

Ecclesiastes 6:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

Analysis

A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour—the triple blessing (oshер וnekhasim ve-khavod) represents comprehensive material prosperity: riches (osher, abundance), wealth (nekhasim, possessions/property), and honor (khavod, glory/reputation). **So that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth**—complete material satisfaction with no unmet external needs. Yet—devastating turn—**God giveth him not power to eat thereof** (ולא יshallat ha'elohim le'ekhol mimenu). The verb shalat means 'to give power/authority/capacity.' God grants the wealth but withholds the ability to enjoy it.

But a stranger eateth it—someone outside the family inherits and consumes what the man accumulated. **This is vanity, and it is an evil disease** (חוליה, choli ra)—literally 'a sore/painful affliction.' This scenario depicts wealth's peculiar torment: possessing everything yet enjoying nothing, working for strangers' benefit rather than your own satisfaction.

Historical Context

Ancient inheritance laws normally ensured wealth passed to biological heirs (Numbers 27:8-11), making inheritance by 'strangers' particularly tragic—

suggesting death without heirs, confiscation, or family disaster. Solomon himself experienced this: despite his wealth, much of his kingdom went to Jeroboam and the divided kingdom after his son Rehoboam's foolishness (1 Kings 12). The observation that God controls both giving wealth and granting capacity to enjoy it reflects covenant theology: all blessings flow from God's sovereign hand, and material prosperity without His favor proves empty (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). This principle recurs throughout Scripture: rich fools die suddenly (Luke 12:20), wealth gained wrongly brings no joy (Proverbs 13:11), and treasure must be enjoyed with God's blessing (Ecclesiastes 5:19).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Have you experienced or observed situations where someone possessed material abundance yet lacked capacity to enjoy it due to health, circumstances, or spiritual emptiness?
2. How does recognizing that God sovereignly grants both wealth and the ability to enjoy it reshape your prayer life and expectations?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר	אֲשֶׁר	יִתְּعַנֵּן	לֹא	בְּאֱלֹהִים	עַשֶּׂר	וְנִכְסָם	וְדָבָר
A man	H834	hath given	H0	to whom God	riches	wealth	and honour
H376		H5414		H430	H6239	H5233	H3519
וְאֵין כֵּן	רַבָּס	רַבָּס	לְנַפְשׁוֹ	לְנַפְשׁוֹ	מִכֶּל	אֲשֶׁר	וְאֵין כֵּן
H369	so that he wanteth	H2638	nothing for his soul	H5315		H3605	H834
וְתַּחֲנוּ הָ	וְתַּחֲנוּ	וְתַּחֲנוּ	וְשָׁלִיט	וְשָׁלִיט	בְּאֱלֹהִים	וְאָכֵל	וְאָכֵל
of all that he desireth	H3808	giveth him not power	H7980	to whom God	H430	eateth	H398
H183					H430		H398
וְאָכֵל פּוֹ	וְאָכֵל פּוֹ	וְאָכֵל פּוֹ	בְּלִ	בְּלִ	בְּלִ	וְאָכֵל	וְאָכֵל
H4480	H3588	A man	H5237	eateth	H2088	it this is vanity	disease
H4480	H3588	A man	H5237	eateth	H2088	it this is vanity	H2483
וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ	בְּלִ	בְּלִ	בְּלִ	וְאָכֵל	וְאָכֵל
וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ	וְעַ
and it is an evil	H1931						
H7451							

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 5:19 (References God): Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

Psalms 17:14 (Parallel theme): From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

Psalms 73:7 (Parallel theme): Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

1 Kings 3:13 (Parallel theme): And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

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.

Lamentations 5:2 (Parallel theme): Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.

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