

Eccl. 6:1-2 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

Now Solomon makes note of another distressing observation about life. God chooses to give some men riches, wealth and honor so that they want for nothing. Yet, sometimes He allows trouble in that person's life that prevents him from enjoying all that he has. Instead, someone else benefits from his adversity. The word "stranger" is just a reference to another individual. It just doesn't seem fair.

The more interesting observation is that he considers this to be a common occurrence. This could be referencing a person that has fallen victim to others with more power or authority, or maybe someone who has bad health that prevents him from enjoying what he possesses.

A troubling article in the news recently comes to my mind regarding the current economic changes happening in our country. I'm not sure this family falls under the category of "wanting for nothing," but it certainly falls under the category of not being allowed to enjoy what is rightfully theirs through unfair government interference. Following is an excerpt of this man's letter to the editor in his local newspaper.

"On Thursday, May 14, 2009 I was notified that my Dodge franchise, that we purchased, will be taken away from my family on June 9, 2009 without compensation and given to another dealer at no cost to them. My new vehicle inventory consists of 125 vehicles with a financed balance of 3 million dollars. This inventory becomes impossible to sell with no factory incentives beyond June 9, 2009. Without the Dodge franchise we can no longer sell a new Dodge as "new," nor will we be able to do any warranty service work. Additionally, my Dodge parts inventory, (approximately \$300,000.) is virtually worthless without the ability to perform warranty service. There is no offer from Chrysler to buy back the vehicles or parts inventory.

Our facility was recently totally renovated at Chrysler's insistence, incurring a multi-million dollar debt in the form of a mortgage at Sun Trust Bank.

HOW IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CAN THIS HAPPEN?

THIS IS A PRIVATE BUSINESS NOT A GOVERNMENT ENTITY

This is beyond imagination! My business is being stolen from me through NO FAULT OF OUR OWN. We did NOTHING wrong.

This atrocity will most likely force my family into bankruptcy. This will also cause our 50+ employees to be unemployed. How will they provide for their families? This is a total economic disaster." [end excerpt]

My heart goes out to that family. I don't know whether or not they are Christians. If they are not, I believe that God is working to get them to turn to Him in faith. If they are, they can rest in the truth that God is going to work good out of what seems like a real personal tragedy. Still, from a purely earthly perspective, it certainly appears to be an evil under the sun.

One commentary equates this man to a miser that doesn't know how to enjoy his blessings.

Eccl. 6:3-6 *If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?*

In Israel it was considered a great blessing from God to live a long life and be blessed with many children.

Deuteronomy 4:40 "Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever."

Psalms 127:3 "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

Solomon is basically saying that he has observed this not always to be so. One could have 100 children and live many years and have an empty life. In his opinion that man would have been better off never to have been born. One that was miscarried would never be remembered and would never experience anything that life has to offer—good or bad. In Solomon's opinion, the peace of that unborn child was to be desired rather than to experience the unfulfilled life of such a man. In the end, everyone goes to the same place anyway.

It is obvious that Solomon had no understanding of the heart of a mother. Though I have not experienced miscarriage myself, I have talked to moms who have; and those lost little ones have a precious place in their hearts.

Also, you can't help but speculate how one with such blessing would be so miserable. I think the answer has to be found in the character of the person. Your children are not going to love you if you are not a loving father. People are not going to respect and honor you if you are not a kind, honest and caring neighbor. Without the love and respect of others, this life is empty.

Eccl. 6:7-9 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

I think that Solomon is saying that man is continually working to feed the desires of his flesh, but he never seems to get enough; he always wants or feels like he needs more. Doesn't that mean that the wise man is no better off than the fool who acts without wisdom? Neither finds satisfaction in life. I liked the understanding from the CJB of the next part. What good is knowledge or experience if you are poor? This just describes another category of unsatisfied people. I liked the NLT translation for verse 9: "Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless; it is like chasing the wind."

It seems as though there is nothing new under the sun. Even in the days of Solomon many were never satisfied with what they had and always wanted more. Every person who is working to satisfy the flesh will never find satisfaction. I liked Adam Clarke's comment: "When man learns to provide as distinctly for his *soul* as he does for his *body*, then he will begin to be happy, and may soon attain his end."

Christians will find contentment and satisfaction if they will learn to deny the flesh and the pressure of the culture. We would do well to consider the words of Paul and the writer of Hebrews.

Philippians 4:11 "...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

1 Timothy 6:6-8 "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

Hebrews 13:5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Eccl. 6:10-12 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in *this* life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

After looking at the Hebrew and reading several translations, I think Solomon is reflecting on the character of man and God. The basic character of man was defined by Adam, the human creation. He is powerless before Almighty God, "Him that is mightier than he," the Creator. The Hebrew for the "many things that increase vanity" indicates a reference to words or thoughts. Solomon's

observation--No matter the number of words or thoughts, a reference to knowledge or wisdom, how do they actually benefit man? If knowledge and wisdom do not benefit our search for satisfaction, what's the point? I liked the CJB translation of verse 12: "For who knows what is good for someone during life, during the days of his pointless life spent like a shadow? Who can tell what will happen under the sun after a person is gone?"

My son went through a terrible time of rebellion after graduating from high school. The Lord had to let him experience the truth of the futility of trying to find satisfaction through feeding the flesh before he was willing to repent and seek forgiveness and restored fellowship with the Lord and with his family. The night that brought him to a new beginning found him on his knees in our kitchen floor asking his father, "Is this all there is to life?" That sort of mirrors the thoughts of Solomon at this point.

Concerning who knows what is best for man in this life, the Christian knows that the obvious answer is God. I liked Chuck Smith's comments on this. "What is better for me? Who really knows? I don't know my own heart. It's deceitful and desperately wicked. God knows. God knows what is best for me. That is why it is so wrong for me to contend with God when He doesn't do for me what I think He ought to be doing. When He doesn't give to me those things that I feel I need and desire....And rather than fighting and contending because He's not doing things my way, I need to just submit and yield my life into His hand, into His wisdom, for He knows what is best for me. And even the sorrow or the tragedy that I might be experiencing today God is using for my good. Even the sickness or the suffering that I might be experiencing now God is working His eternal purpose through it."

The NIV Commentary indicated that the writer was basically conveying the thought that a man's life is predestined by God, so he might as well not gripe or complain about his lot in life. You can't overturn His will.

I really take issue with that understanding. Scripture is quite clear in declaring that man has the freedom to make his own choices.

Ezekiel 18:23 "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"

Ezekiel 18:32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Romans 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

God would not make such a statements if man were not endowed with freedom of choice. This is one of those hot button issues for me, but I'll leave it at that for the time being.