

Introduction

Title

Summary:

1. All the good things of life come from God
2. The ability to appreciate and enjoy these things is a gift from God
3. This gift from God to enjoy the good things which He has given us is given to those who fear/please Him.
4. The key to life is not acquirement it's enjoyment.

There are about ten words in Hebrew for the English word “*prosper*” not one of these Hebrew words is primarily about acquiring material possessions.

דָּשַׁן dashen a prim. root; *to be fat, grow fat*:—anointed (1), prosper (1), prosperous (1),
חֹל חול or
חִיל chil ; a prim. root; *to be firm, strong*:—endure (1), prosper (1).
יָטַב yatab ; a prim. root; *to be good, well, glad, or pleasing*:—adorned (1), prosper (4),
יָתַר yathar ; a prim. root; *to remain over*:—abound (1), prosper you abundantly
צָלַח tsaleach or
צָלַח tsalach ; a prim. root; *to advance, prosper*:—advanced (1), give us success (1),
prosper (16), prospered (7), prosperous (1), prospers (2), send prosperity (1), succeed (10),
succeeding (1), successful (4), successfully completed (1), thrive (2), useful (1), victoriously.
צָלַח tselach ; *to prosper*:—enjoyed success (1), prosper (1),
שָׁכַל sakal; a prim. root; *to be prudent*:—act wisely(1), prosper(2), prospered (3), prospering (2),
prospers (1), prudent (2), show discernment (1), showed (1), showing intelligence (1),
succeed (1), understand (4), understanding (2), understood (1), wisdom (1), wise (6),
שָׁלַח shalah or
שָׁלַח shale; a prim. root; *to be quiet or at ease*:—deceive (1), ease (2), prosper (3).

We come now to the last part of the book of Qoheleth. There are **three aspects of this conclusion** that I want to examine. The first is the term “*the fear of God*”; the second is the description of the process of aging in **12:1-7**, the third is the word “*remember*”.

1. The Fear of God

Five times Qoheleth mentions the “fear of God.”

3:14

I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that **men should fear Him.**

5:7

For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. **Rather, fear God.**

7:18

It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for **the one who fears God** comes forth with both of them.

8:12-13

Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for **those who fear God**, who fear Him openly. But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because **he does not fear God.**

12:13

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: **fear God** and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

Qoheleth is a book about perspective. The fear of God is eloquently defined by the words, “For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.” **(5:2)** The fear of God is not the kind of fear that we associate with terror. It is the fear of awe, similar to the awe inspired by the sight of a mighty thunder storm or the beauty of a

desert sunset. We respect these things, even stand in awe of them, but they do not cause us terror.

The fear of God is associated with an awareness of the sovereignty of God. It is an awareness that ultimately God is in control. That He has a plan for His world, and that our lives are part of His plan. From our perspective “under the sun” life looks a little like a tapestry from the reverse side – a confusing collection of threads and knots. We can vaguely make out the pattern but to see the full beauty we must view it from “above the sun” but, to date, only God has this perspective of life. So we live by trust or faith in God. Paul quotes Habakkuk when he writes, *“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”* (**Romans 1:17**) This is why *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.* (**Proverbs 9:10**)

This fear or commitment is associated with knowledge of the Holy One. It gives us the perspective to receive and share the good things in life, “as from the Lord.” It gives us the capacity in the midst of all this seeming meaningless of life to rejoice and celebrate the things we have from God. *“The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them”.* (**Psalm 25:14**) Paul describes the opposite state to Titus, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny

Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” (Titus 1:16)

We express the fear of the Lord in thanksgiving. As I mentioned in the first session “Thanksgiving is the fundamental expression of the fear of the LORD.” This is why the Psalmist writes, “You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD...” (Psalm 115:11)

Now read the first verse of Qoheleth chapter 11 again.

A rather literal rendering of the Hebrew of 11:1-2 says, *"Send your resources out over the seas; eventually you will reap a return.*

*Divide your merchandise into seven, or [even to] eight shares, since you don't know what disasters may come n the earth."*¹

This proverb has been found in the Egyptian source the *Instruction of Ankhsheshonqy* (“do a good deed and throw it in the river; when it dries up you shall find it”) and in Arabic proverbs.”² When the Nile overflows its banks the weeds perish and the soil is regenerated. The rice-seed being cast into the water takes root, and is found in due time growing with healthy vigour.

Trust means being prepared to risk. Send your bread out, give to seven – even to eight. 'Seven' is symbolic of completeness. 'Eight' goes one step further — it means giving 114 per cent! Giving a portion to 'eight' represents the kind of wholeheartedness that comes from a spiritual

liveliness born in the heart by the Spirit of God. New life cannot but overflow (**Ps. 23:5**). This kind of life spreads out, by its very nature.³

(vs 4) The farmer who waits until he is completely certain of perfect weather conditions will never reap anything at all.

What a contrast to the servant who went and buried the talent his master had given him because of his distorted view or lack of wisdom.

Matt 25:24-28.

Fear God is Qoheleth's great conclusion. **Because** you see life from "under the sun" fear God and live life abundantly.

Qoheleth's message is – **Just** Do It -Do these things **while you can!**

2. The description of Aging.

The next section underlines the urgency of learning how to live wisely.

(1) Remember God in the days of your youth

While things are going well, before the difficult days come

Thirteen illustrations of growing old and feeble

(2)

- Before the sun and the light and the moon (sun = physical vitality)
- and the stars grow dark (stars refer to the five senses)

(3)

- The keepers of the house tremble (the hands and arms weaken)
- The strong men bow down (the legs become frail)
- The grinders cease because they are few (the teeth fall out)
- Those that look through the windows grow dim (the eyes lose their sight)

(4)

- The doors are shut in the streets (the ears become hard of hearing)
- The sound of the grinding is low (the mouth and speech become unintelligible)
- When one rises up at the sound of a bird (the elderly easily awakened)
- And all the daughters of music are brought low (the voice no longer able to sing)

(5)

- They are afraid of height (the fear of falling)
- And of terrors in the way (no longer feeling invincible)
- When the almond tree blossoms (the wakefulness of old age or the hair and beard turning grey and white)
- The grasshopper is a burden (an old man, bowed like the insect, able to move only with difficulty)
- And desire fails (the caper berry has no (aphrodisiac) effect (fleshly desires wane)
- Man goes to his eternal home (death)
- Mourners to about the streets (funeral)

(6) Four illustrations to depict the decaying of the body

- Before the silver cord (the spinal cord) is loosed
- The golden bowl (the skull) is broken
- The pitcher (the heart) shattered at the fountain
- The wheel (the pelvis) broken at the well

(7) What occurs at death

- The dust returns to the earth as it was (dust to dust)
- The spirit returns to God who gave it.

So do it while you can....

3. Remember

When we think of remembering we have a fairly passive pastime in mind. The Bible uses this word in association with action that is so significant that it may be life changing.

Gen 8:1 But God remembered Noah andcaused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.

Gen 19:29when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow

Gen 30:22 Then God remembered Rachel ... and opened her womb.

Ex 2:24 So God heard their [Israelites in Egypt] groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God remembers and it leads to life changing action. When the Israelites celebrated the Passover the Rabbis taught them to remember as if each person had themselves been rescued from Egypt. Every Shabbat two candles are lit one to observe and one to remember. זָכַר zâkar To remember; but remembering means much more than merely not forgetting to observe Shabbat. It also means to remember the significance of Shabbat, both as a commemoration of creation and as a commemoration of our freedom from slavery in Egypt.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the tradition he had received from the Lord about the Lord's Supper. It is a remembering - a reliving or re-enactment. In remembering the death of Jesus they are proclaiming it.

Qoheleth 4 – Living with Meaning The Abundant Life

John Atkinson

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- ¹ Stern, D. 1998 *The Complete Jewish Bible*. Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications p1086.
 - ² Walton, John H.; Matthews, Victor H.; Chavalas, Mark W., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press) c2000.
 - ³ Keddie, G. 1982 *The Guide Ecclesiastes* England Evangelical Press.