Living with the End in Mind: Why You Should Avoid Worshiping Material Things

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

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In Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12, Solomon concludes his observations concerning the worship of wealth with a warning. We’ll learn that materialism is a cruel master and cannot provide what only God can.

Part 1

1. The Worship of Riches Illustrated: Look to the governments of this world to see the worship of wealth in action (8-9).
   1. The governments of this world oppress by appealing to the baser natures of their people, promising them wealth and prosperity but delivering only misery and oppression (8a).
   2. The primary motivation of those in power is self-aggrandizement (8b-9; cf. 1 Samuel 8:10ff).
2. The Worship of Riches Exposed: Arm yourself against the worship of riches (9-17).
   1. Riches cannot satisfy (10).
   2. Riches attract parasites (11).
   3. Riches can cost you your sleep (12).
   4. Riches can destroy those who possess them (13-17).
3. The Worship of Riches Avoided: Receive the fruits of your labor as a gift from God (18-20).
   1. Enjoy the fruits of your labors because it is God’s gift to you (18).
   2. Enjoy the capacity God has given you to enjoy the fruits of your labor (19).
   3. Enjoying what God has given you puts life in its proper perspective (20).

Part 2

1. The Worship of Riches Punished: Materialism is a cruel task master (6:1-6).
   1. God often gives the materialist the wealth and possessions that he desires but withholds from him the ability to enjoy those things (1-2).
      1. Jesus used the parable of the rich man to warn us to beware of covetousness (Luke 12:15-34).
         1. The rich man spent his life living for things, but he was poor towards God.
         2. God wants our heart to treasure what He treasures.
      2. God is good to remove idols to turn our hearts toward Himself (Isaiah 55).
   2. God bestows the materialist with many blessings, but those blessings go unenjoyed (3-9).
      1. Without contentment the good things in life (large family, and long life) are of little benefit (3).
      2. Often, the materialist alienates himself from his family resulting in a lonely and pointless death (4-6).
         1. The materialist is very similar to a stillborn child because he is born to a life that is not truly life.
         2. Although the still born child never saw the sun or experienced any of life’s blessings, it is better than the man who possessed a long life and a large family, but whose heart was not at peace.
   3. Illustration: The materialist is like the clown, Pagliacci; everyone laughs at his jokes, but inside he’s empty, broken, and searching for fulfillment.
2. The Worship of Riches Concluded: Don’t look to riches to provide what only God can (7-12).
   1. We should rest content with what lies before us and resist the temptation to wander in search of more (7-9).
      1. When we live for the things of this world, that which we consume only increases our desire for more (7).
      2. Those whose eyes are satisfied with God escape the curse of those who spend their lives wandering in a vain search for fulfillment outside of God (8-9).
      3. Deuteronomy 8:11-18 “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God…And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth…”
   2. We should remember that man is but dust, and it is God Who is almighty; therefore, we should rest in Him Who knows all and controls all (10-12).
      1. God created man and called him, Adam, meaning dust (10).
         1. The materialism tries to become independent of God forgetting that he came from the dust and will return to the dust.
         2. The materialist forgets that God is infinitely more powerful than he is.
      2. We are measured by our pursuits (11-12)
         1. When we pursue things of this world we live for that which will pass as quickly as a shadow.
         2. When we pursue God we live for that which will last forever.
         3. Remember, the ultimate pursuit is not in what you obtain but in who you become! That brings the greatest glory to God and the most fulfillment to your life!
      3. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
      4. Colossians 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
      5. Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Conclusion:

1. What does our government tell us about the kind of people we’ve become?
2. Have you allowed your pursuit of wealth to alienate you from God and those around you?
3. In what areas are you struggling to rejoice in what God has given you?
4. In what areas are you struggling with contentment?