

The Ladder to Nothing

Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 HCSB Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind. (18) I hated all my work at which I labored under the sun because I must leave it to the man who comes after me. (19) And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun. This too is futile. (20) So I began to give myself over to despair concerning all my work I had labored at under the sun. (21) For there is a man whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, but he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it. This too is futile and a great wrong. (22) For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors with under the sun? (23) For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile. (24) There is nothing better for man than to eat, drink, and to enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God's hand. (25) For who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from Him? (26) For to the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and accumulating in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God's sight. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

The Climb

- **Luke 9:25 HCSB** What is a man benefited if he gains the whole world, yet loses or forfeits himself?

The Compensation

- **Ezekiel 37:1-2 HCSB** The hand of the LORD was on me, and He brought me out by His Spirit and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. (2) He led me all around them. There were a great many of them on the surface of the valley, and they were very dry.
- **Romans 6:23 HCSB** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Cross

- **Ezekiel 37:3-10 HCSB** Then He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I replied, "Lord GOD, *only* You know." (4) He said to me, "Prophecy concerning these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! (5) This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. (6) I will put tendons on you, make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you so that you come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD." (7) So I prophesied as I had been commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. (8) As I looked, tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. (9) He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man. Say to it: This is what the Lord GOD says: Breath, come from the four winds and breathe into these slain so that they may live!" (10) So I prophesied as He commanded me; the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.

The Call

- **Luke 9:23-24 HCSB** Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (24) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it.