

**Ecclesiastes 2: 24-26; "Enjoyment - The Good Gift of God",**  
**A Bible Study prepared for the Evening of August 20th, 2007,**  
**Prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall**

Solomon has come to some most definite conclusions concerning what a person labors for in this life, and he is giving them to us here in these verses. He says that if a man is able to eat and drink and to find enjoyment and contentment in his labor it is a very good thing in this life. Nothing is better than this. He is speaking in an existential sense of course. Because for the Christian there is something far greater and more wonderful than earthly pleasures. He lives for the spiritual and heavenly pleasures of fellowship and communion with God. The Christian is storing up treasure in heaven. He is not so much interested in living and laboring for treasure upon the earth. The object that we have in view tonight in our study is our soul's and our body's enjoyment of good things; the good things that God gives. How can we so labor and so work and build that we can find enjoyment and satisfaction in our life? How can we so live that we may say at the end of it that God has given us wisdom and knowledge and joy? How can we be "good" in God's sight and thus find these blessings? The answer is that all these things come from the hand of God. They come from His great grace and goodness and not from our own efforts to establish them. We may be very hard working and yet not receive these blessings. The object before us tonight is not only to be hard working but also to be "good" in God's sight. We must see what the good gifts are which come from God's hand and then pursue them and be satisfied with these if we would be good people. And we must set aside the false and empty pursuits which the unbelieving people of the world would try to persuade us are true, but which are really vanity. Those satisfactions and pleasures will come to an end and all will be lost if we do not understand God's part in our earthly pleasures. But all legitimate earthly pleasures and pursuits will be established and enjoyed in their proper place and time if we understand God's part in our earthly pleasures. And thus He will be glorified, and we will be truly good people. So I want to set before you, from our text, 3 good gifts of God; gifts which, if we will improve upon them, will make us good people in His sight.

**1st - It is the good gift of God when we understand the importance of the soul to the enjoyment of all bodily pursuits and pleasures.** (Verse 24)

"Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor." "This also, I saw, was from the hand of God." It is an interesting wording in that verse. It is interesting because of the word soul which is used there; "that his soul should enjoy good in his labor." In order for a man's life to be satisfying to himself, he must recognize that his soul has a very important part in it. Man has not been created as brute beast, with only earthly interests and appetites to pursue. He has been created in the image and likeness

of God; God has made man for His good pleasure. It is a man's soul which is neglected or ignored if he does not know God. It is the soul which is the most important part of man, even if he does not know it himself. Turn with me to Matthew 16, verse 25. Here we see from the words of Jesus that unless a person is warned of the value of their soul, they may lose it, if they are not careful. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?" "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his work." So our verses in Ecclesiastes are but a primitive form of this same question that Jesus is asking. What is the profit to a man, what is the lasting value to his soul, if he gains the whole world by his diligent work and labor and yet the soul is not satisfied in any lasting sense? It is the soul, the eternal soul of man that longs and yearns for meaning to its life, and meaning to its work. The unbelieving man and the earthly oriented Christian are continually trying to save the life that they have built for themselves. They have forgotten, or they do not know that there will be no future for that life. The thing that Solomon was learning was this very thing. Solomon is saying that it is the soul which yearns to be satisfied and to enjoy good from all of the works of that it has the body do. All the works that are done to one's own personal glory will ultimately perish. Therefore unbelieving men and Christians who fall into worldliness have to find this out the hard way. They refuse to live by faith in God; not realizing that having God at the center of our life is essential to real and lasting satisfaction and enjoyment. Instead they believe that accumulating money and earthly possessions, building great works to the glory of their own intelligence, wisdom, and strength is the way to be lastingly satisfied.

But turn over with me to Jeremiah Chapter 9, and you will see what God thinks of this. "Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." "For in these things I delight, says the Lord." What the Lord is saying here is that He does not approve of people who boast in themselves, their own abilities, or in the riches or possessions that they have. Why not? Because it makes it appear that a person can be satisfied by the works of his own devising, the thoughts of his own mind, or the strength of his own might to live his life. He doesn't really believe that he has a great need for God. He doesn't really need God's salvation, He doesn't really need God's grace, he doesn't really need God's power and strength to help him out with anything. God is greatly displeased with this because He cannot be glorified in such a person. No, God is only satisfied with a person when he can eat and drink and offer up a sincere prayer before-hand, thanking God for what he knows; that these simple gifts of food and drink and a job that he is satisfied with working at; that only God could give and only God could supply these things; only

God could let him do them to God's glory and not his own. It was not done from a proud, self-sufficient, self-congratulatory spirit.

