

## Life Flashed Before Your Eyes

✦ **Hating life in meaningless toil (1:2; 2:18-23)**

✦ **Pleasing God in satisfied life (2:24-26)**

Disclaimer: As far as we know, they did not have MP3 players and iPods <sup>1</sup> in 1000 B.C.

Almost 100 years the LORD Jehovah has given me under the sun. But where I'm headed now would be so different if not for the time I fell, and the LORD lifted me up again. I was fifteen years old.

I wanted to stay home with my friends, but Granddad insisted I go up to Jerusalem to see the King. All those old people, but at least I'd have my tunes. Mom couldn't afford an iPod, but my little MP3 player would do. I had it set on repeat a new song by Travie McCoy and Bruno Mars with sweet lyrics and some solid rap. I don't like to sing all the words 'cause they're bad, but the refrain keeps ringing in my head: "I just wanna be a billionaire – so, so, so bad!" I thought I had rhythm. I was so cool.

It's only about fourteen miles from Jericho up to Jerusalem, but it feels like straight up. 7,000 feet from below sea level up to Mount Zion, what a climb! I feel fine compared to all the old pilgrims, but I'm huffing too. They're singing old songs of Zion. I just crank my tunes louder. It's easier to keep moving on up with your eyes closed. The path is well worn. People keep looking at me funny, but I don't care. "I just wanna be billionaire – so, so, so bad!" Then it happened! I didn't hear everyone shouting at me when suddenly the ground dropped away. Tumbling head over heels, my **Life Flashed Before my Eyes**. My ear pods fell out as I kept falling until I landed hard on a ledge.

Granddad was so relieved when they got me out. "Son, can you hear me?" "Yea, I'm okay. But I hurt all over." "Can you walk?" "I think so." Someone helped me the last few miles until finally the old city with the new temple shone across the Kidron Valley. It almost took my breath away. It almost took my pain away. Somehow the "Billionaire" song seemed so irrelevant. What if I had died? Loosing my MP3 hurt, but not like the rest of me. Down a little, then up and in the temple at last.

I remember everyone waiting for King Solomon. Kings and counselors from all over the world came just to listen to him talk about plants and history and everything else under the sun. Granddad and Mom said how he had some bad years. His huge harem of wives "led him astray," as Granddad put it. I was thinking, "Maybe that wouldn't be so bad. This king is more than a billionaire. He's got fame and fortune and everything! I just wanna be a king someday!"

Since Granddad was an important official, I got to stand close to King Solomon during his speech. His hair, once jet black, was mostly gray. But what surprised me were his eyes. They looked so sad, like pools of deep pain way down inside." The more I listened, the more I realized why.

***"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." "That's really a downer," I thought. But he kept on: "What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look! This is something new'? It was here already, long***

<sup>1</sup> iPod is a registered trademark of Apple Corporation and is used here only for popular purposes.

*ago; it was here before our time. There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.”* (1:3-11 NIV)

Now I was thinking, “I never thought of it that way. Soon my parents and grandparents will be gone, and so will I. Life seems to circle without meaning.” Stuck on my tunes, I was not looking where I was going until my **Life Flashed Before my Eyes**. King Solomon was showing me the end from the beginning, what my life would be like if I kept shutting out God. Wine, women and song sounded so good at first, but now he was **Hating life in meaningless toil**. “*Chasing after the wind*,” he called it. So true! When I got my MP3 player, I were mad it wasn’t an iPod. But the kids with iPods wanted bigger ones and more songs. I didn’t want Mom to be sad, but sometimes that’s how I felt too.

No wonder King Solomon’s eyes were so sad: “*I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.*” (2:18-23) I nearly fell to my death, but I was dying inside. Even billionaires have to leave it all behind.

Then the King stopped. His face changed. His eyes sparkled the way Granddad’s did talking about the temple on Mount Zion and the Messiah who would deliver His people: “*A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*” (2:24-26)

Solomon had been living a life of sin. But so was I. Everything was “Me!...Me!...Me!” But that was me lying on that ledge almost dead. That was me pushing for a life of despair. That was me wanting to be a billionaire, as empty as your breath on a cold winter day. God could have left me to invest and save and finally die, leaving it all behind anyway. But like Solomon, I was receiving from God priceless “*wisdom, knowledge and happiness*” in His Word. I could enjoy God’s blessings with thanks without being enslaved by them. What a blessing when you’re young if your **Life Flashed Before Your Eyes!**

After forty-five minutes King Solomon was looking right at me. “*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them’ – before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him – before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Everything is meaningless!’”* (12:1-8 NIV)

Soon my body will turn to dust in the ground, but my spirit will return to my Creator, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier. Thanks to God’s merciful Messiah, I know why King Solomon concluded like this: “*Fear God and keep [guard] his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.*” (12:13f NIV) In our great Messiah-Deliverer everything is good and life is joy. Amen.