

2117 - BUREAUCRACY & WEALTH - Ecc 5:8-20

PRELIMS. Sol continues to show that life without God is meaningless. He has 'diverted' to show how we must be **humble** before God when we go to worship Him. **Careful** re **dreams**, and **vows**!

*We must remember this was written by a man of **wide experience** of State, Government and Civil organisation! He lived in a **Palace** where one of the most important nations of the world ran **all** civil affairs! Sol organised employment and labour forces in building the Temple where he engaged in **foreign trade** and **hired** many different **ethnic workers**! He started round the clock **shift work** and used many skilled artisans! So, he knows what he is talking about when he talks about the **economy** and the **governance** of a nation! No **novice** - unlike **Jeremy Corbyn** who was never in a Cabinet office!!

He is very **honest** - for he **criticises** his **own** profession! He is actually complaining about the **failure** of **bureaucracy**! He is saying that the bureaucratic system is **corrupt**! He states emphatically *If you see in a province the **oppression** of the **poor** and the **violation** of **justice** and **righteousness**, do not be **amazed** at the matter!*[1]

So, what's new?' The same today! No matter what government is in power, they are all in it for **power/perks**! *But there is **nothing wrong** with **bureaucracy** per se! Bureaucracy is **essential**! Its an **institution** from God! He instructed Moses to divide Israel into **geographical/social/economic** divisions with **laws/regulations** governing each group! The **land** was to be divided among the **clans**. The **judges** were to rule over the social problems with **boundaries** for rich and poor and then between the homebred and the foreigners; the priests were to govern over the temple and religious matters, etc, etc! Bureaucracy - essential! Bad government **better** than no government

We have a **template** in the laws and regulations of the OT on which to **base** our present day affairs. God has not left Himself without a witness as to the **principles** that are to be applied in ruling a nation!!

It is the **people** involved in bureaucracy who gives bureaucracy a **bad press**! Bureaucracy **deserves** a bad press - but **not** because it **administers** affairs of State - but because it administers affairs **badly**

and **wrongly!** We break so many of **God's** laws and principles that life is turned upside down! So, we must *not be amazed* when there is *oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness* in the **institutions** of life today - it was always the same!

Sol here gives us the **reason** for the problems. There were **too many bureaucrats and levels and tiers** of government! There was '**Top-Down Power Control**'! Look: *for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them* [8]!! **APP** It is not just Holyrood, but Westminster, then Brussels, then Straussberg, then UN!! *The Biblical position is '**Bottom-Up Power Change**'. The **people**, at the **bottom**, should have a say in who rules over them - but nowadays we have **unelected officials** making **big** decisions on **our** behalf - **without** even **asking** for our opinion! There are quangos run on high wages for the Prime Minister's **cronies!**

cultivated fields [9] was the **main means** of **production** in that agricultural economy! If used aright, there is *gain for a land in every way* - for the king as well as the people. The text is unclear but all agree that it means the fields 'serve' (provide) for the king. The AV= 'the king himself is **served** by the field'; NIV is 'the king **profits** from the field'; NASB 'the field is an **advantage**' Sol complaint was the king was taking all the profit and the people were suffering! That is still the problem - too many bureaucrats filling forms. Every nation needs **producers** of wealth, much more than administrators of documents and papers filled with statistics! **Too much** is spent on **administration** and not enough of **production of goods!**

*Sol now gives us **another reason** for **oppression** in the land! The **love of money!** Note: it is **not shortage** of money - it is the **love** of it - the **desire** to **obtain** it! It is the **desire** for money that 'destroys' people. *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs* [1Tim 6:9cf] The word 'desires' in 1Tim6:9 = **lust!** When we 'lust', an **appetite** is **created** - not **satisfied!** In 'lust', a **promise** is presented to the mind. Sol gives us many **reasons why** we should **avoid** giving in to it!

Money Does Not Satisfy! *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money!*[10] Millionaires **seek** more and **more** millions! Why? Because **money** does **not** satisfy! I have heard a rich man say ‘Oh, money, what’s money?’ Friends - we were created for something much better than money! Money is just **means** of **obtaining** things. But obtaining **things** is not satisfying! Is Jose **Mourinho** satisfied? Sad face on Awards Ceremony, £10m annual salary? Is his daughter with £5,000+ outfit for a party as photographed this week? No they want something more than money? Acclaim, power, contentment!

