

PP Ecclesiastes: Time Management

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, Part 3 (p. 553 Pew Bible)

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Half a century ago, God wrote a pop song, and it reached number 1 on the charts
 Pete Seegar is credited with the song, calling it *'Turn! Turn! Turn!'*, but it was the music group,
 The Byrds, who made it famous, yet it was taken from Ecclesiastes 3, but for 6 words
 Solomon wrote his poem after preaching that life under this sun is under a curse, and that
 curse is that by itself, nothing in this life can satisfy us, it cannot bring us gain
 Life under the sun is full of vanity, brief like a clock ticking steadily toward our death
 The Steve Miller Band sang, **PP** *Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin', into the future*
 Isaac Watts took hold of it in his famous hymn, Our God, Our help in Ages Past, **PP** *'Time, like
 an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away'*
 Life is an hourglass of sand and it is steadily pouring through that neck and for many of us there
 is a whole lot more sand in the bottom half than the top

Solomon just concluded from three experiments that we'll never find gain in pleasure,
 morality or work, but he is no nihilist, finding no meaning in anything
 He won't agree with Hemingway, that **PP** *'Life is a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness
 to nothingness.'*

Nihilism is a philosophy that streams through our modern education system, and if you want to
 discover that, read the books of J. Budziszewski, a former nihilist and the Professor of
 government and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin,
 Nihilism has one idea to declare: *Nothingness prevails and the world is meaningless*
 It is the personal rejection of God and the redefinition of life in your own image
 It destroys all systems of religion, and value, annihilating them, a word with the root of nihilism
 It's creed is, live any way you want even if it brings harm to another person
 One of its earliest priests/philosophers, Max Stirner, wrote, "Existence is an endless war of each
 against all"
 Their creed is *Bow to no authority; if you cannot be God, then don't let God be God*
 No, nihilism is not where Solomon is going, rather, how can we enjoy life here under the sun,
 when it such a mixture of sorrow and happiness?

PP 1-Life is out of our control

The poem begins with Solomon saying, *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every
 matter under heaven:"* **3:1**
 The NASB translated it: **PP** *"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time
 for every event under heaven."* **3:1 NASB**
PP A *'season'* is an appointed time in which a certain activity takes place Solomon gives the
 opening line, we all have a hard start and a hard stop, we're born, we'll die
 And the rest of the poem describes seasons of life in between them that we experience
 This is life under the sun, east of Eden, under the curse, highs and lows, but ultimately out of our
 control
 Life is like Google maps: we all start with birth, and find our destination to be death
 But we each have our own turns and times of rerouting along the journey from one to the other

We explore along the way, making stops at moral and immoral places
 But life is a journey of seasons we cannot control, half of which we'd prefer not to experience
 Skim through the 14 couplets of this poem with me, which are presented as opposites

Verse 2, there is a season to planting (college, career training) but there are often that which
 harms us that we need to uproot (relationships, habits)

Verse 3, There are times to kill (executing serial murderers) and times healing (forgiving and
 restoring others who hurt us)

It's exciting to build, but sooner or later, everything is torn down and replaced

Verse 4, times of sadness and times of celebration

We'll grieve at funerals and dance at weddings

Verse 5, times when we throw stones on the enemies fields to drive them out of our life, and
 times when we take the stones of the enemy out of our lives

There's a time to embrace and welcome a relationship and a time to say goodbye to a painful one

Verse 6, times to look for answers, and another time to give up and let it go

There are times where we gather things in our lives, and times to get rid of them

Verse 7, there are times of ripping our clothes in grief, and then time to get your life together

Times when we should say nothing to a person, but also a time to finally speak up and confront

Verse 8, there are times to hate evil and love good, fight against it or hold on to peace

This is life under the sun, or heavens, and it is full of unexpected twists and turns for us all

You didn't know you'd be discussing divorce with a lawyer when you walked down the aisle

You never saw that prodigal child coming the day you gave birth

Stephen and Amy Graham didn't know on their wedding day, that in 15 days they would die in a
 rollover truck crash in Washington State

A friend of mine didn't know when he began that he was about to have a terrible motorcycle
 accident, needing months of therapy

No wonder Solomon ended with a question: ***"What gain has the worker from his toil?" 3:9***

The unspoken answer to his rhetorical question is none!

