry about it... a lot)

*A **good** name (character) is **better** than a fine perfume, (It's better to be good than to appear good) It is **better** to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, (causes you to examine your life) for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools. Ecc 7:1-2, 5*

*I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but **no man knows** whether love or hate awaits him. We either worry about it, or effectively only live in it.*

*Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is **now** that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this cursed life that God has given you... For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planting nor knowledge nor wisdom. Ecc 9:1, 7-10*

*Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land. (Don't put all your eggs in 1 basket - diversify)
If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie.
Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well. Ecc 11:2-3, 6*

Exhortation and Conclusion, Ecc 11-12

Exhortation, 11:7-12:8 Introduction, 11:7-8 Conclusion, 11:9-12:7

*Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun. However many years a man may live, **let him enjoy them all.** (This is a command) But let him remember the days of the darkness, for they will be many. Everything to come is vanity.-- as age increases so does the grip of the curse. (your body breaks down) Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, **for youth and vigor are vanity.** Ecc 11:7-10*

*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, I find no pleasure in them before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars **grow dark,** (cataracts)... when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong man stoop, when the grinders cease (teeth fall out) because they are few. when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. The man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. **Vanity! Vanity! Says the Teacher. Everything is Vanity!** Ecc 12:1-8*

*Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: **Fear God and keep his commandments,** for this is the whole duty of man. Or "This will make a man whole". Ecc 12:13*

Would God be any fun as a friend?

If you knew him as he really is, there is no one else you'd rather be with. Don't look at Him through the lens of the curse.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. -Jesus "

He wasn't just talking about eternity. Take comfort and safety out of your prayers... we're talking about full enjoyment. Follow Him and your life will be satisfying.

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." - Frederich Buechner