



All is Vanity – Ecclesiastes 1:2

2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Everything is meaningless. That appears to be the conclusion that King Solomon has reached at this point in his life. Considering the life that he had lived, it is to some degree unsurprising that he might have reached this conclusion. Having been blessed by God with great wisdom, Solomon remained a truly fallible leader.

This was the height of power and influence for the Jewish nation. Under King Solomon, world leaders came to Israel not only for his guidance due to his noted wisdom but through that wisdom Solomon had set up his nation in a position of power and influence desired by many. Thus, Solomon was many times over wed to women from the many nations who sought to share in the blessings and influence of this nomadic tribe, turned regional power.

As King Solomon added more and more wives and concubines to his harem, the diverse influences from these many women, began to impact the way in which Solomon worshipped and followed God. In this context, it would make sense for Solomon to write that “All is vanity.” Solomon had amassed tremendous success as the king of Israel, yet he came to see the vanity of his success against the backdrop of his failure to follow the will of God personally in his life.

Solomon goes on to describe the passage of time using the imagery of the movement of the sun, the wind, and streams. Time passes and upon reflection, we may find that our tiring efforts appear to have amounted to very little. In v. 8b, Solomon notes the struggles even in attempts and personal growth and learning, “the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”

This sets up one of the more famous quotes from the book of Ecclesiastes, “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes. 1:9) While this is not a particularly optimistic view of humanity’s sojourn through life, in Christ, that hopeless feeling need not unduly burden us. In Christ, we are made new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Thoughts for Reflection

How is it helpful to realize along with Solomon that our efforts absent the work of Christ in our lives, may not amount to much in a long-lasting sense?