

False Hopes and True Gain Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

1. Introduction.
2. Vss.8-9—The hebel (futility) of government, politics, and bureaucracy.
 - a. The observation (8a).
 - i. Solomon sees an oppression of the poor and denial (lit. robbery) of justice and righteousness.
 - ii. Government is designed to protect, but the reality is government often exploits. This is the backwards thing—the hebel.
 - b. The reason (8b-9).
 - i. This is the picture of bureaucracy.
 1. No matter who you are (or where you are) in the system, there's always somebody higher.
 2. The result is your work is always done unto the benefit of somebody else.
 - ii. “The king himself profits from the fields” (NIV).
 1. The hebel goes all the way to the top.
 2. The result is that the lowest on the pole (i.e., the ones doing the actual work) are the most oppressed, paid the lowest, and profit the least.
 - iii. When all is said and done, the ultimate reason for the brokenness we see in government is because there's always a profit to be had. In other words, like everything else in Ecclesiastes, it's driven by the pursuit of gain.
 - c. The command.
 - i. “Do not be shocked at the sight.”

- ii. Solomon’s way of exposing the heart. This is coming right off the heels of Solomon’s command to “fear God” in v.7.
 - 1. Wealth and politics are inseparable from the heart. The reason for this is because they are among the top two things the heart feels can perhaps give it gain and provide a standard of living.
 - 2. Therefore, for Solomon, wealth and politics have a way of exposing what the heart truly fears.
- 3. Vss. 10-17—The hebel (futility) of wealth.
 - a. First observation—The negative side-effects of wealth (10-12).
 - i. Three proverbs:
 - 1. Perpetual dissatisfaction (v. 10).
 - 2. Consumers (v. 11).
 - a. Prov. 19:6.
 - b. False friends.
 - 3. Insomnia (v.12).
 - b. Second observation—The uncertainty of wealth (13-17).
 - i. The picture of a man trying to build security for his family.
 - 1. Prov. 13:22 sees this as a good thing.
 - 2. The sin of the man is that he was putting more hope in his wealth than he should have. This is indicated by the fact he experiences a “sickening evil.”
 - 3. The man’s devastation could have been avoided by heeding vss. 15-16.
 - a. He should not have put his faith in something so fragile and finite.

- b. He should not have forgotten that when he dies, he's going to die with nothing.
 - c. Therefore, a wise person always lives with reference of what's to come.
 - 4. The sad result is this man's approach to wealth leaves him spending the rest of his days thinking on what could have been.
 - ii. The ultimate conclusion is that wealth is so incredibly uncertain. Therefore, don't put your hope in it.
- 4. Vss. 18-20—Solomon's conclusion on the matter.
 - a. Same conclusion Solomon gives at the end of his grand experiment in chapter 2.
 - b. "Eating, drinking, and labor" is a reference to the basic duties of life.
 - i. Solomon never calls these activities futile or without meaning, but rather, they are "good and fitting."
 - ii. The reason is this is man's reward.
 - c. The point is that all of life must be view as a gift. When a person finally takes this perspective, joy and contentment are not found in what they have, but in how they view what they have.
 - d. Not only is everything a gift, but so is the capacity to enjoy every good gift (20).
- 5. Conclusion—1Tim. 6:6-12.

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What's the biblical purpose of government?
3. In what ways do you express a sinful hope in your government and politics?
4. What's the biblical perspective of wealth?
5. In what ways do you express a sinful hope in your wealth?
6. What's Solomon perspective on how to achieve true joy?
7. Look at 1Tim 6:6-12. What's Paul's key for how to attain true gain? What are some of the godly attributes involved (hint: v.11) and how are you actively pursuing them in your life?