

Ecclesiastes 5: 18-20; "God Gives True Enjoyment", Bible Study # 41 in the series – "Wisdom gives Life to those who have it", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 21st, 2010, at the Rendall home.

Solomon has gone from talking about an extreme evil in verses 13 to 17, to speaking of an extreme good in verses 18-20. We could almost say, "It's about time!" But when you focus on trying to find satisfaction in this life, apart from the blessings of God, as he did; the only outcome is vanity and vexation of spirit. The extreme evil that he spoke about in the verses which came before this, was that of hoarding money; not being able to be generous and give to God's work and to help with the various needs of His people, when He would have you to help. It is to love silver and riches so much that you as a person are hurt by it. Certainly it is true that you cannot serve God if you are serving money at the same time. You have to choose whom you will you will serve, whether God or money. And the true Christian will always in the end choose God. But sometimes even Christians fall into the unbelieving state of mind where they feel that they must guard and hoard their money. They think that this is what they must do, if they are going to feel safe and secure and happy. We have seen that this is not true and that it is not the God-glorifying way to live. I am not saying that we should not learn to save money or to learn to invest money wisely if we have that great an income. I am speaking about learning to give, which in the Christian life is a grace, and it is glorifying to God. And we saw further that, "He who waters, will himself be watered." (Proverbs 11: 25)

Now here in these verses that we are studying tonight, we learn something further. We will joyfully see that our happiness in this world is not dependent at all upon how much money we have, or how many possessions that we own. It is dependent upon the simple blessing which God gives. We will see that it is God alone who can give us what is needful and what is good every day of our life. There is true enjoyment which is to be found in this life; enjoyment which God gives, and which He approves of. So this evening we want to look at the 3 things which God does to make men happy in this world in relation to their food and drink, their heritage, and their heart. I hope that we will truly benefit from this study and see God's activity in our hearts and lives more clearly.

1st of all – Let us understand that it is God Himself who gives men true enjoyment in relation to their food and drink. (Verse 18)

"Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage." "It is his portion" it says in the King James. We should see from this verse that it is God's purpose that man toil under the sun all the days of his life. He gives each man who has any length of days,

some amount of enjoyment in relation to those days of work which man engages in. It is called, "a heritage" here in this verse. It could be termed, "a portion" or "a reward". Let us first of all remember that it is He who gives us all the days of our life. He knows the length of our life and the number of the days that we will live upon this earth because He is sovereign over all things. Let us look over at Psalm 139 for a moment to confirm this. Verse 15 says – "My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed." "And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." There it is; it could not be plainer. You and I are in the hands of God completely. All of our days were "written beforehand" in God's book. His holy and awesome mind, with its infinite capacities has no need for an actual physical book. His mind is infinitely greater than a man's mind; to know the details of all things. His mind is greater than the greatest calculator that any man could devise. These words are spoken as a metaphor. They are spoken for our understanding. Whatever God's book is; it is first of all based upon His perfect recollection of His own purposes for any given person that He is thinking about. And it is based upon His perfect knowledge of them and all of their thoughts and all their work. And you and I must understand that He can display His perfect knowledge of us and His perfect remembrance of His purpose in relation to any one of us, any time that He wants. He will no doubt do so, where and when it is needed, in relation to all men; on the Last Day, when Christ comes back, and the world is judged.

Verse 18 of our study, however, is not primarily speaking about God's judging men, but His rewarding them in this life according to His sovereign goodness, in relation to their everyday work here upon the earth. It is speaking of God's intention to give man certain enjoyments in relation to his work. The work that man has been given by God to do, was given to men, out of the goodness of God's heart; out of His intention to bless them and give them enjoyment in relation to the things that He had created. He created the institution of man's work in relation to the His own good work which He had done in making the garden, before man had ever fallen into sin. There was no curse upon the institution of work itself; from the beginning, there was only blessing which attend it. Turn with me to Genesis Chapter 2, verse 8. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." "And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Now look down at verse 15. "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it." This is God's showing the first man the work that He would have him to do, and also that there would be enjoyments in relation to that work of tending the garden. There were many trees growing there that were pleasant to the sight, and that pleasure was for man's sight. And these trees were not only beautiful to look upon, but some of them were also "good for food." Man's job was to "tend the garden and keep it." He was to work

with this garden to keep it orderly and beautiful, and to so labor and work in it, that it would bring forth fruit. His was to maintain an orderly garden; working to maintain, to tend, and to keep up what God had given him. It would be overgrown and disorderly and unfruitful if man did not keep it up by diligent, observant, and thoughtful work.

