

(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction – *Eccles 6:1-12*

Introduction – In this section, Solomon begins to spread out the idea that it is God alone who gives man the power to enjoy life in the mist. He begins by contrasting what he has concluded in 5:18-20 with what can be experienced in 6:1-12 and even beyond. Without faith, it is impossible to please God, the book of Hebrews teaches, and without faith (and the corresponding gifts of God), it is impossible to enjoy what God gives in any kind of ultimate, satisfying way. “Cause I try, and I try, and I try, and I try...” – you know how the song goes.

Nothing Works (vv1-6) – Even for a man who has everything, God frequently withholds one item from them; the spiritual taste buds to enjoy any of it. This is a hard affliction and it is from the Lord (v2). He might have riches and honor (v1), he may have a hundred children (v3), he may live two thousand years (v6), and yet “has not seen goodness.” “Prosperity without the divine gift of enjoyment is nothing. It is a vapor, like having braces on your life” – Meyers.

Consuming but not Enjoying (vv7-9) – There is a tight circle between our hands working and our mouths eating, and if God has not given the gift of enjoyment there will be no satisfaction in either. We were built to be producers and not simply consumers. We were created to take dominion and be “little-c” creators; but because of the twist of the fall, unless God gives the gift to us, our souls will not be satisfied, smart or simple, rich or poor, in the “perfect job” or not. Therefore it is better to find contentment in what one has than to have a wandering desire.

Some “Evil” Examples – God was giving Canaan into the hands of Israel, but Achan wanted to hold on to the accursed things and refused to bring his offering before the Lord (Josh 7); his whole family was destroyed. Eli’s sons were in a place of great honor, but lived unfaithfully, accepting bribes and partaking of great perversions (1 Sam 2). When David took Bathsheba, God said, “Why, I would have given you much more...” and yet it was not enough (2 Sam 12). In Jesus’ parable, the prodigal’s brother refuses to join in the celebration of his father’s grace and his brother’s return (Luke 15). In another parable, men who worked a full day lose their joy while coveting the owner’s grace to another (Matt 20). Judas is chosen as one of the twelve apostles, and squanders it all for thirty pieces of silver and a noose around his neck. Power, wealth, long life, a great heritage, none of these things guarantees satisfaction. Only God can give that, and when He does, it does not matter if one is poor or rich, afflicted or healthy.

If God Has Made it Crooked (vv10-12) – Just as we saw in 1:13, sons of Adam cannot break out of this condition because God has made this condition. According to God’s ordinance, the creation cannot and will not yield ultimate satisfaction; only God can give this. The answer is not to become more wise so that we can figure out how to manipulate God. The answer is to become wise and confess our own complicity in the rebellion that has brought about the curse – and to turn and fear God.

The Hidden Secret (Phil 4:10-13) – Paul explains that his joy in receiving their gift was not predicated on their meeting his need. Something else had contained his joy; Someone else had given him contentment.

Things to Flee (1 Tim 6:3-11) – Paul, borrowing heavily from Ecclesiastes (note v7), warns Timothy to protect his flock from an empty, greedy pursuit. He presses Timothy himself to “flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness” (v11). Finally, he exhorts Timothy to warn and command the rich to avoid this pitfall (vv17-19).

And When We are Poor (Hab 3:17-19) – The gift of satisfaction, the gift of meaning and contentment, the ability to enjoy one’s labors and the fruit of it, has nothing to do with one’s station in life. Therefore, poor or rich, we are blessed if God is our salvation and our strength.