

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For September 3:

Ecclesiastes 4:1-6:12:

As the preacher (Solomon) continues to write about life and meaning, he comments that those who have not been born are better off than the dead and the living due to the many and various ways in this life, apart from God, people are continually taken advantage of, hurt, and held down by others (4:1-3). This very morose way the preacher has about him throughout the book is a bit of overstatement. The point he is trying to get across is that life can be very hard and there is a sense in which one can feel like it would have been better if he had never been born. The reader must not miss the phrase “under the sun”. It is life apart from God, only for the material, lived in and for this age only which appears empty and meaningless.

Next, Solomon returns to a consideration of work and concludes it is empty or vain since it often comes from trying to achieve the same as or more than others and this is empty and a “striving after wind,” i.e. working hard for nothing (4:4-6). Work also is empty when the worker has no one else with whom to share the fruits of his labor which is why the preacher launches into the subject of two people being better than one (4:7-12).

Solomon also mentions how futile it appears when a young man, because of his wisdom, rises to the throne and eventually he will be forgotten (4:13-16). Part of what Solomon struggles with is the reality that when it comes to things in this world, this age, apart from God, nothing seems to last.

In 5:1-7 the preacher touches on the solution to all the meaningless. He exhorts readers to take God seriously, to fear Him, and not to make vows to Him that will not be kept. The person who merely goes through the motions of religion is no better off than the person who does not believe in God at all. Both alike are apart from God, i.e. only under the sun.

Now that the preacher has touched on the solution in life, he covers another series of experiences which seem empty (5:8-6:12). As you read through this series, remember he is arguing these things, apart from God, are meaningless and useless. Note that Solomon repeatedly informs readers it is a good thing to enjoy the good things God has given him (e.g. 6:18-20).

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:7:

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:4 Paul raises for the Corinthians two main applications stemming from his teaching on the superiority of the true glorious gospel and its ministry, a discussion in which he has been engaged since 2:14. First, he calls the Corinthians (and subsequent readers) to holiness based upon previous biblical teaching and also God’s covenantal promises to His people (6:14-18). In context, this holiness would necessitate both separating oneself from those who do not know Christ and who would adversely influence us, and separating oneself from false teachers. In 7:1 Paul gives one of the most powerful and beneficial statements on growth and sanctification (the process of becoming more and more like Jesus, cf. Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). He makes it

clear that our sanctification is brought to completion based upon God's promises to us (which include His promise to help us with all we need from this time forth and forever), our sanctification involves refraining from sin, and our sanctification is carried out by means of our fearing God. When we put this all together we learn that when we come to reverence, trust in, and see God as our Savior, understanding we will pay a price for sin since He hates it, we are motivated to trust in all His promises to us that we might say, "Yes" to God and "No" to sin. We can do all of this only because we are in Christ and he in us, the effects of the good news of what Jesus Christ has done for and in us through His death and resurrection.

Second, Paul calls the Corinthians to make room in their hearts for him and other true gospel ministers (7:2-4). Contrary to what their opponents have charged, they are preaching the true gospel, they have great affection toward the Corinthians, and thus in their affliction, they have joy.

In 7:5-16 Paul shares with the Corinthians he has rejoiced in news which has come to him of the Corinthians' well-being and repentance.

Psalm 47:1-9:

This short psalm packs a powerful punch as it reminds us that the LORD, the true God, is king over the world. When the kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ, people were enabled to submit to the King and be part of the kingdom of God by being transformed from the inside out (Matthew 4:23; 5:1-7:28). Yet, whether a person comes to salvation and into the kingdom or not, there is a more general (but nonetheless real) sense in which God is still the King over that person and over all people (verses 2, 3, 7, 8). He is taking the world and history toward His desired end, working all things according to the counsel of His will, and orchestrating all things together for the good of His people (Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11). This should strengthen the faith of those who are in Christ and move us to worship Him!

Proverbs 22:16:

Once again we are reminded of the importance of helping those who are poor. To neglect those in need is to demonstrate life apart from God and thus to come underneath His disciplining or judging hand.