

Frustrations and Folly

Ecclesiastes 9:11-18

1. Introduction.
 - a. Review of 9:1-10
 - b. Before closing out the book on how to live this life well, Solomon again reminds of another area of hebel—the ever-present reality of frustrations in a world of folly.
2. V. 11.
 - a. The language of “again.”
 - i. Solomon bringing up an old matter.
 - ii. No matter how much we know truth, and believe that we live in a world of hebel, this knowledge doesn’t make the experience of hebel any less hard and frustrating to handle.
 - b. Solomon’s pointing out everyday areas of life.
 - i. The illustrations Solomon uses are not meant to describe the major areas of life that are twisted and evil (e.g., government, death, etc.), but the simple, everyday things of life.
 - ii. The everyday experience of hebel makes life difficult and frustrating.
 - c. The reason for this frustration.
 - i. “Time” and Chance.”
 - ii. The terms do not mean Solomon is giving us an evolutionary understanding of life, but affirming that people are simply finite and do not know what life will bring.
 - iii. He still affirms God’s sovereignty behind “time” and “chance” (cf. 3:1-15; 9:1)
3. V. 12.
 - a. The term “evil” (ra’ah).

- b. Solomon illustrates that the unexpected suddenness of hebel is precisely what makes hebel and the frustrations often difficult.

4. Vss. 13-16 – A Parable.

- a. This parable is designed to illustrate the limitations of wisdom.
- b. He contrasts the language of “small, few, and poor” with “great, large, surrounding” to deconstruct the Jewish conception that wisdom always has the ability to bring prosperity.
- c. Wisdom often brings ingratitude.
- d. Indeed, wisdom brings hate (16).

5. Vss. 17-18.

- a. Fools flock to the loudest voice.
- b. It only takes one voice to corrupt.
- c. Two observations:
 - i. We must work hard at protecting each other, especially our children, from the loud corrupt voices of this age.
 - ii. When a fool shouts loudly, the wise are never called to yell even louder.

6. Conclusion:

- a. Joy doesn't come from achieving the big things in life, but learning to be content in the details of life.
- b. While wisdom, which is nothing less than obedience to God, will never solve the problems of hebel, we must remember that the exercise of wisdom is still worship.
- c. We must also remember that in the midst of life's frustrations we still worship a sovereign God Who is not surprised by hebel, and often uses those frustrations to mold us more into the image of His Son.

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What are the areas in your life in which you experience great frustration? What do you think the reason is for your frustration, and what have you done to perhaps try and make it go away? How can Solomon's words shed light on these frustrations?
3. What are some of your biggest goals in life that you've achieved, or are trying to achieve? What was/is your purpose in pursuing them? What did/are you hoping to receive from accomplishing them? Further, how can this passage inform the manner in which you pursue those goals?
4. Why is Christ important in all of this?
5. Have the group discuss what a good prayer would look like in light of each person's situation/frustrations?