



Daily Verse and Comment

Ecclesiastes 4:7-8

(7) And I returned and saw vanity under the sun: (8) There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he has neither son nor brother; yet there is no end to all his labor; and his eyes are not satisfied with riches; neither does *he* say, "For whom do I labor and deprive my soul of pleasure?" This *is* also vanity. Yea, it *is* a grievous task.

A Faithful Version

This person may have neither the drive of the workaholic nor the pleasure-seeking aims of a lazy man, but he shows no evidence of contentment either. As a person uncommitted to sharing his life with another, he is perhaps quite selfish. The description indicates that he wants to keep the produce of his labors for himself. He does not share them with a wife and family, and he has no partners or family to inherit what he leaves behind. The context also gives no indication that he enjoys the use of his profits. He simply works and exists.

Solomon's final comment regarding this worker is intriguing: This situation is not only vanity but a grave misfortune. He seems to conclude that this is the most seriously flawed worker of them all. His description gives the impression of complete self-centeredness. Does anybody benefit from a life as devoted to the self as this worker is?

The New International Version translates what Solomon calls a "grave misfortune" as "a miserable business." Ecclesiastes teaches us that work can be a God-given pleasure, but this description tells us that it will not be pleasing if we work only for self-centered purposes. It counsels us to ask ourselves, "For whom am I working?" [God](#) has worked from the foundation of the earth, but He is not consumed by it ([John 5:17](#)). God has given us work at least partly for us to learn not to be self-centered, as well as to enable us to share life with others. God wants us to labor, to create wealth in the

right spirit and for the right reasons. His counsel in this context is that a major reason is to create benefits for others.

[Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#) gives the impression that Solomon's experiences regarding the man who remained alone in his labors motivated him to think of the importance of friendship and the value of doing things within a partnership:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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