

Things that Matter Most



So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Eccles. 2:17.¹

Every day we are jolted from our everyday pursuits of life when we read in the newspaper or hear from within the church body of a tragedy or the loss of a loved one. Sometimes the seemingly irrationality of living hits us square in the face and our minds are brought to the conclusion that Solomon expressed in our passage from Ecclesiastes 2:17.

Yes, it's easy to say with Paul **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."**² But it *is* easy to get all caught up with this life and to forget the most important things in life. In this lesson we are going to go over the subject the things that matter most. I invite your careful thought and response in your own life.

Discovering Ourselves

Today's prevalent thought is that we need to discover ourselves and yet at the end of the sinner's life, I'm afraid Solomon's words echo in their hearts. Let's go over some passages from God's word and try to discover what He has to say about you and me.

- **We were created by God during gestation.**

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. [14] I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. [15] My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,"
Psalm 139:13-15.

The plain fact is that we were not merely the product of the biology of conception. The language in this passage quite a different dimension to our conception. Some of you will recognize my comments from past lessons, but I think it bears repeating. No matter who we are or what personal notion we have of ourselves - the fact is that God had a creative hand in our conception! The imagery of this passage takes from the life of biblical times where the weaver made beautiful tapestry or clothing such as the richly ornate cloak



¹ All passages are NIV unless otherwise noted.

² Philip. 1:21, KJV

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that was given to Joseph.³ The KJV has it as multicolored but in the original the cloak was more than multicolored, it was ornate with long sleeves - small wonder that his brothers were envious of Joseph especially when he wore the cloak. When the Prodigal son returned from his life of sin one of the first acts his dad did was to put a signet ring on the son's finger and call for "the best robe" - by implication a robe of distinction *and favor*.

The very fact that our Heavenly Father has taken a direct, creative act of the forming of every man indicates that He places great importance on every sinner. So much so that knowing of Adam's fall into sin from Eternity Past He set in motion the redemptive plan for all men - but I anticipate our lesson. Please notice that the gestational creative act of God is declared to be on a par with the creation of the universe - "**...I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.**"

- **We are lost, desperately wicked and separated from God in our sin.**

Something went terribly wrong when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. In their rebellion against God - they died! No, they didn't stop breathing and start to decay - something more insidious and eternally damning happened. They died spiritually and thus became separated from God. Their most natural response to the Lord when He called for them was to hide from Him in their shame. Paul expresses this lost condition in this way:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-- [13] for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. [14] Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. Romans 5:12-14.

The fact is that we are all sinners and as a result are lost - just as the Prodigal Son. In biblical times when a son became prodigal - he was considered "lost" or as good as dead. Even today Jewish tradition observes the funeral of an offspring who has violated the family, for example, by professing faith in Christ - they literally have a funeral for the child even though he is very much alive - he is considered dead to the family.

But man's condition is much worse than that. Man is a paradox. On one hand he is the result of God's loving creative action and on the other hand he is dead in his sin. David said of himself and all of us; "**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.**" Psalm 51:5, KJV. In saying this of himself he was not referring to some sort of illicit sexual act on the part of his parents - rather,

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a *richly ornamented* robe for him. Genesis 37:3. (Emphasis mine).

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he was referring to the gestational / birth condition of man where the original sin of Adam was passed on to the *entire* human race - sin - that is, the sin nature - entered into the world by one man - Adam and because of this, God's warning to Adam "Thou shalt surely die."⁴

This sinful death-condition is so complete that it separates man from God. Paul says of man; **"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: [11] There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. [12] They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."** Romans 3:10-12, KJV. Which leads us to the next point.

- **We cannot discover ourselves (our true nature) nor can we discover God by our own efforts or intelligence.**

"None that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Is not mere hyperbole by Paul, a Jew - whose race was given to such. No. We are utterly lost and cannot seek God, nor can we understand the indictment that God has pronounced upon mankind apart from the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. Today's psychology is utter delusional. Man cannot understand himself for he has been blinded by his own sinfulness and the deception of Satan. Paul, the apostle said of man; **"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2] in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."** Ephes. 2:1-3. We cannot ever discover ourselves - that we are sinners under the reign of Satan - totally subjects to the lusts of our own sinful nature. Our sinful nature is given personification here in that our sin nature tells us what to desire - to do - how to think. This places us all in the most hopeless of conditions - truly we are lost.

Discovering God.

We are a most pathetic of creatures. God loves us - He has an investment in our lives in that He had a direct creative hand in our gestation and yet we are condemned by our sin. So if we cannot discover God - how can the impossibility of discovering God come to pass? When the disciples were confounded by Jesus in His condemnation of the rich young ruler they thought surely was saved, they pleaded with Christ, **"When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"** Matthew 19:25. Jesus Christ's response was that with man salvation - finding God, if you please - was impossible but. **"...with God all things are possible."** Matthew 19:26b. Jesus reveals in His answer the thrilling reality that we can discover God - with His omnipotence, and may I include His mercy and love.

⁴ Literally, "dying thou shalt die." The doubling of the death lends supreme importance to God's warning to Adam.

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- **Man's inability to discover God.**

When Paul visited Athens he made note of their sinful condition - in spite of their pride in "knowing" *all* known gods. In their pride they even admitted that their search for all gods would go on and that they would ultimately discover the gods yet to be found - hence their monument to the "Unknown god." In his sermon on Mars hill he described man's arrogance in thinking that they could discover God by saying of sinful man; **"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:"** Acts 17:27. The picture Paul is giving - and is not lost on those hearing those who were well versed in debate and dialogue was that they were groping after the "Unknown God" whom he was now declaring to them. So we have a serious touch of sarcasm by Paul by his saying on one hand that, indeed, the Greeks *were* seeking the "Unknown God" but that in reality that they were blindly groping after Him and the sad fact was that they would never find Him even though He is close at hand. The B2 bomber, due to special stealth technology it is reported to have the Radar Cross Section (RCS) of a bumble bee. When Bagdad was bombed the F117, another stealth bomber with similar characteristics was able to fly in, drop their bombs and leave *completely undetected* by the Iraqi's radar. This, in a small way, describes man's helpless condition to discover God.

- **God's seeking of the lost.**

"Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:9-10.

Jesus was referring to Zacchaeus who was apparently seeking Jesus but in reality, in this amazing statement by Jesus, *He* was the one doing the seeking! Another example of this was Corneilus, the Roman Centurion, was apparently seeking God but was completely hopeless in his quest. It wasn't until God intervened and gave Peter a vision where, as a result of his vision, he went to Corneilus in order to share with him the Gospel, whereupon, Corneilus found God - and was saved!

- **God has invested His omnipotence in the preaching of the Gospel.**

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." Romans 1:16.

This is an amazing passage! Think of all the creative acts of God - the creation of the universe - the very creative act that God does in the gestation of every man. Now look closely at this passage. The Gospel *is* the power of God for the salvation of everyone - all men, women, the children of the world. Never mind the wonderful miracles of Jesus while He was on this earth - every time a sinner comes to Christ as his Savior - it is the result of the omnipotent power of God in action to completely turn things around - from the hopelessness of man in his sin - his total ignorance of God and the impossibility of man to discover God to "finding" his Creator. It is the omnipotence of God - truly a miracle of His power that man "discovers" God and prays the sinner's prayer and becomes a child of God.

Next Time We Look at God's Wonderful Plan for Our Lives.