

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXIV

November 23, 2014

No. 47

What Profit?

(Jerry Fite)

Wisdom’s insight draws us out to consider an important question regarding all our activities in life. “*What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he laboreth under the sun?*” (*Ecclesiastes 1:3*). We rise in the morning, depart for work, accomplish the day’s demands, and return home to only repeat the process the next day. Our days are like nature. The sun rises and sets only to return “*to its place where it ariseth*” (*Ecclesiastes 1:5*). The wind blows to the south, heads north and “*returneth again to its circuits*” (*Ecclesiastes 1:6*). Rivers go into the sea, without the sea ever being filled, only to “*go again*” (*Ecclesiastes 1:7*). We are like nature in that much activity is occurring, but what profit is there when we must repeat the same activity day by day?

You might reason that today you became wiser and richer than you were yesterday. You are learning more today and making wiser decisions. You are profiting from today’s work and have more money today than you had yesterday. But what lasting profit is there in wisdom, when at death you will be forgotten even as the fool? (*Ecclesiastes 2:16*). What

profit is there in your name being associated with wealth when at your death another who did not “*labor therein*” will have it “*for his portion*”? (*Ecclesiastes 2:21*).

We might look at profit in another vein. You might busy yourself in helping others with your prudence and money. The people you help may remember you fondly for your altruistic deeds long after you are gone. But what lasting profit is there when the generation you help no longer exists on earth? What happens when you outlive those you helped? Will your altruism be only known by you? Those you helped will no longer be here to enjoy your gifts, or praise your name. Your good deeds will soon be forgotten with the passing of each generation. Generations come and go, and there is “*no remembrance*” of them (*Ecclesiastes 1:11*).

Wisdom places life in front of us in terms of life’s occurrences in time. There is a time to be born, but there is also a time to die. There is a time to plant, but there is also a time to pluck up that which is planted (*Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*). Like churning wheels on ice, a lot of activity is occurring, but little profit. The little hamster

is running fast on its little treadmill, but going nowhere. What progress is there when we find ourselves plucking up that which we planted? Wisdom’s refrain continues: “*What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?*” (*Ecclesiastes 3:9*).

This exercise in reality should not drive us to despondency, but inspire us with purpose. Such thinking issues into profitable living. The wise preacher exhorts us with purpose: “*Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man*” (*Ecclesiastes 12:13*). Living with a godly purpose, one will enjoy the fruits of his labor for he knows this is God’s gift to him while he lives his short time on earth (*Ecclesiastes 2:24, 3:13*). Holding God in the heart with reverence and doing deeds according to God’s commands, one will be preparing for what comes after life on earth: the judgment (*Ecclesiastes 12:14, Heb. 9:27*).

True profit occurs when we live godly in this life. “*...but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come*” (*1 Timothy 4:8*). Training to be godly is profitable exercise, leading to a profitable life.