

# Ecclesiastes 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun:  
because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

## Analysis

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**Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun**—the strong Hebrew verb 'sane'" (אָנָה, hated) expresses intense negative emotion, stronger than mere dislike. After comprehensive experimentation (2:4-10), Solomon reaches the bitter conclusion that even his impressive achievements produced not satisfaction but resentment. The reason: **because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me**. The Hebrew 'azav' (אָזַב, leave) means to abandon or forsake. Death forces relinquishing all accumulated wealth, projects, and accomplishments to successors.

This verse articulates a profound frustration: we invest decades building, acquiring, and achieving, only to die and transfer everything to heirs who neither earned it nor may appreciate it. The following verse (2:19) heightens this frustration—the heir may be 'a wise man or a fool,' yet will control everything the builder labored to create. This reality exposes the fundamental futility of labor pursued as an end in itself. Only work done as service to God, whose rewards transcend death, escapes this frustration (1 Corinthians 15:58). Jesus warned: 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' (Luke 12:20).

## Historical Context

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Solomon's concern proved prophetic. First Kings 12 records that his son Rehoboam foolishly rejected wise counsel, provoking the kingdom's division.

Jeroboam's northern rebellion split the united monarchy Solomon built, validating the Preacher's anxiety about incompetent successors squandering hard-won achievements. Ancient Near Eastern kings obsessed over succession—Egyptian pharaohs built pyramids partly to preserve their legacy, and Mesopotamian kings erected monuments ensuring remembrance. Yet countless kingdoms rose and fell, dynasties ended, and monuments crumbled. Only God's kingdom endures eternally (Daniel 2:44). The New Testament redirects labor toward eternal rewards—"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). Church history confirms that earthly empires fade while faithful service to Christ yields eternal fruit. The Reformers emphasized vocation—all legitimate labor, done as unto the Lord, has eternal significance despite earthly transience.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does recognizing that death will transfer your life's work to others affect your attitude toward your labor and legacy?
2. What labor are you investing in that will transcend death and last for eternity rather than being left to uncertain heirs?

## Interlinear Text

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תְּמַת	עַמְלָה	שָׁאַת	כָּל	עַמְלִי	שָׁאַת אָנִי	וְשָׁנָת אָתִי	Yea I hated	H589	H853	H3605	all my labour	H589	which I had taken	H8478	
H8130				H5999			H6001								
הַשְׁמָשָׁה	שָׁאַבְדֵּךְ	לְאַדְךָ	שְׁהִיא הַ	אַתְּ	בְּעַמְלִי	מִשְׁמָשָׁה	אַתְּ	בְּעַמְלִי	מִשְׁמָשָׁה	אַתְּ	בְּעַמְלִי	מִשְׁמָשָׁה	אַתְּ	בְּעַמְלִי	
under the sun	because I should leave	it unto the man	H1961	H120	H3240	H8121								that shall be after	H310

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 39:6** (Parallel theme): Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

**Psalms 49:10** (Parallel theme): For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

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