

# HUMAN LIFE PRIORITY



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## **Human Life Priority**

The writer does not know whether the reader has experienced what often disturbed the writer's mind when he is attending a funeral and also when he is not at a funeral.

When the writer comes to a funeral, a question would often pop up: "Actually, what is a human being's main task in this life?" This thought becomes stronger as the writer joins in the procession of bringing the deceased to the cemetery with another thought: "If there was a major task that this person had to perform in his/her life, had this deceased person done his/her major task?"

The writer believes that there must be a task that is already planned by God for human beings to perform while living in the world, beside secondary things. This thought came up when the writer remembered the security guards in his house. The writer often sees them help in watering the plants in the morning and in the afternoon. The plants grow well, but still, should one day the house got burgled, the writer will reprimand or even dismiss them, because they neglected their primary duty, which is to maintain security of the house.

Likewise with our lives, we may have and do a lot of sideline activities, but we still have a major task as human beings created by God in His image and likeness. And it turned out that what was thought over by the writer has also been thought over by Solomon and discussed in the book of Ecclesiastes. So we

will discuss and contemplate on the book of Ecclesiastes.

*ESV Ecc. 1: 1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

This was Solomon's words and then subsequently in Ecclesiastes 2:3 he said, *"I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine--my heart still guiding me with wisdom--and how to lay hold on **folly**, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life."*

This verse explained that Solomon really wanted to know what was best done by human beings in their lives in the world or what was in fact the priority of human life. Solomon's seriousness in investigating the matter was described in Ecclesiastes 2:3 that Solomon exercised his wisdom and drank wine to refresh himself and insisted on or continued to

study like a fool (*lay hold on folly*) until he knew what the priority of human life that must be done during his short life in this world was.

### **Wealth, Throne, and Women**

Many people assume that a person is considered successful if he possesses 3 Things, namely wealth, throne and women. That is why many people are focused on attaining these 3 Things. They consider having wealth, throne or position and women as the priority of human life.

If we study the book of Ecclesiastes, we will see that Solomon did that, too.

Let's study together to see what Solomon's opinions and experiences about wealth, throne and women were.

## Wealth

As a king, Solomon's wealth was incredibly abundant, he was continually collecting wealth that he became the richest man in his era.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 says:

*I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, **more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.***

Solomon not only collected gold and silver, but he also collected art objects as described in verse 8a:

*"I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of the kings and provinces."*

But after becoming the richest man, Solomon realized that all attempts to collect wealth will be inexhaustible, without end, and finally in chapter 5 verse 10 he said,

*"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity."*

So after collecting treasures as much as it was, he finally said, *"This is also vanity."* Why was it vanity?

*"When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner, but to see them with his eyes?"*  
(Ecclesiastes 5:11)

Having many possessions is also vanity because other people will consume them. We can only eat as much as one plate every time we dine and we sleep in one bed, and even if we have 50 houses, we can only inhabit one house at a time. In fact, he said in Ecclesiastes 5:12:

*"Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep."*

Even poor people sleep better than rich people who eat until satiated.

Solomon continued:

*Ecc. 5:13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt,*

In fact, many wealthy people experienced disaster because of their wealth, whether they were attacked, robbed or abducted, their children fighting over the inheritance or even killed each other.

Solomon also realized that a person's wealth can be gone instantly when struck by misfortune; such as natural disaster, financial crisis, war or other calamity. Apparently all the wealth that had been boasted of as enough for 7 generations of offspring, were used up so that nothing can be inherited even for his son.



*Ecc. 5: 14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.*

Solomon concluded his opinion about wealth by saying that even if a person has an abundance of riches, upon death, he will not be able to bring his property along.

*Ecc 5:15 As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. 16 This also is a grievous evil: **just as he came, so shall he go**, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind?*

## **Throne**

Throne or position causes a person to gain power. His words became influential; with his position he could command many things. Position causes a person to be respected and even feared. He lives like a god who can do

anything. A king could even make a decree to revoke a person's life. Therefore, many people fight to sit on a throne or get a position, because then he will become a powerful person.

Solomon was one of Israel's greatest king, as noted in the following verses:

*1 Kings 4:1 King Solomon was king over all Israel.*

*1 Kings 4:21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.*

What was Solomon's comment about his throne?

*Ecc 2: 18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me. 19 And who knows whether **he will be wise or a fool?** Yet he will be master of all which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.*

Solomon said that all his efforts to become a great king were vanity because when he pass

away, he had to leave everything to the next king whose competence he did not know.

And what Solomon feared really happened in his life. We know that Solomon built a huge empire, but not until a month after his son inherited it, the kingdom was divided. When his son, Rehoboam, followed the advice of his peers over the counsel of the elders, the Israelites rebelled so that the kingdom was split into two.

### **Women**

Treasure, throne, and women are an inseparable package. A man who has considerable wealth may have several wives, especially if he rules over a country as a king with absolute power. In ancient times, a king could have hundreds of wives and concubines, but even in

this modern age there are still people who practice polygamy.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 2:8b,

*"I got singers, both men and women, and **many concubines**, the delight of the sons of man."*

First Kings 11: 3a says that Solomon had seven hundred wives from noble backgrounds and three hundred concubines.

