

Ecclesiastes 6:3-6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-6/ecclesiastes-63-6/>

Anyone who wastes the opportunity of God's blessing is worse off than one who was never born at all.

Solomon contrasts two vastly different and comparatively extreme life experiences. His first example is a *man who fathers a hundred children, lives many years (6:3) or even a thousand years twice (6:6)*. However, this man's *soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not have a proper burial*. Solomon contrasts this man with a *miscarriage*, and pronounces the *miscarriage* as being *better off*.

The stillborn child enters the world then passes without any life experience. There is, therefore, nothing to remember. The child comes in *futility*, passes into *obscurity*, and never really has an identity. The stillborn does not experience life at all (*never sees the sun*) and does not come into a state of self-awareness (*never knows*). It is declared to *be better off* than the prosperous man who was *not satisfied with good things* and did not *have a proper burial*.

Even though the man had a much longer life than the stillborn, his experience ends up in the same *obscurity* and *futility*. He had the potential for great blessing yet was not *satisfied with goodness* and did not have a *proper burial*. He ends up in the *same place* as the stillborn. But unlike the stillborn, he suffers the pain and misery that human experience entails without discovering the blessing within it. In the midst of a vaporous life, he never takes the opportunity to trust God and the vapor is meaningless, confusing, and angst-ridden.

The phrase *and does not even have a proper burial* is added to the dissatisfied *soul*. The word for *proper burial* is "qebuwrah," a noun that means "grave." A literal burial site. Solomon does not tell us why the man had no grave. But perhaps it means his hundred children did not honor him. He might be like the hoarder, who did not enjoy the blessings of his wealth, and also did not mentor his heirs to be stewards. Perhaps the children learned the lesson of a hoarder and were not willing to spend money on a burial site for their miserly father.

In a situation like this, it seems part of his *soul not being satisfied with good things* is that he lives his life without creating human bonds of affection. Perhaps, like the hoarder of Chapter 5, he spent all his time and attention on himself. By squandering his opportunity to live a life of stewardship, generosity, and gratitude, he was not *satisfied with the good things* God granted him, and ended his life completely alone. In *obscurity*. He was consumed with the mystery of life and the compulsion to control, in contrast to the man at the end of chapter 5 who used the mystery of life as a chance to trust God and live a life of purpose.

In verse 4, Solomon explains that the *miscarriage comes in futility*. It has a vaporous existence because it lingers with promise in the mother's womb but dissipates before given the chance to be born, or grow up, or live out an earthly life. It *goes into obscurity* (literally "darkness"). *Its name is covered in obscurity*. Its *name*, the thing that identifies it and sets it apart from others—a mark of identity—is blanketed by *obscurity*. *It never sees the sun and never knows anything*.

Yet *it is better* off than the dissatisfied man. This word for *better* at the end of verse 5 is "nachath." It means "rest, quietness." So the phrase literally means "he has more rest than the other." The dissatisfied man will suffer misery in his discontent but the *miscarriage* will rest more securely.

In verse 6, Solomon asks rhetorically, "*Do not all go to the same place?*" The man who is not *satisfied with good things* ends up in the *same place* as the miscarriage. Both end up reverting back into dust. The difference is that the man who could not see the good during his life wasted time and opportunity on this earth. So he actually experienced more *futility*. Even if he had twice as long, *a thousand years twice over*, it is a waste unless he figures out how to *be satisfied with good things*. To live in thanksgiving.

The opportunity of life is only beneficial if we take advantage of it. Modern research has identified gratitude as a primary key to human happiness. This research confirms what Solomon observed 3,000 years ago.

Biblical Text:

³If a man fathers a hundred *children* and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not even have a *proper* burial, *then* I say, "Better the miscarriage than he,⁴for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity.⁵It never sees the sun and it never knows *anything*;

it is better off than he.⁶ Even if the *other* man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things—do not all go to one place?”