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The Life of Faith
Ecclesiastes 2: 24-26

The life of faith DIG: Who are you working for and why? Is our labor cursed because of Adam or Eve? Why? What does God have to do with the good results from your work? Who is the sinner? Why does God favor one over the other? Why is this portion of Ecclesiastes vital?

REFLECT: Do you see your work as drudgery, as a gift from God, or both? Does that make you grateful, even for the drudgery, or hateful? Why? Has ADONAI been part of the solution or part of the problem in your life up to now? Does that need to change? How so?

We were working for the Lord rather than for people.



Nothing prepares us for what comes next, because suddenly **Ecclesiastes** takes a surprising turn. Without any warning **Solomon** says the first truly positive thing in the entire book. Up to this point **he** has sounded like a workaholic who hates **his work** and has nothing to show for it. We might even be tempted to think that **he** was a bitter skeptic, suspended over the abyss of despair. But suddenly **the Teacher** says: **There is nothing better for a man to do than eat, drink and let himself enjoy the good that results from his work. I also realized that this is from God's hand. For who will eat and who will enjoy except me (Ecc 2:24-25)?** These verses are an oasis of optimism in a wilderness of despair.

Thus, they mark a turning point in **Ecclesiastes** – not just on the subject of **work**, but for the entire argument of the book. Martin Luther called the end of **Ecclesiastes 2** “a remarkable passage, one that explains everything preceding and following it.” It is “the principle conclusion,” Luther said, “ in fact the point of the whole book.”

Here, **Solomon** is not giving in to despair, but beginning to see the difference it makes to live with **ADONAI** at the center of **life**, **above the sun**. **He** is not seizing something for **himself**, but receiving it from **God**. As a result, **his** message is not simply **pointlessness under the sun**, cutting God out of the picture, but also, joy from the hand of **YHVH**. It is important not to make one of these claims the only message of the book and dismiss the other. The teacher insists on both, and often in the same passage. There is a bittersweet balance between the two. We live in a world that is cursed by sin, but it is also a world that **God** created good, that **He** has visited in **the flesh** and that **He** is **working** to redeem through a cross-bearing crucifixion and a **life**-giving resurrection. Thus, we experience both the agony and the ecstasy.

Notice carefully what brings **joy**. In **verse 24, the Teacher** embraces some of the very activities that **he** has already rejected for their failure to bring meaning to **life**. Earlier **he** concluded that **work** was a total drag. Not even **the pleasures** of **food** and **drink** could satisfy **his** soul. But now **he eats** and **drinks** and finds **enjoyment** in **his toil**.

What makes the difference? **God** makes the difference! Up to this point in **Ecclesiastes, ADONAI** has hardly been mentioned, and when **He** was, **He** has seemed to be part of the problem. Indeed, this was one of **the Teacher’s** greatest struggles. Inevitably **Ha’Shem** seemed to be responsible for **his** troubles. **Solomon** never gave up **his faith** in the power and sovereignty of **God**, but rather than making **him** feel better about things, the truth of **the LORD’s** existence sometimes made **him** feel worse. If our frustrations with **life** are also frustrations with the **God** who gave it to us in the first place, then what hope do we have that **life** will ever make sense? But here the presence of **ADONAI** makes all the difference! No one can ever find any true **joy** in *anything* apart from **Him**. So, if we are having trouble finding **enjoyment** in **life**, **God** must not be at the center of things for us. If we are deeply dissatisfied, this could be the reason: we have been taking good things and making them the ultimate things, when in fact they are **God**-given things.

By contrast, **the eating** and **drinking** that **the Teacher enjoys** in **verse 24** come

directly **from the hand of God. Solomon** had stopped trying to seize **pleasure** for **himself** and had started to savor **it** as a gracious gift. Here is a basic biblical principle that we can apply to many situations in **life**: **For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected *if* it is received with thanksgiving, because the Word of God and prayer make it holy (First Timothy 4:4-5).**

Earthly **pleasures** are a gift from **God**. **They** have **their** limits, of course, so **they** will never give us eternal satisfaction. But the **joy** they bring encourages us in the worship of **God**. It is strange, but when we receive the good things in **life** as a gift rather than taking them as an entitlement, we experience genuine **joy** and true **thanksgiving**. **So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (First Cor 10:31).**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, **You** are a joy to have as a wonderful, l**oving father**! Even when things are going good, **life** sometimes does not measure up to what we had hoped or expected. **Your love**, wisdom and tender care are always more than we can comprehend! Trials will soon be over but **Your** love is now and lasts eternally! **But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord (Romans 8:37-39).***

*We can have joy as we think of the future for we know for sure that those who **love You (Romans 10:9-10)** will go to heaven to live with **You** forever. **But if Messiah is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Ruach of the One who raised Yeshua from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Ruach who dwells in you (Romans 8:10-11). Loving You** brings joy, peace and meaning to **life**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Even **work** is a gift from **YHVH** when we receive it **from His hand**. This has been true since the very beginning. Sometimes we imagine that **Adam and Eve** had nothing to do in **the Garden of Eden**, when in fact **Ha'Shem** gave them good hard **work** to do **(Genesis 1:28** and **2:15).** Unfortunately, because of **Adam's sin** our **work** is cursed (see the commentary on **Romans, to see link click Bm – The**

Consequences of Adam), which turns our **labor** into toil and trouble. But there is still a basic goodness about **work** that comes from our **Creator**. We were made in the image of **a working God**, and when we **work** for **Him**, we feel **His pleasure**.

For the believer in **Yeshua**, our true **Boss** and ultimate **Master** is **the Savior** who gave **His life** for our **sins**. Whatever our job happens to be – whether we **work** as a teacher or a student, an office **worker** or a construction **worke**r, in food services or financial services, we are **working** for **Messiah** and **His Kingdom**. To say it another way, **we** are **working under the Son**, not simply **working under the sun**. For **we** should **work willingly at whatever we do, as though we were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give us an inheritance as our reward, and that the Master we are serving is Messiah (Colossians 3:23-24).**[264]

The inheritance of a reward takes us back to an issue we considered previously: What does **the worker** gain from all **his toil**? **The Teacher** has started to wonder whether **he** would ever get anything at all **under the sun**. But when **he** brought **God** back into the picture, **he** found **his** reward: **For to the man who is good from God's viewpoint he gives wisdom, knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of collecting and accumulating things to leave to him who is good from God's viewpoint. This too is pointless, like chasing the wind (2:26).**

It is **the sinner**, especially, who finds work to be a total frustration. **He** refuses to receive the blessings of **life** as gifts from **God**. **His** only business is gathering and collecting. **His** motto of **life** is "whoever has the most toys wins." In other words, **his life** is dominated by the acquisition and accumulation of consumer goods. But eventually, **he** will have to leave it all behind and this is **pointless** indeed. So, whatever you are involved in right now, and whatever you are planning to do with the rest of your **life** . . . are you busy with the great work of **Yeshua Messiah**? Each of us works in a different way, but it is all part of the same **work**, to the glory of **God**. **Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (First Cor 15:58).**[265]

Two points need to be noted. First, **Solomon** stated that **God's** disposition of wealth and the **enjoyment** of one's labors and its fruits are based on whether a person is pleasing to **God** or is **a sinner**. As is clear from the words **the man who is good from God's viewpoint** and **the sinner** elsewhere in **Ecclesiastes 7:26**

and **8:12**, this implies that a person will be judged on the basis of their ethical behavior and **faith** in **ADONAI** or lack of it. Second, **Solomon** wrote that this judgment would take place in this **life** (not in a **life** after **death**) and would involve temporal, not eternal, rewards. These two points (**enjoyment** of **life** and judgment), which are brought together only here, are crucial in the development of the book. The **enjoyment** theme, mentioned at crucial times **(3:12-13** and **22, 5:18-20, 8:15** and **9:7-10)**, is here specifically related to the theme of judgment **(11:9** and **12:14)**, and to the advice of **God** to **keep His commandments (12:13).**[266]