

BASIC TEACHINGS
(MILK FOR BABES)

#1

VANITY

By Buddy Cobb



A Faithful Apostolic Teacher of the Word

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When we are born into this world, it doesn't take long before we begin to realize that we are in a hostile place. Babies are attacked by disease and often times are mistreated and forsaken by their parents.

There are all kinds of things trying to get a hold of you to bring you into captivity - many voices counseling you, leading you, directing you, trying to take you into all kinds of corruption. Advertisements, radio broadcasts, television programs are all trying to get you hooked on something. We need to recognize and confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth and that this is not our home. This is a temporary dwelling place. We had no control over when we came here, nor do we have control over our time to leave. What is this life all about? What is it for?

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter One.

Ecc 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity. 3 What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? 4 *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. 5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. 6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. 8 All things *are* full of labor; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. 9 The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun.

10 Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 11 *There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after. 12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

We see that Solomon in all of his wisdom, though he was king over Israel and had the blessing of wisdom given to him by God, came to the conclusion that all, in this life, is vanity and vexation of spirit. Do you know why he came to this conclusion? Notice the term he uses in verse fourteen "all the works that are done under the sun" s-u-n. He goes on in chapter two speaking about the same thing in verse eleven.

11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Why would Solomon come to such a conclusion? The term "under the sun" puts it in the realm of the natural or the temporal?

There are two basic realms the Bible would have us to consider. One is the natural - the temporal - the now. The other is the spiritual - the eternal - the life to come. (1 Tim.4:8) Now, what is the characteristic of that which is natural? It is temporal, limited, it has a beginning time and an end. (Ecc. 3:2) How about the eternal? It is spiritual and it has no beginning and no ending. No matter how much you learn, no matter how much good you accomplish, no matter how great you are, if you have a beginning and an end, what is your conclusion? All is vanity. Since there is coming the time when you and everything that you have is going to pass

away, then your life is like a vapor (Js. 4:14) or like a smoke. You come, people can see your presence for a while, and then suddenly you are gone. What profit is there? You invest everything-your life, your time, your talents. You may even accomplish a certain amount. You might get the whole world under your control while you are here. We have had kings in history and civilizations where this has happened. Men have come to greatness of power, but because they were temporal, created beings, when they approached their end and could see that there it was, right there in front of them, they knew they were about to depart into a place where there would be no more remembrance of them or what they had accomplished. (see Ecc. 2:11-19) The Bible teaches us (Isa. 65:17, Rev. 21:1) that there is coming the time when the former things will pass away and be remembered no more.

Included in God's purpose and plan is a provision to keep natural man from finding out what God is doing. It says in Ecc. 3:11 that He has set the world in man's heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end. Now, with the world in his heart, which way will man go? Is it not the way of the world? Matthew 6:21 reveals to us that where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. You see, as long as that is your condition (your heart and treasures in the world) there is no way for you to find out what God is doing. You won't understand why you're here, you won't understand the purpose of it all, you'll think that it is to gain some advantage for yourself. But, as you continue in this life, you will, like Solomon, realize that no matter how much you have gained, it is all vanity and vexation of spirit. This is the conclusion God would have us reach so that we may know that our way, as contrasted with His way, is vanity.

In Ecc. 3:10, Solomon speaks of the travail in which God exercised the sons of men. Why does He give it to the sons of men? Is there a difference between the sons of men and

the sons of God? Romans 9:8 says that those of the flesh are not the children of God. In 1 Cor. 15:45, 46, we read, 45. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.

Jesus speaking to Nicodemus in John 3:6 said, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Let us realize the difference . . . as long as we are in the natural we are limited sons of men until we do what John 1: 12, 13 tells:

12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Until we have been Born of God, we are not the sons of God, but the sons of men. God has put the sons of men, natural men, in an environment and a situation where he can discover the futility of life apart from God.

These two scriptures in Jeremiah and Proverbs give us the understanding that the problem with natural man is internal and not external and that God himself is responsible for it. Jer. 10:23 says:

23. O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Proverbs 20:24 tells us: Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?

God ordains it to be this way for a purpose. God has not put it in man to be able to direct his own way in a way that will profit him, for no matter how much we gain for ourselves, we still loose it all at the end. (See Mark 8:36, Proverbs 13:7, 1 Timothy 6:7) It is all vanity and vexation of spirit as long as we are under the sun."

This term "under the sun" is repeated many times in the Book of Ecclesiastes to draw our attention to the source of natural man's light or understanding. There are several kinds

of light the Bible speaks of. Consider Matthew 6:23 compared with John 1:9. Matthew 6:23 says: But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

John 1:9 says: That (Jesus) was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. There is a false light which is darkness, and there is the true light. Until we receive Him who is the true light and have Him abiding in us (John 14:20, 15:4,5) we are under the influence of the false.

Eph. 2:2, 3, Eph. 4:17, 18) In I Cor. 1: 19, 20, Paul calls the false light the wisdom of this world and he tells us that God has made it foolishness. In I Cor. 1:21, he says that by the wisdom of the world, the world has never known God. 2 Cor. 2:6 tells us that the wisdom of this world comes to naught. I Cor. 1: 19 refers to the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. We recognize similar terms in Isaiah 5:20, 21: Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

The wise and prudent in Isaiah 5 are mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 11: 25 when He says: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven, and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

We see then that the truth of God (the true light) is hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto the babes. Until we have been born again, and realize that we are babes in the sight of God, knowing nothing as we ought to know it, but needing to be taught of God (John 6:45), and do as Peter instructs in 1 Peter 2:1, 2, as newborn babes desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby, we shall continue to abide in the false light which is darkness and not light. No matter how much we accomplish by that false light, it will come to naught and prove to be vanity... our deeds will be evil by God's standards, and not good. We

will be wise in our own eyes and prudent in our own sight, but fools in the sight of God, and it is God who is the judge of all, as it tells us in Hebrews 12:23. Let us develop the strange truth that we find in Romans 8:20: For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope

Why has God made us, this creature, subject to vanity? God certainly had a definite reason for doing it that way. We read that God made us subject to this vain way of living, not by willingness on our part, but by His reasoning, who (He) subjected us in hope. Consequently, we come forth in this natural life with the world in our hearts. In that condition we walk according to the course of this world (Eph. 2:23), without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, etc. (Eph. 2:12) Now, as long as we are going the way of the world our life is directed along the course of the world. We cannot discover what God is doing. In other words, we cannot, while being in the way the world teaches, come to the knowledge of God. We are abiding only under the light of the sun. We are only subject to natural light or understanding, by which we cannot receive or know the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14)

1 John 2:15, 16, 17 sums up for us what our attitude should be concerning the world, what is in the world and where it is going. 15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Since we are not to love the world -and there is no profit in going the way the world teaches, we need to be saved from the course that can only lead us to destruction. It is vanity! But, our hope is kindled in verse 17 where we read in contrast that "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever". We have to be delivered from the way we are going through

this life if we are going to end up in a certain place . . . eternal life.

We cannot wander aimlessly, allowing our attitudes and our desires and the lusts of our flesh to lead our course. It is paramount that we remember that we are sojourning through here.

Look at I Peter 1: 13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. 17. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear; 18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers:

19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Now, when Peter speaks of our vain conversation, he is referring to our vain way of living. Therefore, what were you redeemed from? Vanity. Way back there, Solomon did not know about this condition, the redemption information was not available to him. It was not opened up or revealed to him. In I Peter I : 10, Peter related how the prophets of old inquired of and sought diligently for this salvation, and though they prophesied of that which should come, they did not understand nor did they know the time or unto whom they were applicable. So, we discover that God has given unto us the understanding that these things are applicable now to us and that they are spoken concerning us. Therefore, we are admonished to gird up the loins of our minds and to be sober and hope unto the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us.

As Peter continues, he speaks of our being redeemed. From what are we redeemed? Our vain way of living. What makes this life vanity? What is the vanity he is talking about that you have been redeemed from? He is speaking of the vanity of our own way. He says that in times past we were fashioning ourselves according to our own desires and lusts. Let us consider the motivating factors in our lives, their source and influence. Who do these factors have us serving? Don't we go around with our course determined by what I want for self next? Our considerations are for the great ambitions and desires that we have for self. But, God has set us in an environment and in circumstances so that one day we are going to wake up to the fact that even if we got everything we wanted, what is it? It is all vanity.

