

Eternal PERSPECTIVE Ecclesiastes

BIBLE TEXT | ECCLESIASTES 5:8-20

8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. **9** But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.

10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. **11** When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? **12** Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, **14** and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. **15** As he

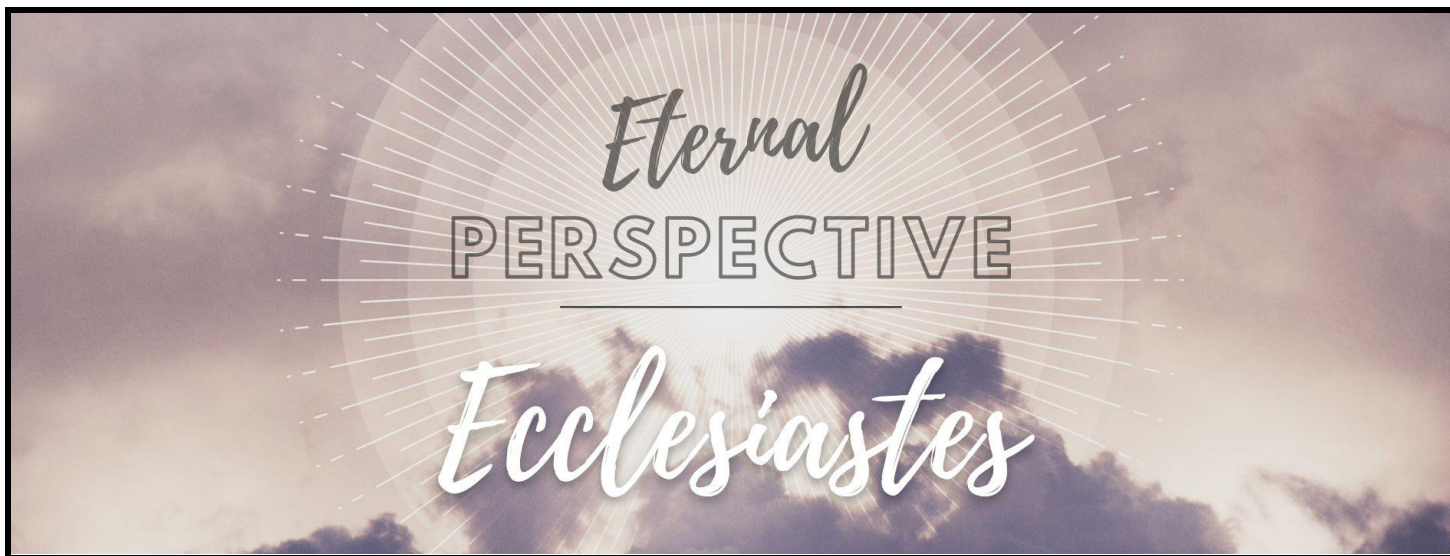
came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. **16** This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? **17** Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. **19** Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil — this is the gift of God. **20** For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

DEVOTIONAL FOR ECCLESIASTES 5:8-20

AUTHOR: PAM PAINE

I struggled a lot with this passage. As someone who has fought depression most of my life, my first thought was that Ecclesiastes is perfect if you want to be depressed. Being told that everything is vanity and we are all chasing after wind makes me feel like I have an excuse to just sit there and be a lump, doing nothing, because if it doesn't matter anyway, why bother? Then I started really digging into this passage (in part because I had to in order to write this) and I came to the conclusion that what I am seeing is actually a pretty heavy dose of sarcasm, not depression.



The hidden message is that, although nothing on earth lasts forever (verse 15), following God in daily life makes these things worthwhile. Amid the overwhelming tide of "nothing matters," we have verse 18, a simple but powerful view on life: If we do our work and live our lives while following God, we will have happiness and even joy, no matter our circumstances.

I think this passage shows the difference between someone who lives with and for God and someone who does not. The rich man and the wicked officials are living evil lives not *because* they are rich, but because they are living against what God has deemed good. The good king, who has power and presumably riches, uses that power to make sure everyone in his kingdom is fed and thus taken care of. This results in everybody's profit and good. It is a godly way to operate.

God wants all His creation to be blessed in Him. I wish I could remember who told me, "God is a gentleman," and will not force us to take more of His blessings than we will accept. The more we yield our wills to Him, the more He will entrust to us. So, my final take on this is that, rich or poor, the one who lives with and for God will find joy in Him. May you all find your happiness in God, and may you be forever blessed in Him.

Questions:

1. Do you find your happiness in God, not your circumstances? If not, why not?
2. Do you struggle with depression? Share with your Journey Group, other biblical community, or email pastoraloffice@stonepointchurch.com.
3. Do you make time to spend with God, in His Word, at least a few minutes every day? If not, give it a try. You will be amazed at how much happier you will become.