

MEANINGLESS

AUDIO DEVOTIONS

ON ECCLESIASTES

The Meaning of Life

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

¹³ Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:

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

¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment,

including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

So what is the meaning of life? Many a treatise and countless comic strips have been composed seeking to answer that most basic question of our existence, without which this life is little more than a series of experiences--some happy and bright but many mundane and even painful. Where others have spilled much ink on the subject, King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, closes Ecclesiastes by summing up the purpose of our existence in one phrase: "fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

With these words Solomon is not telling us to live in terror of God, like he is some cosmic boogeyman just waiting to get us. Rather "the fear of God" is a relationship word, a faith word. It means to live in awe and respect and reverence and worship and dependance on the one true God, who reveals himself in the Bible. Fear is an attitude and disposition of the heart within that then shows itself in willing obedience on the outside.

In the very beginning God made man and woman in his image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Adam and Eve lived in a relationship of perfect love with and trust in God and showed their love by gladly obeying his will. That perfect image was lost when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (cf. Gen 3; 5:1-3), but through God's Word and the promise of salvation revealed therein, the Holy Spirit is restoring the image of God in all who believe (cf. Col. 3:10). While we will never be perfect this side of heaven, the new spirit he gives now loves God and longs to do his will from a free and ready heart, just as Adam and Eve had in the beginning. It is essential that both our hearts and our actions be aligned for God sees them all and will finally bring them all into the light of his judgment. Solomon warns that there will not be any pretenders or hypocrites or fakes in heaven. The Apostle Paul says the same thing: "Wait [until] the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God" (1 Cor 4:5). In his parable of the Sheep and the Goats Jesus insists that all who have been chosen by God and made righteous by faith will also demonstrate their faith in lives of humble love (cf. Matt. 25:31ff).

Solomon's profoundly simple answer lifts an incredible weight from our hearts and gives us direction for every moment of our lives. Just imagine if life were actually all about one of the other vanities that we've considered in this series. What if the purpose of life was loving family, but you didn't have one? What if it was having great achievements, but you had nothing to speak of? What if life were about having as much laughter and enjoyment as you could, but you ended up being born in slavery in a mining camp? Were it so, you'd have no purpose at all, BUT since life is about loving and knowing God and fearing loving and trusting him above all things and loving and accepting the people around us even as God loves and accepts them in Christ, every second we are here is thereby filled with importance and poised for eternal impact. My dear believers, live each one in the Lord for your life is meaningless no more!

For your self-reflection:

1.) Think through your day ahead. What are some real and practical ways that you can live in faith and love towards God and kindness towards the people around you at home, work, or school? Write them down, and as you have opportunity, live them out!

2.) Identify the people in your life who do not know or believe in the Lord. What are they living for? Or if you don't know, ask them. Share Solomon's meaning of life with them.

Prayer: Lord God, forgive me for falling into the trap of believing that my life must be something "better" or "more" or extraordinary to be meaningful. Through faith in your Son, Jesus, and obediently showing forth his love for me and for all, you have already given me all the meaning I need for life and forever. Thank you, and by your Spirit help me live my most meaningful life! Amen.