



# LIVING LIFE BACKWARD

How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live Life in Light of the End

# BASED ON A BOOK BY THAT NAME

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LIVING LIFE  
BACKWARD

HOW ECCLESIASTES TEACHES US

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TO LIVE IN LIGHT OF THE END ◀◀

# ECCLESIASTES 1:12-2:26

Chapter 2: Bursting the Bubble

# REVIEW

- Last week, we looked at Ecclesiastes 1:1-11.
- “All is vanity,” 1:2
  - “Vanity” means “breath” or “vapor.”
  - Life is fleeting
  - Life is elusive
- Death is inevitable.
- Recognizing the implications of our mortality is necessary for joy and contentment.
- How then shall we live?

# MOTIVATIONS

- We are sojourners
  - Hebrews 11:9-10: “By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”
- Our treasure should be in heaven
  - Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

# THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

- “All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they use, they all tend to this end. The cause some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both-to be happy. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.” –Blaise Pascal.
- Everyone seeks four interrelated goals:
  - Happiness
  - Satisfaction
  - Gain
  - Meaning



# BUT IS EVERYTHING REALLY VANITY?: WISDOM AND PLEASURE

- The preacher has considered the major objections to everything being fleeting and gainless.
- Wisdom, 1:16-18
  - Is difficult to obtain.
  - Brings grief as it highlights the vanity of life.
  - *Question:* How have you seen this result of wisdom?
- Pleasure, 2:1-3,8
  - Laughter, wine, and sex
  - Entertainment?
  - “What use is it?”, 2:2
  - Used to cover up what we want to avoid.

# BUT IS EVERYTHING REALLY VANITY?: CREATIVITY AND WEALTH


- Creativity, 2:4-7
  - Houses, gardens, parks.
- Wealth, 2:8
  - All the riches of a king.
  - Status.
- None of these satisfy our desire for gain and satisfaction, 2:11
- The preacher testing all these things is neither prescriptive nor right.
- *Question:* What other gainless pursuits do we take on?



# TOILS END IN DEATH

- Beyond the elusiveness of gain, death guarantees the fleetingness of life's efforts.
- While there is more earthly gain in wisdom than folly, the hope placed in wisdom is dashed by death, 2:16.
  - See the book of Proverbs.
- "How the wise dies just like the fool!" 2:16
- Yet, the fool may inherit the status, riches, and pleasures of the wise.
- "If you are typically modern, your life is like a mansion with a terrifying hole right in the middle of the living-room floor. So you paper over the hole with a very busy wallpaper pattern to distract yourself. You find a rhinoceros in the middle of your house. The rhinoceros is wretchedness and death. How in the world can you hide a rhinoceros? Easy: cover it with a million mice. Multiple diversions." –Peter Kreeft

# A RAY OF LIGHT

- What ought we then to do if all of life is indeed vanity?
  - Enjoy things in life, even toils, for what they are, not expecting gain from them.
- Enjoyment comes from God, 2:24-25
  - God alone gives the correct perspective that no earthly thing can produce gain for us.
  - Enjoyment vs. pleasure
  - As we will see, this perspective is made possible by God providing gain and meaning outside of earthly things.
- *Question:* What things in life that could have brought joy did not, and what things that should not have brought joy did?
-  God gives joy to those who please Him, 2:26
  - The aim of life is to be found in our relationship with God. In Him we have enjoyment and meaning.