

## **ECCLESIASTES — PART 4**

### **CHAPTERS 7, 8, 9**

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We've been studying the Book of Ecclesiastes. It's about King Solomon. He had wandered away from God — turned his back on God. God was angry with him.

At this stage in his life ... Solomon seems to be in a very dark place.

#### **Ecclesiastes 7:1-4**

1 **A good name is better than precious ointment,**

**And the day of death than the day of one's birth; (looking at a material world without God)**

2 Better to go to the house of mourning

Than to go to the house of feasting,

For that is the end of all men;

And the living will take it to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,

For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.

4 **The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,**

**But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.**

There is some truth in Solomon's observations.

**Most people are busy with life ... multiple distractions ... give little serious thought to the reality of death (and perhaps any afterlife?)**

But anyone who attends a funeral has an opportunity to stop ... to give thought ... to what life is ... how temporary their existence is. **You might learn more of value from a funeral ... than from a wild party?**

A good minister at a funeral is likely to refer to a resurrection to eternal life that awaits believers. Could be vital information for some listeners?

#### **Ecclesiastes 7:5-6**

5 **It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise**

**Than for a man to hear the song of fools.**

6 For like the crackling of thorns under a pot,

So is the laughter of the fool.  
This also is vanity.

**Humanly ... we don't like rebuke or criticism!** But if it's well-meant and from someone "qualified" ... it is better than raucous laughter! Flares up ... and is gone in a moment.

**Ecclesiastes 7:8-9**

8 The end of a thing is better than its beginning;

**The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.**

9 **Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,**

**For anger rests in the bosom of fools.**

**It's important to be patient!** Wait and see how something ends up ... may be very different than how it started.

**God is patient with us! Gives us plenty of time to develop and mature — to bear fruit.**

**Don't be quick to anger! Don't be impetuous!**

**Compare:**

**Proverbs 14:17**

17 **A quick-tempered man acts foolishly,**

And a man of wicked intentions is hated.

**Avoid a quick temper.**

**Proverbs 14:29**

29 **He who is slow to wrath has great understanding,**

But **he who is impulsive exalts folly.**

**Be slow to anger.**

**We need to control our minds and tongues. "Engage brain before opening mouth".** Might be worth counting to 10 ... or ...100? Or even a day to cool down.

**Ecclesiastes 7:10**

10 **Do not say,**

## **“Why were the former days better than these?”**

For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.

**Be cautious in romanticising “The Good Old Days”.** Some aspects of life and culture might have been better ... but there was plenty of sin and wickedness too!

### **Ecclesiastes 7:15-18**

15 I have seen everything in my days of vanity:

**There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness,**  
**And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness.**

16 **Do not be overly righteous,**

**Nor be overly wise:**

Why should you destroy yourself?

17 **Do not be overly wicked,**

Nor be foolish:

Why should you die before your time?

18 It is good that you grasp this,

And also not remove your hand from the other;

**For he who fears God will escape them all.**

Verse 15: Life doesn't always seem fair? Sometimes the “Good Die Young?”

Verse 16: Don't be overly righteous? Probably referring to the self-righteous! They can be obnoxious and difficult to be around!

Verse 17: Ideally ... don't be wicked at all — but definitely don't be “overly wicked”! **Any sinner can hopefully repent** ... but if anyone is extreme ... might be very difficult for them to extricate themselves?

### **Ecclesiastes 7:21-22**

21 **Also do not take to heart everything people say,**

**Lest you hear your servant cursing you.** (*Gossiping about you*)

22 For many times, also, your own heart has known

That even you have cursed others.

Don't be “thin-skinned”.

### **Ecclesiastes 7:23-25**

23 All this I have proved by wisdom.

**I said, “I will be wise”:**

**But it was far from me.**

24 As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep,  
Who can find it out?

25 I applied my heart to know,  
To search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things,  
To know the wickedness of folly,  
Even of foolishness and madness.

**Solomon seems to realise even his wisdom is limited.** Even more so for us? Though **understanding our limits is real wisdom?**

### **Ecclesiastes 7:26-29**

26 **And I find more bitter than death**

**The woman whose heart is snares and nets,  
Whose hands are fetters.**

He who pleases God shall escape from her,

But **the sinner shall be trapped by her.**

27 “Here is what I have found,” says the Preacher,  
“Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason,  
28 Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find:

**One man among a thousand I have found,  
But a woman among all these I have not found.**

29 Truly, this only I have found:

That **God made man upright,**

**But they have sought out many schemes.”**

**Solomon has a fairly negative view of women (at least in his personal experience!)**

**Not easy to find a trustworthy man (maybe 1 in 1,000?) ... but hasn't found a single trustworthy woman (presumably among his 1,000-strong harem)! **Probably should have stuck with just one ... with Proverbs 31 woman values!****

### **Ecclesiastes 8:1-9**

## 1 **Who is like a wise man?**

And who knows the interpretation of a thing?

A man's wisdom makes his face shine,

And the sternness of his face is changed (*reflected in your facial features?*)

2 I say, "**Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God.**

**3 Do not be hasty to go from his presence.** Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."

**4 Where the word of a king is, there is power;**

And who may say to him, "What are you doing?"

