

## The Shadow of Satisfaction – Ecclesiastes 6

**Main Idea:** True satisfaction in life is not achieved through abundance or ambition but received through humble faith in God’s sovereign goodness.

### **I. The Tragedy of Abundance | Ecclesiastes 6:1-6**

As Solomon continues to reflect on life “under the sun,” he continues to expose a paradox that has haunted humanity since Eden—the tragedy of abundance without enjoyment—a tragedy described as “an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind” (v.1). The burden Solomon makes reference to is not poverty, oppression, or suffering, but prosperity without peace. The man he describes has been granted everything the human heart might desire: wealth, possessions, honor, and the esteem of others. Yet in the mystery of divine providence, “God does not give him power to enjoy them” (v.2). The problem is not what he owns, but what he (in his mind) lacks—the capacity to delight in what God has given. **Here Solomon unmasks one of the deepest illusions of the human heart: that satisfaction can be secured through accumulation.** Abundance without contentment is a curse, not a blessing. The tragedy is not simply that man hoards what he cannot enjoy, but that he has mistaken the gift for the Giver. **Joy, Solomon insists, is not found in having everything, but in being rightly related to the One who gives everything.** The ability to enjoy is itself a gift of grace—it cannot be bought, stored, or manufactured.

To underscore this futility, Solomon paints a stark image. A man may father a hundred children and live many years, yet if “his soul is not satisfied with life’s good things,” Solomon concludes that “a stillborn child is better off than he” (v.3). The stillborn child, though it never sees the light of day, rests in peace; the prosperous man lives long yet never finds rest. This is not cynicism—it is conviction. Life, no matter how full (materially), is empty without the joy of knowing and trusting God. **Without the divine gift of contentment, even the longest life becomes a drawn-out tragedy.** In verse 6, Solomon drives home the point: “Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the same place?” The inevitability of death renders the pursuit of earthly satisfaction vain apart from eternity. **Abundance without communion with God is like a feast in the dark—it may fill the stomach but not the soul.** True abundance begins where human striving ends—in humble dependence upon the Giver of every good gift (James 1:17).

#### **To Ponder:**

1. How does Solomon’s portrayal of abundance without joy/contentment confront our modern understanding of success and fulfillment?
2. In what ways might the pursuit of “more” reveal a lack of trust in God’s sufficiency?

### **II. The Tyranny of Desire | Ecclesiastes 6:7-9**

Solomon now turns from the tragedy of abundance to the tyranny of unending desire, “all the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied” (v.7). **Man’s labor, in all its forms, is driven by hunger—physical, emotional, and spiritual.** But no matter how diligently we labor, the craving always returns. **The more man feeds his appetite, the larger it grows.** Solomon exposes the insatiability of the human heart by showing us that we are creatures of infinite longing trying to fill ourselves with finite things. The poor and the rich, the wise and the fool—all alike labor under the same futility. “What advantage has the wise man over the fool?” (v.8). Even wisdom, when divorced from faith, offers no ultimate advantage. **Without God, man’s desires only sharpen the ache of dissatisfaction.** Verse 9 delivers the Solomon’s verdict: “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite.” **It is better to receive with gratitude and contentment what God has placed before you than to live in perpetual pursuit of what lies beyond your reach.** The “wandering appetite” is a poetic description of the restless human soul—always looking elsewhere, never resting anywhere. **This is the essence of covetousness: it blinds us to the goodness of what we already have.** Contentment, by contrast, opens the eyes to grace. Jesus restated this truth when He said, “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). The tyranny of desire is broken not by having more, but by treasuring God most. The apostle Paul learned this lesson: “I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:12-13). **Christ alone satisfies the longing soul.**

### To Ponder:

1. Where do you sense the “wandering appetite of the flesh” at work in your own life—always searching but never resting?
2. How does contentment function as a spiritual weapon against the tyranny of desire?

### III. The Triumph of Faith | Ecclesiastes 6:10-12

Solomon closes chapter 6 with a **sobering reminder: satisfaction begins when God disarms man**. “Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is” (v.10). To “name” something in the Hebrew sense is to exercise authority over it. By declaring that all things have been named, Solomon affirms that God alone governs every aspect of existence. **Humanity is not autonomous but accountable—our days, our breath, and our boundaries have been set by divine decree**. The attempt to contend with God is as foolish as trying to outtalk or even question Him (Isa. 40:13; Rom. 9:20). True satisfaction comes not from man mastering the world but from God mastering man. In the process, the Lord strips us of our self-sufficiency so that we might be filled with Himself. As Job said, “Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering” (Job 26:6). Nothing is hidden from His sight—how much more the hearts of men (Prov. 15:11). When we are exposed before the gaze of a holy God, our pretenses dissolve. The man who finds his fulfillment in his career, his wealth, or his children has no room left for the Gospel. **The good news of Christ makes no sense to a heart that still believes life under the sun can satisfy the desires of the flesh**. That is why Jesus said, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

**The new birth is not a religious upgrade—it is a call to leave behind a life filled with unsatisfying desires and embrace the sufficiency of Christ (Matt. 10:37-39)**. Yet we live in an age obsessed with immediacy. We want healing now, answers now, comfort now. But the wisdom of Ecclesiastes confronts man’s impulse for instant gratification. **God’s way is always the way of surrender, not personal achievement**. Solomon’s teaching anticipates the Beatitudes of Jesus, which describe the blessed not as the powerful or impressive but as the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the persecuted. **The question is unavoidable: Are we any of these? Do we live as salt and light in the place God has appointed us to be?** Satisfaction in God requires that we be emptied of self—that He might fill us with Himself. John Calvin wrote, “For what befits faith more than to recognize that we are bare of all virtues, in order to be clothed by God? That we are empty of all good, in order to be filled by Him?”<sup>1</sup> Solomon concludes chapter 6 with two rhetorical questions that pierce through human pride: “For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?” (v.11-12). These are not words of despair but of divine truth. They prepare the heart for the Gospel by dismantling every earthly hope. **When we realize that we cannot know what is good apart from God, nor control what comes after us, the soil of the soul becomes fertile for grace**. Evangelism often begins here—by showing people the futility of life without God so that they may see their desperate need for Him.

And what they need is not a sentimental “invitation to receive Jesus,” but the biblical gospel: the call to repent and surrender all to Christ’s lordship. The gospel is not a self-improvement plan—it is a summons to die and live again in Christ. It is the message that saves not through human merit, effort, or emotion, but through grace and mercy alone. As Jude writes, believers are those who are **called, beloved** in God the Father, and **kept** for Jesus Christ (Jude 1). **Called**—not casually invited but summoned by divine authority. **Beloved**—not merely liked, but loved in God with an eternal, covenantal love. **Kept**—not barely hanging on, but preserved, protected, and guarded by the power of Christ. **To be satisfied in Christ is to reject the diluted Gospel of cultural Christianity—a Gospel that neither convicts nor transforms**. It is to refuse both legalism and libertinism; to flee evil rather than flirt with it; to obey Christ’s commands rather than excuse our sins. The satisfied believer watches and prays, serves and proclaims, seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Satisfaction in Christ is not passive—it is active faith rooted in surrender.

### To Ponder:

1. In what ways does surrender—not striving—become the pathway to true satisfaction?
2. How can you contend for the faith while remaining deeply content in Christ, especially in a culture where Christianity is often assumed rather than lived (cultural Christianity)?

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 3.12.7.