Jesus died for us that we might be redeemed from this vain way of living. This vain way of living is a death ... the dead living. Why? Because of what we are living in. The scripture says in 1 Tim. 5:6 that she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. Yet, we find it pretty comfortable living in this death--this death that consists of the pursuits of our pleasures. (See Isa. 58:13) We worship the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). We seek the pleasures, and if we succeed in that seeking, then it is done--you're dead while you live. But, if you will seek living at his right hand (Ps. 16:1 1) what will you discover? Pleasures forevermore! And, by definition, these are not temporary.

God has a purpose in redeeming us. Jesus had a purpose in dying and shedding his blood for us. He wants to save us from our living a life that ends up in vanity. If you don't let God have control of your life and direct it, that is exactly where it is going to end up. If you let God have and direct your life, will you lose it? Are you going to lose it anyway? That is what the preacher concluded, that all is vanity under the sun, because if you yield to God or if you don't yield to God, what happens? Every moment of the day you are losing your life, either in vanity, or you're losing it and finding it unto life eternal.

What is this life that we have right now? What is this something that I call my life? Our life does not consist of the abundance of our possessions, but our true life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

This life is not our life. This is what God is actually asking us to lose (Matt. 16:25,26). This that we call life was never ours to begin with. This life is a temporary thing. You did not ask for it and you cannot keep it. How could you say it is yours? At the moment God requires it, how are you going to hang on to it? If it is not yours, do you have a right to do with it what you want? No. This life is another man's (Lk. 16:12). And yet, how convinced are we that that is true. We still fashion this life according to our former lusts in our ignorance. But, what is God calling us to do?

The point that we want to see is that God sent His Son to die on the cross so that we might have opened up to us a recovery from the way we were living. We see that Jesus' death on the cross and the shedding of His blood was for our redemption, but we have thought of it in the terms of being our salvation, like He purchased for us our salvation and so now if we accept that redeeming work eventually we'll be saved. But, we've got to come to a more realistic understanding of what God is after and we can come to that understanding 1 Peter 1:18: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

Why does he talk about being redeemed with corruptible things? The value of the corruptible decreased, but there is no way for the value of the blood to decrease. It is able to purchase for you an eternal redemption from the vain way of living that you received from your fathers. We were living in a way that no matter what we did, good, bad, or indifferent, it was vanity. God wants us to enter into the way that will guarantee our life not being in vain. Before yielding to God, if you suffered, you suffered in vain. If you lived in pleasure, you lived in pleasure in vain. Now,

whether you are in pleasure or in suffering, as a result of your life being in the hands of the Father, it is no longer in vain. Look at I Peter 4: 1. Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Jesus came and he lived and he suffered in the flesh and he died, but He did it for a purpose. What was the purpose? That you might be saved? Ultimately, yes, that you might be saved, but what is the purpose that he died in the flesh, that is laid out here in I Peter 4:2?

It is that we should no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. This is our time in the flesh, but while we live in the flesh, we are not to walk after the flesh.

(See Romans 8:5-8, 12-13)

In this redemption process, one thing God wants us to redeem is the time. Why? Because the days are evil. In the evil day, all is vanity. Now, however, we have a way to redeem the time. Are you wasting time or are you redeeming time? What makes the difference? Well, whose will are you doing? Whose will are you serving? This is what Peter talks about in I Peter 4:2-6. Jesus suffered in the flesh for us on the cross for a purpose, that we should no longer spend the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

When is God our God? He is only our God when we are living unto Him. If we're looking to God to be our Saviour and Redeemer, then when is He going to be that to us? When we are living how? When we are doing His will instead of our pleasure.

The thing that I have had a burden for is that we all come to see the living truth, the living reality that what God has done for our benefit is to open up a way for us to change the way we are living now, so that our time that is spent here is not spent to the lusts of the flesh, and to the desires of the

mind, but that it is spent under the control of God so that we are not fashioning ourselves according to our own appetites, but that we might be fashioned by His hands.

