

The Balanced Life

Ecclesiastes 4:3-16

Introduction

1. Review of Solomon's message so far.
2. Biblical wisdom takes hard work

Text

1. V.4—The observation of rivalry (envy and jealousy).
 - a. Rivalry—everything we do is the product of rivalry.
 - b. “Hebel” means “absurdity.” Solomon's goal is not so much to point out our sin, but rather, the absurdity of our ways.
2. Vss. 5-6—Solomon's response.
 - a. Two proverbs.
 - i. An antithetical structure—stating the opposite point.
 - ii. The first proverb is qualified by the second.
 - iii. The second is the “golden means,” which is the balanced approach.
 - b. V. 5 is a picture of the sluggard. Solomon's reacting against those who think that a proper response to a world full of rivalry is to do nothing.
 - i. Prov. 6:10-11.
 - ii. We were created to work.
 - c. V.6 is the balanced approach, and therefore, the right reaction to rivalry.
 - i. Work hard, but rest.
 - ii. Heeding this wisdom is worship.
3. Vss. 7-8—The observation of loneliness.

- a. Not a reference to every form of loneliness, but a reference to those who have willfully chosen to be alone.
 - i. The reason—they want more.
 - ii. The problem—they've never stopped long enough to ask, "why?"
 - b. This is self-inflicted havel, derived from a skewed perspective of life.
4. Vss. 9-12—An expansion on the idea of companionship.
- a. Short narrative developed from the idea of ancient travel.
 - i. V.9—More profit with two.
 - ii. V.10- Protection on the road.
 - iii. V.11—Staying warm during the night. This one has a broader reference. It speaks to having help in times of need.
 - iv. V.12—Protection from theft of product.
 - b. This is a metaphor for life, so it expands beyond just business and travel.
 - c. The lesson is that companionship is better than loneliness.
 - i. The language of "better."
 - 1. "Better" is not the same as perfect.
 - 2. While there is "better way," it still carries a sense of hebel with it.
 - ii. Solomon's counsel is to pursue the balanced approach when it comes to relationships.
 - 1. Don't put all your hope in relationships.
 - 2. Don't shun relationships.
5. Vss. 13-16—The Observation of old age and the rejection of counsel.
- a. Another 4 verse narrative.

- b. Solomon's point is that it's always a good thing to be a person who receives counsel.
- c. V.16—always remember that no matter how much a person might pursue wisdom, it's no guarantee of future security.

Conclusion

1. The point of the text is bound up with this idea of "better."
 - a. Approach this life with a balanced perspective.
 - b. It's the kind of wisdom that sustains.
2. Life is still a gift.
 - a. Pursue it with balance.
 - b. Don't let the pursuit of the extremes pull you away from the enjoyment God intends for His people.