

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown  
Bible Study Notes: Ecclesiastes 6

*"Solomon's Practical Council"*

5/1/13

**SUMMARY**

The Preacher continues his observations about the vanity of riches in this chapter (cf. 5:13-20). He describes a sad, but very common situation: a man blessed with riches, wealth and honor so that he has all that he desires; yet God does not let him have it, and it is consumed by someone else! Such a man, even if he has a hundred children and lives two thousand years, is described as no better than a stillborn child (1-6).

His reflections on riches lead the Preacher to conclude that man's labor might feed his mouth, but it does not really satisfy the soul. It is better to have the sight of the eyes (i.e., to enjoy what you see), than to have the wandering of desire which is vanity and grasping for the wind. Since man cannot change that he is subject to life's vanities and unable to contend with God, accumulating many things may only increase vanity in this life. By asking who knows what is good in this short life, and who can tell what will happen in this life after we are gone, the Preacher implies that only God (and not the accumulation of wealth) provides the answer to the vanity of life "under the sun" (7-12).

**I. A SAD SITUATION (6:1-6)**

*I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: <sup>2</sup> God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. <sup>3</sup> A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. <sup>4</sup> It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded. <sup>5</sup> Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man — <sup>6</sup> even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?*

## **A. A COMMON AFFLICTION AMONG MEN (1-2)**

1. To receive riches, wealth, and honor from God, all that one desires
2. Yet not be able to enjoy it
  - a. Because God does not give him the ability or power to do so
  - b. Instead a foreigner consumes it -- This is vanity, and an evil (grievous) affliction

## **B. EVEN WITH MANY CHILDREN AND LONG LIFE (3-6)**

1. Unless the soul is satisfied with goodness, a stillborn child is better off even though...
  - a. It may come in vanity and depart in darkness
  - b. It's name may be covered with darkness
  - c. It has not seen the sun or known anything
2. For the stillborn child has more rest than one who suffers this affliction
  - a. Even if he lives two thousand years
  - b. For they all eventually go to the same place

### **ECCLESIASTES 6:1**

In this section, Solomon shows that having the right attitude about God can help us deal with present injustices. Prosperity is not always good, and adversity is not always bad. But God is always good; if we live as he wants us to, we will be content.

### **ECCLESIASTES 6:1-6**

This person has died without being able to enjoy his wealth and honor. Even if he had lived a long life, it is ultimately meaningless in itself because all that he has accumulated is left behind. Everyone dies, and both rich and poor end up in the grave. Many people work hard to prolong life and improve their physical condition. Yet people spend little time or effort on their spiritual health. How shortsighted it is to work hard to extend this life and not take the time to prepare for eternity.

## **II. REFLECTIONS ON RICHES (6:7-12)**

*<sup>7</sup> Everyone's toil is for their mouth, yet their appetite is never satisfied. <sup>8</sup> What advantage have the wise over fools? What do the poor gain by knowing how to conduct themselves before others? <sup>9</sup> Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*

## A. RICHES CANNOT SATISFY THE SOUL (7-9)

1. They can be consumed, but don't really satisfy
  2. They don't make the wise any better than the fool
  3. They don't make one better than the poor who knows how to conduct himself properly - cf. Pr 15:16; 19:1; 28:6
- Indeed, better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire, which is vanity and grasping for wind

## B. RICHES CANNOT CHANGE THE VANITY OF LIFE (10-12)

*<sup>10</sup> Whatever exists has already been named, and what humanity is has been known; no one can contend with someone who is stronger. <sup>11</sup> The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone? <sup>12</sup> For who knows what is good for a person in life, during the few and meaningless days they pass through like a shadow? Who can tell them what will happen under the sun after they are gone?*

1. No matter what one becomes, he is still "man", unable to contend with God
2. Man is still subject to many things which increase the vanity of life
  - a. Who knows what is good for man?
    - 1) All the days of his vain life?
    - 2) Which he passes like a shadow?
  - b. Who can tell a man what will happen after him "under the sun"? -- Unless it be God, no one!

### ECCLESIASTES 6:10

God knows and directs everything that happens, and he is in complete control over our lives, even though at times it may not seem like it. How foolish it is for us to contend with our Creator, who knows us completely and can see the future. (See also Jeremiah 18:6; Romans 9:19-24.)

### ECCLESIASTES 6:12

Solomon is stating the profound truth that we cannot predict what the future holds. The only one who knows what will happen after we're gone is God. No human knows the future, so each day must be lived for its own value. Solomon is arguing against the notion that human beings can take charge of their own destiny. In all our plans we should look up to God, not just ahead to the future.