

Ecclesiastes Lesson 4 | Eccl. 5:1-7, 7:23-29 | 8/11/13

- The proper way to present ourselves before God (Eccl. 5:1-3)
 - **Read Eccl. 5:1-3**
 - Solomon says it is better to be obedient than to offer the sacrifice of fools. (Eccl. 5:1)
 - God wants obedience from us and not sacrifices.
 - God wants us to be obedient, to do as he has commanded us to do. We are to keep his commandments and live a Christian life the way he has asked.
 - God would rather have this than the sacrifice of fools.
 - A fool might be one who thinks that worshiping God is a matter of empty words and rituals.
 - Saying empty words praising God that has not meaning isn't really worshiped.
 - Physically attending church but not having your heart anywhere near God is simply you sitting in a building with no real purpose.
 - Matthew 15:8
 - "These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.
 - **Is our Christianity real? Is it from the heart or is it simply a show? God will know.**
 - It might be a check-box in society's view but it's not obedience to God.
 - It is a matter of the heart and not our outwardly looks or physical actions. God wants us to be obedient, to fear him and worship him with all our heart and soul.
 - 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."
 - God cares about what is on your heart and not your lips, if your praises or prayers to God are not coming from the heart, then they are simple words that are meaningless.
 - Don't be hasty with your speech to God so let your words be few. (Eccl. 5:2-3)
 - **Read Eccl. 5:2-3**
 - We can let our words be few to God because he is not like man, he can read our thoughts and he knows what we need even before we ask.
 - Let our speech to God come from the heart and be meaningful, if we don't know what we need or don't know the words to say God can do that for us, our heart just needs to be in the right place.
 - Solomon is speaking against heartless praying or meaningless repetitions
 - Matthew 6:7
 - "When you pray, don't babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words."
 - The prayer must be from the heart.
 - Long prayers are good, Jesus prayed all night.
 - But if they are meaningless words of repetition then the prayer is meaningless.
 - To speak meaningless words of repetition in prayer to God is a sacrifice of fools.

- A fools dream makes him think that this is what God wants.
- Fulfill your vows to God (Eccl. 5:4-5)
 - **Read Eccl. 5:4-5**
 - When we think of a vow we tend to think of a promise. It's simply making a promise to someone that you will do whatever it is you said you would do.
 - In the Bible a vow is always used in a reference to God a promise that you make to him. This is primarily done in the Old Testament.
 - Numbers 30:2
 - "When a man makes a vow to the Lord or swears an oath to put himself under an obligation, he must not break his word; he must do whatever he has promised."
 - He must NOT break his word he MUST do what he promised.
 - So what does a vow look like?
 - I tend to think of a vow as not so literal but perhaps when in prayer I have promised God that I would do something or not do something.
 - A prayer to God stating that you vow to serve and worship him forever.
 - A vow to turn away from a particular sin.
 - Or perhaps a vow that Lord if you deliver me from something then I will do xyz
 - **We'll look at some examples and discuss that in a bit.**
 - Solomon wisely tells us of the importance that we fulfill the vow or we keep the promise that we made to God.
 - We know how important is for us to keep our promise that we make to others, so how much more important is it that we keep our promises that we make to God?
 - If we don't keep our vow to God then we offend God, we are the fool.
 - In fact there is a scripture from the NT that shows what happened when a man named Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit.
 - Acts 5:1-6
 - God keeps his promises to us, he cannot lie.
 - Since God always keeps his promises and cannot lie, then shouldn't we do the same?
 - God does not change his mind
 - Numbers 23:19
 - "God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?"
 - God does what he says he will do.
 - God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled
 - Joshua 21:45
 - "None of the good promises the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled."
 - God's promise of eternal life.
 - Titus 1:1-2
 - "Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to build up the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that lead to godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, **who cannot lie, promised** before time began"
 - Scripture is clear that God keeps his promises, and aren't we glad that he does?
 - **So why would we expect it to be ok for us to break our promises to him?**

- **Have you made a promise to God that you have broken? How would feel if you were brought to the great white throne and God asked you why you lied?**
- If you are not going to be able to fulfill your vow, then don't make one at all. (Eccl. 5:6-7)
 - **Read Eccl. 5:6-7**
 - So we know that we are not supposed to break our promises to God, and a promise that we make that we know we don't intend to keep is a lie.
 - There is nothing wrong with making a vow to God, just be sure that you keep it because to not keep the vow or promise is a sin.
 - Deuteronomy 23:21-23
 - "If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to keep it, because he will require it of you, and **it will be counted against you as sin**. But if you refrain from making a vow, it will not be counted against you as sin. If you are going to make a vow to God you had better keep it. Be careful to do whatever comes from your lips, because you have freely vowed what you promised to the Lord your God
 - To make a promise and then to take it back or not keep it is a sin.
 - There are numerous examples of people in the Bible who have made vows to God:
 - Israelites made a vow in return for God's favor.
 - Numbers 21:1-3
 - Samuel was born because a vow made by Hannah.
 - 1 Samuel 1:10-11, 20
 - In these instances the people making the vows upheld them, so then should we if we choose to make a vow to God.
 - To say your vow or promise to God was a mistake means you didn't put enough thought before you made it, you made a hasty decision.
 - Verse 6 – "do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake"
 - Proverbs 20:25
 - "It is a trap for anyone to dedicate something rashly and later to reconsider his vows"
 - This is why it is important that if you are going to make a promise to God that you put real thought into it before you make it.
 - A promise to God CANNOT be empty words.
 - Dreams and meaningless words are futile, we must fear God.
- **What kind of vows or promises have you made to God? Have you ever told God that if he would deliver you from your affliction that you would in return do something for him? How do you feel about this kind of vow?**
- **Have you promised God that you would always praise him because you have seen him work in your life?**
- **Have you ever not kept your vow because it was hasty or for some other reason?**
- Solomon provides practical Wisdom. (Eccl. 7:1-21)
 - As we have read through the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon has examined several aspects of human lives and the things that we live for.
 - He has discovered that everything is futile without God everything from earthly wisdom to pleasure, work, wealth and possessions.
 - He has spoken of death being preferred to life if you are under oppression.
 - We have seen that there is a purpose for the things that we do that God has appointed us tasks for us to complete with the time that we have here on earth.
 - Solomon speaks to what he found:
- Solomon's wisdom independent of God was not enough (Eccl. 7:23-25)
 - **Read Eccl. 7:23-25**