5 He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful;

And **a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,**

**6 Because for every matter there is a time and judgment,**

Though the misery of man increases greatly.

7 For he does not know what will happen;

So who can tell him when it will occur?

8 No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit,

And no one has power in the day of death.

There is no release from that war,

And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.

9 All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.

**This passage is highlighting the attitude of a wise man:**

- **Be respectful to those in power (such as a king).**
- **If you have to raise an important issue ... choose the time and circumstances carefully.**

**A person with real power can make life very difficult. Choose your "battles".**

Though none of us knows the future perfectly. And none of us can escape death when it comes (though believers can be victorious over death).

**Ecclesiastes 8:10**

10 **Then I saw the wicked buried**, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and **they were forgotten in the city** where they had so done. This also is vanity.

**Even wicked kings will eventually die — and mostly be forgotten.**

#### **Ecclesiastes 8:11**

11 **Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**

**Justice delayed rarely works.** We've all seen it. Without sure and speedy punishment ... many crimes just multiply. Criminals feel they can “get away with it!”

#### **Ecclesiastes 8:12-14**

12 **Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.**

13 **But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.**

14 There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

**Although ultimately there will be true justice ... humanly — under the sun — life is not always fair. Some wicked live long lives — some young die prematurely (Charlie Kirk).**

#### **Ecclesiastes 8:15**

15 So I **commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry**; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.

**Maybe just “eat ... drink ... and be merry”! Just have a good life! Not a bad option if you can do it!**

### **Ecclesiastes 8:16-17**

16 **When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth**, even though one sees no sleep day or night,  
17 **then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.**

**Even with wisdom ... life is just too complex to understand.**

But **believers can understand better than Solomon.**

Compare:

### **1 Corinthians 2:6-14, 16**

6 However, **we speak wisdom among those who are (spiritually) mature**, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

7 But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory**,

8 which **none of the rulers of this age knew**; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written:

**“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,**

**Nor have entered into the heart of man**

**The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”**

10 **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so **no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.**

12 Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.**

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But **the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

16 For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But **we have the mind of Christ.**

**We have access to true wisdom that comes through God’s Holy Spirit —revealing the mind of God ... and what God has prepared for us! The natural mind can’t perceive these truths.**

### **Ecclesiastes 9:1-6**

1 For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that **the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God.** People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them.

2 **All things come alike to all:**

**One event happens to the righteous and the wicked;**

**To the good, the clean, and the unclean;**

**To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.**

**As is the good, so is the sinner;**

**He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath.**

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. **Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live,** and after that they go to the dead.

4 **But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.**

5 **For the living know that they will die;**

**But the dead know nothing.**

**And they have no more reward,**

**For the memory of them is forgotten.**

6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun.

We live in a fallen world. In a general sense ... especially to a carnal mind like Solomon’s ... the same things happen to everyone — the sunshine and the rain fall on everyone.

**Verse 3: mankind — generally — leans toward evil. Think of Israel's history. As Jeremiah says ... the heart is deceitful above all things.**

**Verse 4: Better to be alive than dead! You can still do things —be active — (including repent!).**

**Verse 5: When you're dead ... it's all over (in Solomon's view).**

### **Ecclesiastes 9:7-10**

**7 Go, eat your bread with joy,**

**And drink your wine with a merry heart;**

For God has already accepted your works.

**8 Let your garments always be white,**

**And let your head lack no oil.**

**9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life** which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

**10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.**

In the midst of his philosophising ... some basic truths appear:

- Eat ... drink ... and be merry.
- Enjoy your marriage with the one woman you truly love.
- And be active — accomplish — while you can. You can't do much when you're dead! "Make hay while the sun shines!"

### **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12**

11 I returned and saw under the sun that—

**The race is not to the swift,**

**Nor the battle to the strong,**

**Nor bread to the wise,**

**Nor riches to men of understanding,**

**Nor favor to men of skill;**

**But time and chance happen to them all.**

**12 For man also does not know his time: (*his time of death*)**

Like fish taken in a cruel net,  
Like birds caught in a snare,  
So the sons of men are snared in an evil time,  
When it falls suddenly upon them.

Typically ... the fastest runner does win the race! The strongest boxer does win the fight. But not always.

But **time and chance — unexpected incidents — can derail expectations?** The favourite runner at the Olympics — having trained for years — might twist his ankle on a soap bar ...on the morning of the final.

**Robert Burns: “The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley”.**

**And you don't know your "time" (of death) ... so get busy while you can!**

**Ecclesiastes 9:13-18**

13 This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me:

14 **There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.**

15 Now **there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.** Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

16 Then I said:

**“Wisdom is better than strength.**

**Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised,**

**And his words are not heard.**

17 **Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard**

**Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.**

18 **Wisdom is better than weapons of war;**

But one sinner destroys much good.”

**People tend to dismiss the views of “the poor” pay more attention to people of “status” — wealthy people.** Often see “celebrities” invited to offer opinions ... on mental health ... marriage ... values ... global warming etc. People are “moved by famous stars”.

**Real wisdom should be heeded — wherever it comes from.**

(It once saved an entire city from a powerful enemy!)