

# Ecclesiastes Lesson 3 | Eccl. 4:1-3, 5:1-2 |

## 8/4/13

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- The oppression of the less fortunate and the power of the wicked. Eccl. 4:1
  - **Read Eccl. 4:1**
  - Solomon observed that there were people under oppression throughout the world.
  - Individuals of higher ranking likely kings, rulers governors etc, were being cruel to others, most likely those that were less fortunate. Either slaves or just people of a lower status. You common peasant.
  - Solomon identifies what seems to be “lack of judgment” against those that abuse their power.
    - ***We did speak of this last week but I want to read some additional supporting scripture, that and this question was repeated to God on numerous times throughout the Bible so I see no harm in examining this again.***
    - Solomon saw there seemed to be power with those that are wicked.
    - That they seemed to be able to live on in their sinful and evil ways “unchecked”. Where is the justice?
    - This isn’t anything new as there are others in the Bible who have asked God the same question.
      - Job 21:7
        - “Why do the wicked continue to live, growing old and becoming powerful?”
      - Jeremiah 12:1
        - “You will be righteous, Lord even if I bring a case against you. Yet, I wish to contend with you: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the treacherous live at ease?”
      - Several places in the Old Testament people are asking God why evil prospers. Why do those who oppress seem to be strong and upright?
    - To have the life of the wicked, to have that power can be tempting.
      - Psalms 73:1-5
        - “God is indeed good to Israel, to the pure in heart. But as for me, my feet almost slipped; my steps nearly went astray. For I envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have an easy time until they die, and their bodies are well fed.”
        - Oh how strong is the temptation to be evil and wicked. How do they (on the surface) look to be so good? The joy and fun that the wicked have seems to be the way one would want to live because on the surface it looks so great and wonderful.
        - **To indulge yourself in the pleasures of life with no regard for anyone else but yourself, is one of Satan’s tools to take us off our Godly appointed tasks.**
          - Satan uses the temptation of the wicked because he knows it can destroy us.
      - **The draw to the wicked especially when they are in a position of power can certainly be a temptation; do you believe that a more mature Christian can better withstand this temptation? Are our kids more susceptible? If so should we instill Christian values early in their lives? Is there danger if we do not do this when they are young?**
    - Even though the wicked looks strong and prosperous, they will ultimately perish.

- In response to the questions that were posed by Job, Jeremiah and others in the Bible we have a Psalm from David that provides the proper answer.
- Do not envy or become agitated by evildoers, instead trust in the Lord.
  - Psalms 37:1-6
  - If we put our faith and trust in God he will bless us.
- Be patient because the wicked will perish and those that follow God will inherit the land.
  - Psalms 37:8-11
  - Being angry about the injustice can only bring harm to ourselves, the evil will receive their justice from God.
- The lord laughs at the wicked because he knows his day is coming
  - Psalms 37:12-13
  - The Lord knows the end for the wicked and he laughs because he knows that he will serve them justice.
- The strong appearance of the wicked is deceiving.
  - Psalms 37:35-36
  - Even though we may see someone who on the surface appear to be rooted firmly God can wipe them away like the wind.
- The wicked will perish
  - Psalms 37:20,38
  - Again the wicked will be destroyed.
- Scripture makes it clear that sin is tempting; Satan makes the life of the wicked look prosperous and rewarding.
  - **But we having the scripture, we know that the external appeal of the wicked life is simply a mask. A good looking mask that covers death.**
  - **Once the short time of pleasure goes by the mask is removed and the truth is revealed...death.**
- Solomon examined the suffering and without God, it was better to be dead. Eccl. 4:2-3
  - If you take the view that there is no God, and you one who has experienced the oppression of rulers, where they seem to have complete power over you and you suffer.
  - That the dead are to be admired because they are not experiencing this great suffering. Without God the dead turn to ash and there is no soul, so the dead are envied.
  - In fact even better are those that were never born because they never had to experience such suffering that the oppressed experienced under the sun.
  - Job identified with this:
    - Job 3:11-13
      - “Why was I not stillborn; why didn’t I die as I came from the womb? Why did the knees receive me, and why were there breasts for me to nurse? Now I would certainly be lying down in peace; I would be asleep.”
      - Job was in a state of deep duress when he said this, not unlike someone else who was under the severe oppression of a tyrant or dictator.
  - As Christians we know we have a better life at death but we have a duty here before we are called home.
    - The Christian is well aware that when we leave this earth that we have a wonderful place to go and that is Heaven.
    - So a Christian in times of turmoil and struggle might even think that it would be best if they were called home now to glory instead of saying here on this earth.

