

## **“Vanity of Worldly Accumulation”**

Ecclesiastes 1:2-3; 2:10-11, 18-23

Barry Noll

1:2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. 3 What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

2:10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

2:18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, 19 and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. 20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, 21 because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22 What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? 23 For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

### **For Further Reflection:**

1. What kind of legacy do you hope to leave when your life here is over? What “toils” are you working on to try to make it happen?

2. What is the biblical definition of “vanity” (1:2,14; Ps. 39:4-6, 11; 144:3-4 Prov. 31:30)? How does the Preacher’s repeated use of the term throughout Ecclesiastes teach you about life “under the sun” (2 Cor. 4:18)?

3. What does the Preacher imply that is gained by all the toil under the sun (1:3-11)? When have you felt like you had “gained,” only to find that in time you were dissatisfied again (2:10-11)?

4. Why does the Preacher end up despising and despairing over all of his toil (2:18-24)? How does his wisdom help you evaluate your own toil and steward all that you have accumulated?

5. What strategies do the people you know, including yourself, employ to avoid facing the reality of death? How does living life backwards from the reality of death give you the perspective that you need to enjoy life (Jn. 12:24-25; Mk. 10:43-45)?