PP Allistair Begg said *There are 14 pluses, and 14 minuses that adds up to zero*

Every birth ends in death, peace today meets war tomorrow

You get your kitchen clean, and tomorrow it's piled with dishes; you celebrate completing a
 work project, but the next day the next project is laid on your desk

PP *"Up every mornin' just to keep a job; I gotta fight my way through the hustling mob; Sounds
 of the city poundin' in my brain; While another day goes down the drain." Five O'Clock
 World, The Vogues, 1965*

Life is just not within our ability to control, and for many, that is a difficult truth to reconcile

*Some want to control life, but find they cannot, so they abuse their bodies with drugs, cut their
 arms and legs with razor blades, starve their bodies, obsess endlessly with micro
 compulsions like Bob Wiley in the comedy, *What About Bob?*

They all seem absurd to most, but they are all quests to gain some semblance of control

*Others go a different route and try to wrest control by abusing others, often children as the
 Allentown diocese horribly demonstrated recently

*Some discover they cannot control life so they live on the brink of despair

Pink Floyd contemplated the tick of time and lack of control in their hit song, Time

PP *"You are young and life is long and there is time to kill today. And then one day you find ten years have got behind you. No one told you when to run, you missed the starting gun. So you run and you run to catch up with the sun but it's sinking, Racing around to come up behind you again. The sun is the same in a relative way but you're older, Shorter of breath and one day closer to death. Every year is getting shorter never seem to find the time."*

*Terribly, some don't stay at the brink of despair, they fall into a pit of suicide, as Brad Delp of the super group *Boston*, pinning a note on his shirt declaring 'I am a lonely soul' If I cannot control life, finding the gain I desperately want, then I don't want to live anymore Solomon will not us end in despair, abuse, defiance or suicide, but instead he'll show us how to live our lives with value by giving us truth to live by

PP 2-How can we live in an out of control world and find joy and peace?

Solomon spirals back to what he said at the close of chapter 2, but now goes much deeper

PP a. Know that God is perfectly sovereign over every part of your life

"I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time." 3:10-11a

PPThe word '*beautiful*' is better translated *appropriate*

All those '*times*' and '*seasons*' from that poem, each of them, God is the one Who has made them to be fit like puzzle pieces in the mosaic of our lives

He has a plan, and every season, every time is ordained by Him to fit into that plan

I genuinely feel badly for Christians who do not view God as sovereign over all of life

It paves the way for anxiety, for complaining, for depression, for doubt and despair

It is a glorious, comforting truth that while we are bound within seasons and times, God is not; and while we cannot see the end of a season, God can

PP "The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." Proverbs 16:4

We do not know why our children get seriously sick, why financial struggles come, why the door of an opportunity closes, why tragedy visits

And that is the rub: God isn't interested in telling us why, but enabling us to trust

PP b. Trust in what you know but cannot understand

"Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." 3:11

We are all designed with echoes of glory, unable to be satisfied by this world's pleasures

PP *"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing." C.S. Lewis*

There is an imprint of eternity in each us, yet while we have the sense of something greater than us, it is that greater than us that frustrates us so

We have limited access to the big picture, it is just out of our reach

It provokes this idea within us that if we just know the reason for the season we'd be ok

The problem is, the life above the sun, where Lewis' real thing is available, can only be accessed by faith

I downloaded a free book from an author this past week, and it required me to download an app called Bookfunnel to receive it

The book was mine to have, but I couldn't get it without that app

In a spiritual sense, that app is faith, and without it, you can not gain access to what is above this world, that is yours, and what is waiting for you to receive is what Solomon says next

PP c. Enjoy your life...now!

"I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man." 3:12-13

Did you know that the most joyful of the Jewish festivals is Sukkot, which starts this weekend?

The Jewish people read Ecclesiastes every Sukkot feast because they view as a book of joy

They know what many of us have never learned...God wants us to be happy, and live out that happiness by doing good to others

PP *"It is a Christian duty for everyone to be as happy as he can."* C.S. Lewis

Trusting that every season and every point in time in our lives is part of God's perfect, sovereign plan, allows us to relinquish control and let go of anxiety, and live life well

Christian, we live under the sun, and there are seasons of good and bad, easy and difficult

But every one of them is part of God's plan for you, and cannot be thwarted or changed

PP Complaining about your life is complaining about your God!

"I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away." 3:14-15

The happiest life you can have, is to be full of the fear of God and that seems so odd to us

Paul explains the connection well: **PP** *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* **1 Corinthians 10:31**

PP To fear God is to be so in awe of Him, that our highest desire is to live in such a way that He is shown to be the perfect God that He is

Christian, we know that life under the sun is out of our control, but that does not need to rob us of joy and peace...the very last word of the poem

PP (Put on one slide) *We can find gain here-satisfaction and happiness-knowing that God is perfectly sovereign over every season and time in our lives

*We can trust in what we know to be true, but cannot fully understand

*We can enjoy life here, by loving God and doing good in this life

Amen?

Pray