

Grace for the Day

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Incorporated non-profit in New Jersey, USA

Ecclesiastes - Outline

By Rev. Peter Eng

Thesis: How to enjoy life within God-given perimeters and God-given guidelines.

Introduction:

Without God everything one does is meaningless (1:1-3)

I. How to enjoy life within God-given perimeters (1:4-6:12)

- A. How to enjoy life despite tedium and insignificance (1:4-2:26)
1. Quest for significance by doing something different (1:4-11)
 - 1.1 Observation: We can't do anything different (1:4-10)
 - 1.2 Conclusion: Therefore, we will not be remembered (1:11)
 2. Quest for significance through wisdom (1:12-18)
 - 2.1 Observation: Wisdom discerns reality (1:12-17)
 - 2.2 Conclusion: Discerning reality only brings more sorrow (1:18)
 3. Quest for significance through hedonism (2:1-11)
 - 3.1 Observation: The preacher had all his desires (2:1-10)
 - 3.2 Conclusion: Getting all brings no satisfaction (2:11)
 4. Quest for meaning through a forage into folly (2:12-16)
 - 4.1 Observation: Wisdom is better than folly (2:12-15)

- 4.2 Conclusion: Both end in oblivion (2:16)

5. Summary statement on the reality of life (2:13-23)

6. The Teacher commends God so that life is not meaningless (2:24-3:15)
 - 6.1 Basic pleasures and duties bring joy when it is from the Lord (2:24-25)
 - 6.2 The one who lives his life to please God finds wisdom and happiness but the one who lives his life without God gains nothing (2:26)
 - 6.3 Right relationship with God
 - 6.3.1 God is in sovereign control (3:1-15)
 - 6.3.2 God has assigned a lot to man (3:9-10)
 - 6.3.3 God has a sovereign plan (3:11a)
 - 6.4 God-given perimeters (3:11b-15)
 - 6.4.1 Man has a mere glimpse of eternity (3:11b)
 - 6.4.2 Life is to be enjoyed in the context of God-given perimeters (3:12-15)

- B. How to enjoy life despite trouble all around us
1. Observation on injustice (3:16-22)
 - 1.1 The Preacher observes the lack of justice (3:16)
 - 1.2 The Preacher observes that God will execute justice (3:17)
 - 1.3 The Preacher observes that death tests our faith in God (3:18-21)

- 1.4 The Preacher observes that God wants us to enjoy this life (3:22)
- 2. Observation on oppression (4:1-6)
 - 2.1 The Preacher observes that there is oppression (4:1-3)
 - 2.2 The Preacher observes the envy and emptiness of the oppressor (4:4)
 - 2.3 The Teacher observes the reaction of the foolish oppressed (4:5)
 - 2.4 The Teacher observes the reaction of the wise oppressed (4:6)
- 3. Observation on ambition (4:7-16)
 - 3.1 The Preacher observes the lonely man driven by aimless ambition (4:7-8)
 - 3.2 The Preacher observes that one can find comfort in another (4:9-12)
 - 3.3 The Preacher observes political advancement is useless (4:13-16)
- 4. The Teacher commends God so that we can make sense of turmoil around us. (5:1-7)
- C. How to enjoy life though life produces many ironies (5:8-6:12)
 - 1. The first cycle of ironies (5:8-17)
 - 1.1 The irony of gaining wealth to give away (5:8-11)
 - 1.2 The irony of gaining wealth to lose sleep (5:12)
 - 1.3 The irony of gaining wealth to be impoverished by his own son (5:13-17)
 - 1.4 The recommendation to enjoy our lot in life (5:18-20)
 - 2. The second cycle of ironies
 - 2.1 The irony of gaining wealth but not being able to eat (6:1-2)
 - 2.2 The irony of gaining posterity but not remembered (6:3-6)
 - 2.3 The irony of wise men and fools subject to the same appetite (6:7-9)
- 2.4 The irony that the strong has no power (6:10-12)
- II. **How to enjoy life according to God-given guidelines (7:1-8:17)**
 - A. How to enjoy life by living wisely-first cycle (7:1-14)
 - 1. Exhortations to wisdom
 - 1.1 Contemplations during funerals (7:1-6)
 - 1.2 Ideals that govern our lives (7:7-14)
 - 1.3 Keep our moral bearings (7:7)
 - 1.4 Avoid temporal success (7:8)
 - 1.5 Control anger (7:9)
 - 1.6 Avoid foolish comparisons (7:10)
 - 1.7 Advantage of wisdom (7:11-12)
 - 1.8 Accept God's plans (7:13-14)
 - 2. Wisdom in the face of realities (7:15-22)
 - 2.1 The reality of the wicked prospering (7:15)
 - 2.2 The reality of extremes (7:16-18)
 - 2.3 The reality that wisdom is power (7:19)
 - 2.4 The reality that we all sin (7:20-22)
 - 2.5 The reality that ignorance is not always bad (7:21-22)
 - 3. Discourse on wisdom and folly (7:23-8:1)
 - 3.1 The need to understand folly in the search for wisdom (7:23-25)
 - 3.2 He discovers the folly of the man who falls prey (7:26)
 - 3.3 He discovers the limitations of inductive knowledge (7:27-28a)
 - 3.4 He discovers the scarcity of wisdom (7:28b)
 - 3.5 He discovers the perversion of uprightness (7:29-8:1)

4. Wise conduct under a despotic king (8: 2-9)
 5. Wise conduct when spiritual principles seem irreconcilable (8: 10-14)
 6. The Teacher commends the enjoyment of life (8: 15-9: 12)
- B. How to enjoy life by living wisely-second cycle (9: 13-12: 8)
1. Wisdom works but the wise may not be remembered (9: 13-16)
 2. Wisdom works but folly destroys (9: 17-10: 3)
 3. Wisdom in the face of foolish leadership (10: 4-7)
 4. Wisdom during work (10: 8-11)
 5. Wisdom about words (10: 12-14)
 6. Wisdom about work and revelry (10: 15-19)
 7. Wisdom with regard to the government (10: 20)
 8. Wisdom on work and investments (11: 1-6)
 9. Wisdom on how to spend one's youth (11: 7-12: 8)

III. Conclusion (12:9-14)

- A. Wisdom in what to imbibe (12: 9-12)
- B. Summary statement (12: 13-14)

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Rev. Peter Eng is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.