- Solomon tried to be wise independently of God, but he realized that it was beyond him.
- He had wisdom enough to discover the vanity of the world and that nothing in the world alone was fulfilling for his soul, but he realized that even with his wisdom he was not able to understand everything.
- Solomon had set himself out to explore and seek wisdom in every way that he could, but as he says in verse 23 “it was beyond me”
- This is much like what we saw in Job.
 - Job 11:7-8
 - “Can you fathom the depths of God or discover the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you know?”
- Solomon discovered the evil of the great sin that he was guilty of (Eccl. 7:26-28)
 - **Read Eccl. 7:26-28**
 - Solomon was a very wise man, but yet even he succumbed to the temptations of Satan.
 - Solomon laments to the sin that ensnared him the most that was the sin of his many women, 1000 to be exact.
 - He then later in his life turned from God to worship false God’s from his wives that he was not supposed to have.
 - Solomon’s disobedience to God
 - 1 Kings 11:1-3
 - This particular sin of Solomon was disobedience to God by marrying the women that he was told not to because God knew they did not worship him the one true God, but false Gods and they would turn him away.
 - Solomon followed other God’s
 - 1 Kings 11:4-6
 - God punishes Solomon because of his disobedience
 - 1 Kings 11:9-13
 - In hindsight Solomon obviously knew what he should have done, look at what we saw in Eccl. 5:1
 - How heavy this must have weighed on him as he found it more bitter than death.
 - Wise Solomon may not have resisted the temptation that he succumbed too but he was wise enough to realize his mistake.
 - We can succumb to the same temptations and have the same revelations as did Solomon.
 - For Solomon to reflect back on a sin that caused him great pain is something that we all have most likely encountered.
 - Having the wisdom from the Bible we are able to look at our lives both present and past and we can reflect on the wrong that we have done.
 - The temptations are difficult just as Solomon described his as being a trap and a net, so we all have our sins and temptations that do the same to us.
 - The sin baits us in promising pleasure, but it only leads to pain and suffering.
 - Proverbs 5:22
 - “A wicked man’s iniquities entrap him, he is entangled in the ropes of his own sin”
 - **Have you been in a situation like Solomon where you have been with God, only to have fallen into a trap? Were you able to see this later once you were once again closer to God?**
 - Solomon realized that with God one can escape sin. (Eccl. 7:26b)
 - Eccl. 7:26b

- “The one who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner will be captured by her”
- Those of us that escape our sin must realize that it is because of God and not our strength alone.
 - It’s is God’s mercy upon us that he helps us to overcome these sins and temptations.
 - We must be diligent to keep God’s commandments and to be obedient so he will deliver us from these evils.
- The person that allows other sins into their life and the one that doesn’t lean on God’s strength will be taken.
 - A person who does not lean on God or care for God is much more susceptible to these evil traps because they do not have God.
 - The constant sinner is of course more susceptible to be taken.
 - Those in Christ that keep Christ at the forefront of their minds are much more resilient to turn from these traps.
 - God gives us a way out.
- Solomon realized in his sin that he was not able to find a true woman. (Eccl. 7:27-28)
 - **Read Eccl. 7:27-28**
 - This is not a dig on women as it may sound, but that he was not able to find a true woman amongst them because of his disobedience.
 - He many more wives than God wanted him too.
 - And if we look again at 1 Kings 11:3 he had foreign wives that turned his heart from the Lord.
 - Solomon had disobeyed God and he had not found a true woman amongst all that he had.
- Solomon discovered that God made people upright, but they pursued their own plans. (Eccl. 7:29)
 - **Read Eccl. 7:29**
 - God mad man upright beginning with Adam and Eve.
 - Genesis 1:27
 - “So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.”
 - When God created man he was upright and just and had not yet sinned. But the scheme of man led him to sin.
 - God didn’t create us for evil, he wants us to be upright and to be obedient to him.
 - As it is with Adam and Eve all they had to do to live in paradise was to simply obey God, be obedient.
 - They chose not to so that led to their and our calamity.
 - **We cannot get back that perfect world that God had given man in the Garden of Eden while we live on earth.**
 - **But we can do our best to be upright and to live in obedience to God.**
 - **We then have the hope that we will be perfectly upright once we are in Heaven.**