For whatsoever the Lord doeth, it has an eternal value to it. (Ecc. 3:14) And this is what I want us to see clearly. Man says, "I'll meet with you Lord tomorrow, but right now I have my creature comforts to look after, I have my own will that I want to do, I've got my own thing I want to accomplish. " It grieves the heart of the Father and was expressed through Jesus when he said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you, but you would not."

There is a time for gathering (Ecc. 3:5) and I think we are at that time. God is gathering those that are His and He wants to get that hold upon our life, He wants to get the reins in His hands, not by force, not by might, not by power, but by His Spirit. We recognize that the only way of profit is to be living unto God, and now is the only time we can redeem this present time.

Look at Romans 6:1 1: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Most of the people in the world-'are absolutely dead unto God. They are not alive unto the will of God. Many in the Christian walk are still dead unto God. They have great hopes for what God is going to do for them one day. But, they are still spending their life in vain. Do you see this? How much of our lives is spent in vain? And can you see that every way that you would design yourself, even if you are successful in it, is vanity. Go ahead and get your own way, but what is it going to profit. We deceive ourselves if we think we are getting away with something by getting our own way. If you see the truth you'll know that it profits nothing. Go ahead and do your own thing. What is it going to profit. Go ahead and show yourself to be something or somebody. We have got to wake up out of the sleep/death we have.

been in and out of our dream world and establish ourselves in reality.

Let us look at 2 Cor. 5:14. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 16. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. 18. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: 19. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

We want to recognize that we are all dead, that He died for us, and because of that we should live unto Him. Notice that the emphasis in the scriptures we have been looking at is the change in the way you

live. Before, you lived unto yourself, but now you live unto God. Before, when living unto yourself, all was vanity. Now, as you live unto God, you have as a reward eternal life. No longer is anything in vain. As you live in the natural, going your own way, though you accomplish much, it is all for naught. And as you live unto God, although you accomplish little, it is not in vain. This is the thing we must allow God to do-to recover us from our vain way of living as we begin to live unto God. And, although we may suffer the loss of all things, at least it won't be in vain. In the portion of scripture just quoted, we can see what this word reconciled means. It means to be recovered from the vain way of living, that you might henceforth no longer live your life pleasing yourself, but that you might begin to live your life

pleasing God. For if you do the will of God you will have not lived in vain.

In Galatians, chapter two, Paul is talking about those who try to show themselves to be righteous. In verse nineteen it says: 19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

So we see that the whole stress is to change our way of living so that we no longer live our life to the satisfying of ourselves and in pleasures, not that there is not pleasure in doing the will of God, but you cannot live in pleasure. It is not that you are going to suffer any worse consequences as a result of doing God's will than that of doing your own will, but you are going to stop being deceived into thinking that if you can have your way in the matter that that will be the best way. And this is, I believe, what Jesus went to the cross and died for, this is what He suffered for. It is not just, as we have thought in times past, that we might be saved, but it is that our way of living right now be changed, so that we are no longer serving self, no longer serving the creature, but we are now serving the Creator. And the reason He wants us to serve the Creator is not so that the Creator can be served, but so that the Creator can serve the creature. God knows that so long as the creature is working in his own behalf and trying to better himself, that he is actually failing. There is nothing possible that he can do for himself. He must be brought into that relationship with God where God himself is the one who serves him. (Ps. 127: 1)

Do you know that in going your own way you are cheating yourself? The more I try to save my life, the more I am losing it. (Matt. 16:25) The more I try to enjoy my life, and build something and make something out of my life, the further away I am getting from reality, and truth. Though I accomplish all my objectives, what is it in the end? Vanity. God sent his Son to die on the cross for us so that we might be recovered from that vain way of life. There is only one profit, and it is not under the sun, it is under God. We have got to come out from under the sun and get under God and

when you do that you cease moving in the way of no profit, and start moving in the way of profit. There are some that think that gain is godliness, but God is teaching us that godliness with contentment is great gain. (I Tim. 6:6-7) All else is vanity and vexation of spirit.

First Corinthians 15, verse 58 reads: Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Amen