

THE FUTILITY OF HOARDING WEALTH: A REFLECTION FROM ECCLESIASTES

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In a world where financial success is often equated with personal worth, Ecclesiastes offers sobering and timeless clarity: wealth is fleeting, and hoarding it is ultimately meaningless. Throughout this book's reflections, Solomon—a man of immense wisdom and material abundance—doesn't mince words as he writes on the emptiness of laboring solely to accumulate riches.

WHAT HAPPENS TO WEALTH WHEN WE'RE GONE?

I loathed all the fruit of my effort, for which I worked so hard on earth, because I must leave it behind in the hands of my successor. Who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool? ... This also is futile, and an awful injustice!

ECC 2:18–21 (NET)

These verses capture a deep frustration: you can spend your life building wealth through wisdom, skill, and diligence—but in the end, it will pass to someone else. And there's no guarantee that person will value it, steward it well, or even understand the cost you paid for what they received.

This sobering truth leads Solomon to despair. He wrestles with the thought that a lifetime of labor can be casually undone by another's carelessness. It's not just a possibility—it's a recurring theme throughout human history.

HOARDING CAUSES MORE HARM THAN HELP

Here is a misfortune on earth that I have seen: Wealth hoarded by its owner to his own misery. ... Just as he came forth from his mother's womb, naked will he return as he came, and he will take nothing in his hand that he may carry away from his toil.

ECC 5:13–15 (NET)

Here, the tone sharpens. Wealth that is hoarded can become a source of anxiety, isolation, and ultimately harm. When money is worshiped, instead of wisely stewarded with purpose and shared generously, it warps our priorities.

After all, no matter how much we accumulate, we leave this life with empty hands.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US TODAY?

Ecclesiastes isn't a call to abandon ambition or productivity. Rather, it warns against placing our hope and identity in what we can earn, own, or store away. The consistent message throughout the book is this:

- Wealth is a tool, not a savior.
- Wealth can be a blessing, but never a guarantee of meaning.
- Wealth can be lost or misused by others after we're gone.

In contrast to hoarding wealth, Ecclesiastes urges us to enjoy the gifts of God with gratitude and in the present:

Everyone should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all his toil, for these things are a gift from God.

ECC 3:13 (NET)

And ultimately, Solomon wisely concludes with a call to focus on what matters most:

Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.

ECC 12:13 (NET)

LIVING WITH PURPOSE AND PERSPECTIVE

What is the remedy for the futility of hoarded wealth? It is not reckless generosity or blind asceticism, but purposeful stewardship. When we recognize that everything we have is a gift from God, we are freed to gratefully give our all for eternal impact—to invest in people, causes, and ministry that extend far beyond our lifetimes.

Why cling to what we can't keep? Ecclesiastes implores us to live with open hands and eternal perspective—finding joy in God's provision and using our resources in a way that honors Him.