

Ecclesiastes 6:1-2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-6/ecclesiastes-61-2/>

There are severe consequences to squandering God's gifts.

In Chapter 5, we saw someone *empowered* to enjoy their wealth and the fruits of their labor. Solomon now gives us the other side of the coin, *an evil* Solomon has *seen* that is *prevalent among men*, that is, humankind. The *evil* is that God gives *riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all he desires; yet God has not empowered him to enjoy his wealth.* Instead a *foreigner enjoys them.*

Soul in Hebrew has to do with a person in his vitality, that is, the vigor with which he lives life. This man has all that he could possibly desire as the means to having a vibrant life. Yet he is not *empowered* to actually enjoy his bounty.

In contrast to the previous case, *God has not empowered him to eat from this bounty.* Rather, a *foreigner enjoys* it. So, *God* is the agent on both fronts. He gives, yet does *not empower.* The word for *empower* is “shalat,” meaning rule or govern. So, God gives gifts but not dominion.

A *foreigner* (literally “stranger”) *enjoys them instead.* Solomon does not focus on a singular mechanism for this. Perhaps the man does not enjoy them as a natural consequence from the *riches* being hoarded, as in Chapter 5. It seems reasonable Solomon's observation would include this example. We also saw wealth consumed by an expanding entourage. It seems reasonable that Solomon is expanding the application to other possibilities as well, as he continues to cycle through his observations.

Solomon repeats his prior observation (as in [Ecclesiastes 2:26](#)) that God's gifts and blessings do not go to waste. If the benefit is not reaped by the one for whom they were intended, they will be passed on to others. *Foreigners.* If the hoarder does not enjoy his blessings, nor pass his blessings to his heir, then they will end up in the hands of a stranger, who will enjoy them.

God gives gifts of *riches, power and honor*, and they are squandered. This is *vanity*, or vaporous, and a *severe affliction.* It might be worth reflecting on all the ways any one of us can live a life apart from thanksgiving and gratitude

rooted in faith. The attitude of hoarding is an attitude that results in seeking to control things beyond our true capacity to control. There are many other means to express this underlying attitude, including seeking to control our emotions or perceived environment through drugs, or seeking to control others through fits of rage. Or perhaps sinking into self-destruction of various sorts.

There is an inner sickness that says, "If I can't control others, or my circumstances, at least I can control my own self-destruction." This is an example of an *evil* and a *severe affliction*. God has granted a capacity for joy through faith-based gratitude. Instead we often prefer to chase the illusion of control and self-dependence. The incapacity to enjoy God's gifts was something Solomon observed was *prevalent* in his own day. It is certainly *prevalent* in our day as well, three thousand years later. Which also validates Solomon's assertion that there is "nothing new *under the sun*."

Biblical Text:

¹There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men— ²a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction.