

“Looking On The Dark Side of Life”
Ecclesiastes 1:1-12; 12:13-14

In today’s troubled world, many people are giving in to the tendency to look on the dark side of life – to view everything as negative and hopeless. We are not the first people to do this. The Scriptures record that many people have had that problem. One such person is the writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes – one who calls himself the “Preacher.” In most of that book, his writings reveal a strong negative attitude which almost gets the best of him. Hear him as he cries out in chapter 1 and verse 2: “Vanity of vanities, . . . vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

Out of my own personal experiences during the course of life, I have learned some lessons which have helped me with my personal attitude toward life. I share several of those lessons.

1. Find a definite, powerful purpose in life. Many people grow up to adulthood and many live out the days of their lives without ever discovering one supreme purpose in life. People who do not have a strong purpose for which to live will surely discover that life is indeed dark and dreary. This is more than likely what happened to the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes. To him life was all chaos and confusion because he had not discovered any supreme value in life.

I shall never forget the inner turmoil, personal confusion, and many disappointments which I experienced during my first year at Wake Forest College. I tried as hard as possible but it just seemed that all the work was useless. Everything seemed to be all mixed up. To me life was becoming meaningless and purposeless. And then one glorious day Dr. J. Allen Easley – Chairman to the Department of Religion at Wake Forest – spoke in chapel on the subject “What Are You Doing Here?” He pointed out the need for every person to discover God’s will for his life and then he challenged us to make God’s will the powerful purpose in life. That chapel service turned out to be God’s challenge for my life. Right then I realized that I had run from God and His will long enough. I had entered college to prepare for what I wanted to be, but I had made the terrible mistake of leaving God out of my plans. As a result, I was discovering how confusing life is when a person does not have a powerful purpose in life. I yielded to God’s will, went to see Dr. Easley, and changed my course of study. Almost immediately, my attitude changed. Whereas I had been looking on the dark side of life, I now discovered that life was a glorious privilege with a powerful purpose. I learned that Thomas Carlyle was right when he said: “The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder.”

What is the one supreme, powerful purpose in your life? The Apostle Paul said: “This one thing I do . . .” (Philippians 3:13).

2. Build life on a strong foundation. It is no wonder that the great Apostle Paul wrote: “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Christ Jesus our

Lord.” Life will be different and our attitude toward life will be positive and powerful when Jesus Christ dwells in us and works through us in the person of the Holy Spirit – when our life is built on Him and His will. None of the storms of life – not even death itself – can shake us if life is firmly grounded in confident faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord.

3. Totally dedicate life to Christ and to Christian service. Total dedication to Jesus will lead us to that Great Commission which Jesus gives all of His disciples. When we work to fulfill that call to service, we will find little time to be preoccupied with that destructive tendency to look on the dark side of life. Christian service will keep the spiritual fires burning – working with God to meet the spiritual needs of others will transform attitudes. Christian service will enable us to stop thinking about self and motivate us to think of others.

The inspired writer of the book of Ecclesiastes looked on the dark side of life until – until he reached the conclusion that life was indeed dark, dreary, and meaningless apart from a right relationship with God. At the end of the book, he writes: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” And Jesus Christ said: “I am come that people might have life and have life more abundantly.”

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