Later, Solomon realized that many wives did not make him better; because his wives made him follow God half-heartedly and in the end Solomon even turned away his heart from God and after other gods worshipped by his wives because they had influenced his belief.

That explained why he wrote:

*Ecc 7:26 And I find something more bitter than death: the woman who heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.*

## Wisdom

Beside seeking treasure, throne, and women, Solomon also studied a lot to gain a lot of knowledge because he viewed wisdom or knowledge as most important in human life.

*Ecc 2:13 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.*

*Ecc 2:14a The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.*

At first Solomon thought that wise people were extraordinary people who could discern right from wrong and give fair consideration, as opposed to fools who walked in darkness.

*1 Kings 4:32 He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. 33 He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles and of fish.*

Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and composed 1,005 songs. He spoke of trees: from the cedar trees on mount Lebanon to the hyssop that grew on the walls. (Hyssop was a small plant whose stems and leaves could be used to sprinkle liquid). He also had extensive knowledge about animals, birds, reptiles and fish. How amazing! He studied everything.

But then he said that having a lot of knowledge was also useless because everyone would surely die, both foolish and wise men.

*Ecc 2:15 Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity.*

Beside this, Solomon also realized that even a wise person would still be subjected to calamities that can occur and befall on everyone, both the fool and the smart.

A man's fate in God's hands and he cannot control it, for example, when Aceh or Japan was struck by a severe tsunami, everyone--whether smart, stupid, low or highly educated, cannot be spared from death.

*Ecc 9:12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.*

Beside that, there were other things that were unattainable by human wisdom since there were other powers that controlled and regulated human life.

*Ecc 9:11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.*

When we look around, we will notice that many things happen not in accordance with the

laws of nature? The fast will not always win a race, the strong will not always be superior, the rich--whose diet is more nutritious--will not necessarily be wiser than the poor. The intelligent people are not necessarily richer, the smart and educated may not necessarily receive the grace of God, because there are situations that are beyond the control of man, namely time and fate that have been appointed by God to every human being.

Solomon continued:

*Ecc 2:16 For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!*

The wise man will also die. Even if he has done a phenomenal work, still in the long run he will be forgotten. For example, do you know who Edward Jenner was? We still use his



research results until this time. As children, we have all been vaccinated chicken pox, haven't we? And Edward Jenner was the inventor, but how many of us still remember him? Almost none, although we had used and enjoyed the benefits of his research. He had spent a lot of time studying and conducting his research, made a great deal of sacrifice, but unfortunately, we did not know him and even forget him.

If all human efforts, such as collecting treasure, occupying the throne, having many wives, and even searching for wisdom are useless, what should we do in this life? Let us go back to our initial topic: what is exactly the priority of human life?

At the end of the closing chapters, Solomon said,

*Ecc 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

The closing verses will be easier to understand if we read verse 14 first and then read verse 13. All men will be judged by God for all his actions, whether good or bad. So, we have to prepare ourselves to face that court. And the preparation is by becoming a person who fears God and keeps all His commandments.

## **Twenty Years of Seeking for the True Religion**

As mentioned in his book, the writer was allowed by God to seek for the true religion

for 20 years. The writer had been attending Sunday School since childhood and had been baptized in his teens. When he was in his first year of college, he took a Comparative Religious Studies course. The course made him aware that in this world, not only the Christian religion existed, but there were four other religions. From that course he studied the five religions and in year 2000, with full conviction, he wholeheartedly made a firm decision to be a follower of Christ.

Once, while he was telling his experience, one listener commented that if the writer had not spent so much time in studying religion, he might have become richer than he was then. The opinion might be true, but the writer never regretted the time he had spent, because seeking for the true religion and following it is a major priority of man's life.

## **Conclusion**

Humans are trinity creatures, composed of body, soul and spirit. The body is physical, which we can see and touch. The soul or the life God breathed into man's nostrils is the element that distinguishes between people who is still alive and people who are dead, therefore a dead man is often referred to as a body devoid of life. On the other hand, a person who is mentally ill is a person whose spirit is sick, although physically he is fit enough. Unlike the body that is physical, the soul and the spirit are immaterial. From the above explanation we understand that man is a spirit that has a soul in a body.

Basically, all religions believe in three things, namely:

First: the body is temporary, but the spirit is immortal.

Second: there is life after death.

Third: there is the final judgement that will determine whether our spirit will live in a good place (heaven), which gives happiness forever, or stay in a terrible place (hell), where our spirits will be tormented forever.

The priority of human life is to prepare ourselves so that later we go to heaven; that is the first and most important thing.

Every religion teaches ways to get to heaven, but Christianity explains that only in Christ there is a guarantee of salvation, in that we are granted the right to enter heaven by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, as written in:

*John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

*Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

To enter heaven is the priority of human life. Our priority is not to make money as much as possible, not to occupy a position as high as possible, not have wives as many as possible, and not study to earn a degree as high as possible, but to prepare ourselves and make sure that we shall go to heaven.