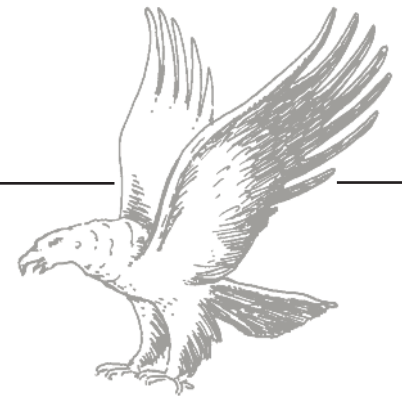


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



July 26, 2015

Busy . . . But Why?

Long hours spent in a job we enjoy may satisfy for a while, but someday we will look back on it all with a vague regret. In the end, what are we really knocking ourselves out for?

“I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. . . . Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun” (Eccl. 2:4, 11).



The author of Ecclesiastes was no fool. He knew that life was more than fun and games, that man was put here on this earth to work. So that’s what he devoted his life to doing. Skim through this section and notice all the verbs describing his life of industry: “I made . . . I built . . . I planted . . . I acquired . . . I gathered . . .” Here was a man who was determined never to waste a single minute of time in idleness. Every waking moment would be dedicated to accomplishing something worthwhile with his life.

Yet as he approached the end of his life and reflected upon all he had accomplished, his mind became darkened by a gnawing fear: “indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no

profit under the sun.” In the end, everything he made, built, and gathered did not provide the value he thought it would. It was as though all his years of hard work had been for naught. This revelation caused him to question whether his life had been a complete waste after all: “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind” (v. 17).

How could a man who had been so successful in his earthly endeavors come to such a miserable conclusion? What went wrong in his life to render all his hard work so inconsequential?

The author provides clues here in this chapter. He came to realize that his ultimate fate would be no different from the man who never lifted a finger to do anything; both would die and eventually be forgotten (v. 15-16). Moreover, everything he left behind would pass on to someone who would likely squander it all away (v. 18-19). So in the end, what was the advantage to all his hard work? What difference did it really make?

Later in the book he summarized his frustration in words that go to the source of the problem: “All the labor of man is for his mouth, *and yet the soul is not satisfied*” (6:7). The reason for his vexation lay not in the work itself, but in the deeper purpose behind the work. As long as his work was performed *for himself*, he would always be tormented by an emptiness within. He was filling his life with activity, but starving his soul of any meaningful reason for existence.

This man’s story is reflected in lives of millions of people today. Day after day we throw ourselves furiously into our work, determined to achieve something worthwhile from it all. But we never pause to reflect on what it all means in view of our final end. We work for ourselves, and not for a higher Purpose, then wonder why we feel so barren and unfulfilled inside.

The author finally found the solution to his despair: “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (12:13-14). Only when our work is performed for God’s glory, not ours, will we be pleased with it.

– David King