I am not much on the theology of the Shakers. They needed to do more Bible study in order that they might be sound in the faith. But there is an old Shaker hymn that I am well-satisfied to relate here. It goes like this.... "Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free, 'tis a gift to come down where you ought to be." "And when we find ourselves in the place just right, we'll be in the valley of love and delight." "When true simplicity is gained; to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed." "To turn, to turn will be our delight, 'til by turning, turning, we come round right." To me this song is saying, life is like a dance, but it does not mean that we bring dancing into the worship of God. But life is like a dance with God. When we believe in the gospel He and I begin to live the Christian life, He asks us to dance with Him, to go whirling and twirling through the many situations of our life, joyfully holding on to Him and moving with Him. And when we are dancing with Him, He would lead, when we dance with Him. He wants us to bow and to bend to His good will and thus become good people. He wants to give to each one who believes in Him an infinite number of good things through Jesus Christ His Son. A good person realizes that they have to receive from God every good thing in relation to all that they desire to do and to have. He wants them to see it as coming immediately from His hand. We must learn to turn from trusting in our own thoughts and our own strength and keep turning, keep repenting of self-sufficiency until we come round right. Good people realize that in everything that they want to do, and in everything that they pursue that only God can truly satisfy them in it. This is why so many people, Christians included, are so dissatisfied with their lives. They haven't learned this simple truth. They do not daily put it into practice in their experience by faith. Do you understand the importance of your soul? That is the first point and the first question?

**Then 2nd - It is the good gift of God when we understand the importance of God to the enjoyment of all bodily pursuits and pleasures.** (Verse 25)

"For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I," says Solomon. In the margin, there is a reference which tells us that the sentence can be translated, "For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, with Him?" We have seen the importance of our soul. Now we see the importance of God in relation to all of our pleasures. You and I, in order to make progress in sanctification must come to understand that there are sinful pleasures and pursuits and then there are holy pleasures and pursuits. God is the God who gives us all the legitimate pleasures that we will have, both in this life, and in eternity. It is the Christian's pleasure to learn to please God and not just himself. It is by faith that we learn to please God. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Before we come to faith in Christ we find that our love of sinful pleasure separates us from understanding the pleasures that God has, which are much, much better.

A few verses from 2 Timothy 3, verse 1 and following will confirm this for us. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power." "And from such people turn away!" You can see from these verses that what characterizes unbelievers is their selfish sinfulness in pursuing their own pleasures in rebellion to God's good instructions to them about that which would really give them righteous pleasure. Notice how it is that many people are so proud that they make pleasure their god rather than God. We are not to run with such people it says here.

There are consequences for living this kind of lifestyle. Turn with me to Hosea 4: 6 and following. A principal of truth is given to us here that we need to remember. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." "The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame." "They eat up the sin of My people; they set their heart on their iniquity." "And it shall be; like people, like priest." "So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds." "For they shall eat but not have enough; they shall commit harlotry, but not increase; because they have ceased obeying the Lord." "Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart." In the NAS, it says, they "take away the spirit." There are grave consequences for pursuing sinful pleasures. The glory of our spirit and the health of our bodies is taken away. The Lord rewards us with punishments according to our deeds; our children are forgotten, and our glory is turned into shame. And our spirit is taken away. That is we really cannot find real pleasure in anything. What is the remedy for this? It is to know and believe that God gives pleasures that are much better than these and so to forsake the sinful pleasures. Moses is a good example of this. Turn to Hebrews 11: 24. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." There it is; Moses chose, but He chose by faith to forsake Egypt, the picture of the World. Verse 26 says, "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Where was the pleasure in all this? It was found in walking with God. He, by faith was seeing Him who was invisible, and God was giving Him many good things, many spiritual blessings. He was a good man who God could bless richly. Turn with me to Psalm 16. How do we have enjoyment of spiritual things, so much so that we will forsake all sin and cast down all idols, and find meaning and satisfaction in this life? This psalm tells us. We pray to God. "Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust." "O my soul, you have said to the

Lord, you are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from You." "As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight." Verse 5 says, "O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot." "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance." "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons." "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." "Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." "For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." This is most definitely where righteous pleasures are always found. They are found in Jesus Christ our Lord who is right now, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

**3rd - It is the good gift of God when we can see that God is sovereign in the outcome of all of our labor.** (Verse 26)

"For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He give the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God." "This also is vanity and grasping for the wind." It is truly amazing is it not, to realize that God very well knows how to reward a person according to their works? He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to man who is good in His sight. These are most definitely spiritual blessings. For the only way that a person comes to been seen by God as good is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is how you come to have wisdom, and knowledge, and joy. But once God undertakes to provide salvation for the person trusting in Him, He also undertakes to cause all things to work together for good to the ones whom He calls. The wicked person may store up riches and possessions like the sand upon the sea shore. But God has ways of using their collecting and gathering; even though they have stored all of it up for themselves, to be given to those who are good in His sight. "...But to the sinner," our text says, "He give the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God." I think of the children of Israel when they left Egypt. They were given the gift by God of plundering the Egyptians as they left. In Exodus 3, verse 20, when God was commissioning Moses to go to Pharaoh, He said to him by way of prophecy, "So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in it s midst; and after that he will let you go." "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed." "But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters." "So you shall plunder the Egyptians." I am quite sure that according to the verses that we are studying tonight, that the Lord does the same kind of thing on a lesser scale every day with regard to the good things stored up and collected by wicked people being eventually given in

some way to the righteous. The Lord is very mighty in regard to His goodness and mercy toward all of His people.