The purpose for which it was created was for man to know God's goodness toward him; the beauty and the wonder of all that He had created for Him to enjoy; to be able to glorify God in his work, and then to be able to feed upon the outcome of all the labors which he had done in relation to his work there in the garden. Because of the Fall, the ground was cursed and men would experience difficulties in relation to their work; but that does not mean that God did not intend that work itself should be enjoyable to a man. While men are here upon the earth, whether they are a believer or an unbeliever, men and women need to know that "it is good and fitting for a person to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all their labor in which they labor under the sun, all the days of their life." It is a good thing because God designed life to be just this way; an experience of God's goodness to them, to provide for their every need. Manual labor and all righteous work is good and it has its own reward attached to it, which God establishes and blesses. It is good and fitting when you have worked long and hard in a day, for you to come home, men, and sit down and have a nice dinner and talk to you wife and children. This is a great blessing to a man, and it ought to be a source of great encouragement and comfort to him that he is able to do this "all the days of his life." God has made us for His good pleasure; to do His will in all things; but a part of His good pleasure is eating and drinking, and enjoying the good of our labor. How then should we respond to His blessing us with these blessings of this life? Well, turn with me to 1 Corinthians Chapter 11, verse 31. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Remember that God has given you these good gifts of food and drink. It is He who has allowed you to know this good for so many days that you cannot hardly count them. Eat and drink thinking of the greatness and excellence of His goodness. "For this is your portion;" this is your heritage it says in the NKJV. This is your day to day glorifying of God; six days of the week to work; but also the enjoy God's goodness in the work and the fruits of that work.

Now Secondly – Let us understand that it is God Himself who gives men the power to receive this portion and to rejoice in it. (Verse 19)

"As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God." We find here that it is not only true that God has given us work to do, suitable to the way that He has made us; but also that He is the only one who can make man happy in going to that work day after day, and to rejoice in it. It is God's gift to him. You might say to me, "Work is work." "You just get up and go do it." "God never intended necessarily that you rejoice and be happy in it." Ah, that is not true, my friend, and you have a very stilted view of the whole matter.

This verse is saying that it is God who gives a man the ability to be rich or poor; it is also God who gives that man the power to eat of it also. In other words, you may have riches and food and not really be able to benefit from them in the way that God intends. And so, you may be very unhappy in your work. And further, this verse is saying that it is God who must also give you the power to receive your heritage and rejoice in your labor. Perhaps the reason that you do not enjoy your work is because you are not enjoying God as you should. You think of Him as some sort of taskmaster; standing over you with the whip to see that you get things done for Him. You keep His commandments, but you do not rejoice in the Lord's goodness to you. Turn with me over to the book of 1 Timothy, Chapter 6, and verse 17. "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." This verse may be primarily speaking to rich believers, but it certainly holds truth for all men. Rich men, even Christian rich men, may have the temptation to be proud and self-sufficient in the way that they view themselves and the enjoyments of their life. They are to understand that it is not right for them to trust in their riches as the source of their enjoyments, comforts, and security; but rather they are to trust in the living God. He is the One who gives us richly all things to enjoy. It is not money that gives this; it is God. It is God who is giving the power to receive this portion and to rejoice in it. Oh this is so important to learn. Because riches can make wings for themselves and fly away. And in the end they cannot be taken with you. Where then is your enjoyment if you have trusted in them? Turn over to Romans Chapter 14, and verse 17. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." "For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men." There had been some controversy in the church at Rome about what foods were clean or unclean. Some had tender consciences and would not eat meat or drink wine. They had a certain diet which they considered spiritual. This was their enjoyment before God. Others had a stronger conscience and they ate meat and drank wine and thought themselves free to do it. They enjoyed it with a clear conscience. But Paul showed them that they both needed to take care, both of these groups, that they did not show contempt for each other based on thinking of what brought them enjoyment, based upon personal convictions. The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. That is the true and lasting enjoyment; all other is passing. "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy both of them." (1 Corinthians 6: 13) It is God who gives the power to eat of these riches of truth in relation to foods. It is God who gives the power to rejoice in your work, and to receive the benefits of your work as a heritage, as a reward, and as the blessing of God. Do you do this?

And then finally - It is God Himself who gives men the power not to dwell unduly on the days of their life.

Sometimes people think too much, in relation to their earthly life and their work. They get all bound up in their minds with whether they are in the right work, whether they are productive enough in it, whether they are really enjoying what they are doing; and whether they are fulfilled in it. But what a wonderful thought is found in verse 20 for the person trusting in the Lord; the one who receives this gift. "For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart." It is in the power of God; it is His gift to any man who works; not to dwell unduly on the days of his life; how long he will live, and what he will accomplish with His life; that is all is God's hands. Rather God, it says here, that He can "keep him busy with the joy of his heart." That is truly the gift of God; when you are busy with the joy of your heart. Your joy may be in your work, but it is even more in God who gave you that work. It is His presence with you in your work, and His blessing in and upon your work, that gives you a cheerful heart. Truly it is one of the greatest blessings of this life, and it will help to anticipate the greater things that God will give to us when it comes your time to die.