- But as Christians we also know that it is not God's will for us that upon immediately accepting Christ that we are to go straight to Heaven, or if we suffer we should be called home.
- Because if that was the case then how could anyone become saved, there would be no one to spread the good news.
- Paul had the same thought that he would like to go Heaven with Christ.
  - Philippians 1:21-26
    - "For me living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ-which is far better-but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.
    - Paul knew that he would gain at his death and he would enjoy the glory of Heaven which is far better but Paul knew he had a task still yet to complete on earth.
    - Paul's had a reason for living which was to glorify Christ and by doing this he would strengthen his fellow brethren.
  - This is an excellent example for all of us, that in our times of troubles and suffering we may long for Heaven and want God to take us away, but if we remember the scripture we can have assurance that we will one day be there, but for now we have work to do we have been assigned tasks by God.
  - This task like Paul stated is to be an ambassador for Christ so that we like Paul may grow the confidence of others in Christ Jesus.
    - If we are obedient to Christ the time that we spend here will be a blessing and a benefit to others.
    - Are we not commanded to make disciples of men which is to make followers of Jesus? Are we not tasked with strengthening our fellow Christians?
  - Quite simply we are to worry less about our wellbeing and our happiness and to do the task that God has commanded, which is to share the gospel so that all may have a chance to believe and to be saved.
  - Yes it is far better to be with Christ in Heaven but it is this hope exactly that will sustain us through to complete the tasks that God has given us.
    - When we as Christians live our life for Christ it is something that we will never regret, on our death beds we will not say Oh I spent too much time doing God's work.
    - We can never spend too much time doing what God has commanded of us.
  - **Have you felt the same way as Paul did? Have you longed for Heaven but realized that you are still needed here to strengthen others? Have you taken God's tasks to heart to make the best use of your time before you spend an eternity in Heaven?**
- Envy and laziness 4:4-6
  - These verses speak of the envy that a man may have upon another because of his abilities or his work or his wealth. Solomon sees this as also being a pursuit of the wind.
- It is better to have a friend than to be lonely 4:7-12 (Higher Ranks)
- The poor who is wise is better than the foolish king. 4:13-16
- The state of our heart when we are in the presence of God. Eccl. 5:1-2
  - ***Read verses 5:1-2***

- Solomon speaks to how we are supposed to present ourselves when we go the house of God, weather this is in prayer or even church.
- He says to guard our steps because there is a certain demeanor that we are to have when we approach God.
- When we go to God it should not be done ritualistically with meaningless words but we should be humble with a submissive spirit, knowing that we are talking with God our creator.
- Solomon says it is better to be obedient than to offer the sacrifice of fools.
  - Or it is better to have listened to God and do as he asked. Because God no longer wanted sacrifices.
  - Regarding sacrifices God at one time had in fact wanted them, it was required, but at this time God no longer wanted them.
  - God wanted obedience instead of sacrifice
    - Jeremiah 7:21-23
      - “This is what the Lord of host, the God of Israel, says: “Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices, and eat the meat yourselves, for when I brought your ancestors out of the lad of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offering and sacrifice. However, I did give them this command: **Obey Me**, and then I will be your God, and you will be My people. You must follow every way I command you so that it may go well with you.”
      - God no longer desired their physical sacrifices he instead wanted their obedience and likewise our obedience.
  - Obedience is the spirit of the law’s requirements
    - Deuteronomy 10:12
      - “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you except to fear the Lord you god by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul?”
      - Fear God, be obedient, love and worship God with all your heart and soul. This should be something all Christians constantly strive for.
  - So instead of a physical sacrifice it is now a matter of the heart, we must be obedient, humble and submissive to God. This is how we must approach God.
    - Psalms 51:17
      - “The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. God, you will not despise a broken and humbled heart.”
    - Isaiah 66:2
      - “My hand made all these things, and so they all came into being. This is the Lord’s declaration. I will look favorably on this kind of person: **one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and trembles at my word.**”
        - **Does that describe us?**
      - The lord didn’t say the arrogant or self-righteous he said the humble and submissive.
  - We may not have to worry about being a fool by offering physical sacrifices but we may not always go to God as he has asked.
    - If we are actively disobeying God and going to him with an unrepentant heart we are being disobedient.
    - If we go to God with an arrogant and self-righteous heart, that is being disobedient and unfavorable in his eyes.

- Proverbs 15:8
  - “The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”
- This certainly doesn’t meant that we have to be perfect to go to God or none of us ever could, but we must be mindful of our heart, repent of our sins and be humbly submissive to God. Show God respect.
- We will be much more favorable to God when we approach him this way.
- We must also be sure that we put the focus on our heart when we go to God and not our external appearance.
  - God doesn’t care what you outwardly actions look like or who sees you, he cares about what is in your heart when you go to him.
  - You can go to God in the shower, driving to work at any time. All that matters is the state of your heart.
  - Matthew 6:5-6
    - “Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward! But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And you father who sees in secret will reward you.”
- **Do you feel closer to God when you are obedient, humble and submissive instead of out of necessity or habit?**
- Don’t be hasty with your speech to God, let your words be few.
  - God knows what we want even before we ask it.
    - Matthew 6:7-8
      - “When you pray, don’t’ babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words. Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.”
      - If God knows the things we need before we ask them, then let our words be few makes perfect since.
      - This doesn’t mean we should never pray because God knows what we need but it certainly means we don’t have to give every minute detail.
  - We should not be hasty or rash, it must come from the heart and not just our mouth.
    - The words of our mouth must be the product of our hearts.
    - No matter what we may say with our lips no matter how eloquent it may seem to someone listening to us it may seem. It is meaningless if our heart is not behind those words.
    - If I utter what seems to be a heartfelt prayer to God but my heart isn’t in it, it is futile and meaningless.
    - Matthew 15:8
      - “These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.
      - Jesus makes it perfect perfectly clear that is must come from the heart.
- **Do you at times let your prayers be hasty that are just words that don’t come from the heart?**
- God is in Heaven and we are on Earth.
  - We approach God in a different manor that we do men because God is our creator who lives forever in Heaven, while we are frail creatures who live on Earth.
  - We must do as God as asked we must be obedient.

- God looks at our heart and not our outwardly appearances, it is so important that we make sure our Christianity is true and not something done externally only to please others.