

March 19, 2017

“Banish Anxiety from Your Heart”

Focal Passage: Ecclesiastes 11:1-10 (NASB)

Cross References: Deut 15:10; Psalm 112:9; 139:13-16; Prov 19:17; Ecclesiastes 1:13; 3:10-11; 8:17; 9:7, 10; 12:1; Matt 5:42; 10:42; Luke 6:30; John 10:10; 2 Cor 5:10-11; Gal 6:9; 1 Tim 6:18-19; Heb 6:10; Rev 20:11-15

Lesson Idea: We should enjoy our lives and honor our God.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Mar 19 Judges 3-5	Mar 20 Judges 6-7
Mar 21 Judges 8-9	Mar 22 Judges 10-12
Mar 23 Judges 13-15	Mar 24 Judges 16-18
Mar 25 Judges 19-21	Mar 26 Ruth 1-4

Background: In this chapter, Solomon starts working towards his conclusion of the matter. He re-emphasizes his message that man’s knowledge is limited at best, but God holds even the future in his understanding. Towards the end of this chapter, Solomon points out that young people should appreciate and enjoy their lives, because health and strength are fleeting. We should also remember to honor God in our activities, because we will be accountable to Him.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

1 Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. 2 Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. 3 If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. 4 He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. 5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.

6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

7 The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. 8 Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility.

9 Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes.

Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. 10 So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

DISCUSSION:

- v 1-2. What principle does this verse teach? What kinds of things come back to us as we give them away? (see Deut 15:10; Prov 19:17; Matt 10:42; Gal 6:9; Heb 6:10)
- v 2. Why is it wise to diversify your “portions?” How can developing multiple friendships be like dividing your portions? What about generosity with others? (see Ps 112:9; Matt 5:42; Luke 6:30; 1 Tim 6:18-19)

NOTE: from David Guzik:

Cast your bread upon the waters: This probably refers to a shipping venture that required great patience for the return of the investment. The idea is that it was wise and good to work for a return that could not be immediately seen.

“The allusion is to the element of trust in much ancient business. Ships on commercial voyages might be long delayed before any profit resulted.” (Eaton)

Some commentators (Trapp, Clarke, and others) think this speaks of generosity. Cast your bread upon the waters is to them a way of saying, “Give your material things to the needy in a way that might seem wasteful – as wasteful as throwing bread upon the waters, and you will be rewarded.” If this is the sense, the point is much the same: do something now for a reward that cannot be immediately seen.

Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth: The Preacher counseled generosity and did so in light that the future – though uncertain – must be prepared for. With these ideas he continues to direct us towards the place of true wisdom.

- v 3-4. How can the uncertainty of nature cause some people to miss opportunities? Why do we need to be responsible every day no matter what the day holds?

NOTE: from Guzik:

He who observes the wind will not sow: The farmer who is overly analytical about the wind or the clouds will never plant his fields, and thus he will not reap. The Preacher gently pushes us away from an overly analytical approach to life.

“If we keep on observing circumstances, instead of trusting God, we shall be guilty of disobedience. God bids me sow: I do not sow, because the wind would blow some of my seed away. God bids me reap: I do not reap, because there is a black cloud there, and before I can house the harvest, some of it may be spoiled. I may say what I like; but I am guilty of disobedience.” (Spurgeon)

Spurgeon went on in that sermon (*Sowing in the Wind, Reaping Under Clouds*) to describe other ways that this attitude sins against God and man. To observe circumstances instead of trusting God shows unbelief, rebellion, foolish fear, and idleness.

- v 5. What examples does Solomon use to demonstrate man's limited knowledge? How does this relate to the activity of God? (see Psalm 139:13-16 and marvel. see also Ecclesiastes 1:13; 3:10-11; 8:17)

NOTE: from Guzik:

As Jesus would later say, *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit* (John 3:8).

So you do not know the works of God who makes everything: In the same way we don't know the hidden things, we also do not know the works of God in any comprehensive way. The Preacher brings us to a place of humility and submission to God and His works that again pushes us out of the previously entrenched under the sun premise.

- v 6. Why is it important to be diligent in your work? (see Ecclesiastes 9:10)

NOTE: from Guzik:

For you do not know which will prosper: Solomon again pushes towards an appropriately humble loss of self-confidence. We should give ourselves to all kinds of work, because we do not know the results. We know less of the future than we think we do; this shakes the previously assured under the sun premise

- v 7-8. Why did he think it was good "for eyes to see the sun?" What should a person do with his many years? Why should one remember "days of darkness?" What should the "futility" of life cause us to do? (see Eccl 9:7; 12:1)

The NIV translates verses 9-10 in this way:

9 You who are young, be happy 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 into judgment.

10 So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

- v 9. Why should young people rejoice? What things rob young people of their joy today? How should one's impulses and desires always be tempered by pending judgment? (see 2 Cor 5:10-11; Rev 20:11-15)

- v 10. How do you "remove grief and anger from your heart?" Why should young people not allow pain or troubles to slow them down? How are youth and vigor meaningless and fleeting?

NOTE: from Guzik:

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth: Perhaps this argued that Solomon now looked back from old age to the days of his youth, before an under the sun premise took a toll upon his life and mind. He hoped for better for his young readers.

This also indicates that in his conclusion, Solomon saw clearly that there was a place in youth (though not only there) in the legitimate pleasures and satisfactions of life. If the meaning of life was not found in the pursuit of pleasure (as in Ecclesiastes 2:10-11), it is also not found in asceticism and self-denial for its own sake.

If we accept the truth of the next few lines; that there is more to life than what we can see – that there is an eternity and an eternal God to reckon with – then the legitimate pleasures of life can be enjoyed in the best sense. One doesn't try to find meaning in those pleasures, but simply some good seasoning for a life that finds its meaning in eternity and the eternal God.

Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment: Here the Preacher comes to the answer of his premise and his book. One may live according to their heart and by what they see; but they should not think that their own heart or eyes will be their judge. There is a God in heaven who will bring all your life and works into judgment.

Here is the antidote and antithesis of the under the sun premise. Life is lived not only for this life but also for eternity, knowing that good will be rewarded and evil will be condemned perfectly by the God who will bring you into judgment. Literally, Solomon spoke of the judgment, referring to our great accountability before God.

The Apostle Paul knew this eternal perspective banished sorrow from the heart and later wrote, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Without this premise of eternity and the eternal God, life is vain and meaningless. The Apostle Paul understood this: *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable* (1 Corinthians 15:19).

And put away evil from your flesh: Living in light of eternity and the eternal God also is an incentive to live a holy, godly life in our days on earth. We know that our good will be rewarded and blessed; not only in this life, but also in the life to come.

APPLICATION:

- ✓ How does your life reflect both the joy of living and the holiness of living for Jesus? (see John 10:10)

Lesson by Bro Stan