The More We Have The More We Want! *nor he who loves wealth with increase* [10b] The very **opposite** happens! Rather than being delighted and satisfied, the **desire** for more is **increased!** Just think about **your own** life - have **you** not desired something, and got it - yet you still **hanker** after something else! Its like that all along life’s way! Luther on death-bed ‘I thankThee Lord that you made me **poor**’

The More We Get, The More People Seek a Claim On It! *When goods increase, they increase who eat them* [11a] Of course there is the **taxman!** **George Best**’s son **sued** his auntie for selling the **valuable memorabilia** which he claimed as his! The pop-star ‘**Sting**’ lost several millions of pounds to accountants who **cheated** him! Creditors from ‘no-where’ appeared to ‘siffen-off’ £1,000s. Friends ‘arise’ to whom you ‘**owed**’ **money!** **Charities** make you feel **guilty** by not giving to their cause! So, as Sol says *what advantage has their owner but to see them with their eyes* [11c]

The More You Have, The More Sleepless Nights You Have! *the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep* [12] Or the **abundance** of the rich...! Worried about how to **save** it from the taxman or others who are ‘in line’ for it! Abraham was rich in livestock and silver and gold! The word is **heavy-** he was **burdened** with all he had! Business tycoons; property developers; banking investors work thru the night trying to ‘**protect**’ what they worked so hard for thru the day! They work to **get** it - and then to **keep** it! **Dan Brown** author of ‘The Da Vinci Code’, multi millionaire, was asked after gaining more millions from that book ‘What’s new in your life now?’ ‘Nothing - I still **rise at 4am** to work!’ He **has** to get up at that time!

We Can Work Hard To Earn It, To Keep It - Then Lose It All And Nothing To Give To Your Family! *This is a grievous evil that I have seen...riches were **kept** by their owner to **his hurt**, and those riches were **lost** in a **bad venture**. And he is the **father** of a **son**, but he has **nothing** in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again...and shall take **nothing** for his **toil**...just as he came, so shall he go...what gain is there for him who **toils** for the **wind*** [13,14] Again we can cite George Best! Made millions but drank it all and really left **nothing** to his inheritors, but **debts £193,000!**

God In Providence Can Take Away a Man's Fortune At Short Notice! God can change a man's fortune in a moment! God's glory and kingdom may be **more advanced** by our **loss!** **Bishop Ryle**, went to bed the son of a millionaire banker and woke up the son of a bankrupt! But what a spiritual blessing Bishop Ryle became to many people! ***William Randolph Hearst**, the publishing magnate, amassed a fortune during his lifetime, but ended his days amidst the opulence and splendour of his castle in California, sitting in a basement playing over and over again the movies of his paramour from Hollywood seeking enjoyment from the past! **Frederick Forsyth** (Day of the Jackal), sits in his armchair in his estate in Buckinghamshire, **unfulfilled**. His wife asks him 'Lets go to Australia for a holiday'. He complains he has 'been there, and seen that umpteen time, he has been everywhere and seem everything in the world, and there is **nothing more for me to see!**' Alexander 'No more worlds...

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO RICHES?

Some people **feel guilty** about having a good meal when so many in **Ethiopia** are **starving!** They say it is wrong! That's **home-made theology!** *what I have seen to be **good** and **fitting** is to eat and drink and find **enjoyment** in all the toil with which one toils....**everyone**... whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to **enjoy** them...this is the **gift of God*** [18,19]! A gift to enjoy blessings!!

Enjoy the fruit of your labours! If you have worked and earned honest money - **enjoy the fruit of it!** And remember - the more you make, the more God gets (you are supposed to **tithe**) Piper = 'Earn as much as possible so you can build **more churches!**'

*One thing is sure - when we die, we **cannot take it with us!** The **bottom line** is that riches were **never really our's** in the 1st place - they were always God's, we're just asked to 'make good use of it'!!