

Ecclesiastes 4 - Various Lessons And Observations

Wednesday PM 04/29/20

Introduction:

The first 3 chapters are easy to outline and make into a lesson with a central theme. But from **chapter 4** there are parts that goes from one topic to another. Much like **Proverbs** where there will be a number of verses with a central them and then there are a number of verses which goes from one topic to another without any transition. So, in this lesson we are going to use **chapter 4** to go from one subject to another.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter-On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter. 2 Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, More than the living who are still alive. 3 Yet, better than both is he who has never existed, Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

I) The Dead Are Better off Than the Living

- A) How is this so? We value human life and tend to celebrate human life. We have birthdays as celebrations.
1. This passage takes a bleak look at life, under the sun.
 2. Key words is “oppression” and “oppressor”. Persecution- to be hard pressed, like the pressing of grapes.
 3. Later on Solomon writes, ***Ecclesiastes 9:5 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.***

4. Without God man tends to live a very self-centered and selfish life. Go by the law of the jungle, survival of the fittest.
 - a. The wealthy tend to oppress the poor, the strong to rule over the weaker.
 - b. Therefore, the dead can no longer be oppressed.

B) With God we can take a different look at life

1. The Law of Moses regulated how man was to deal with his fellowman.

Exodus 22:21 "You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 "You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. 23 "If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 "and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

2. God would hold the oppressor accountable for his mistreatment of his fellowman.
3. With God in the picture the oppressed can take comfort in God knowing their circumstances.
4. The wealthy can also take note that they can do good with their wealth.

1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to

share,

5. We have to remember that the wicked, the oppressors, often seem to have the benefit without any judgement but that is not true.
6. There are times the righteous may feel like they would be better off if they had never been born.

Jeremiah 20:18 *Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow, That my days should be consumed with shame?*

7. But with God we know there is a crown of life to be received when this life is over.

II) The Vanity of Accumulating Wealth

Ecclesiastes 4:4 *Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind. 5 The fool folds his hands And consumes his own flesh.*

A) The hard work man puts in for his wealth comes at a cost

1. Often that cost is his soul.

Luke 12:20 *"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

2. How many people will be lost because they are poor? How many people will be lost because they obtained great wealth? The valuation of things over their soul or family, the being misled by great wealth, the trusting in riches

1 Timothy 6:9 *But those who desire to be rich fall*

into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:17a *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches*

B) With God we can say there is goodness in having wealth.

1. **1 Timothy 6:17b** *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*
2. The goodness of helping others. **1 Timothy 6:18** *Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*
3. People such as Abraham, Job, Nicodemus, and Lydia were all wealthy people.
4. I have known a few wealthy Christians who wanted to do good works with their money- help preach the Gospel, contribute to their local congregation, benevolence, individual acts of kindness.

III) The Value of Companionship

Ecclesiastes 4:9 *Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For*

he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

A) The pain of loneliness

1. I think during this time of “social isolation” and “quarantining” we understand the pain of being alone.
2. You remember the commercial “I’ve fallen and can’t get up” that is a real fear to a lot of people.

B) *Verse 9* they have a good reward for their labor.

1. Their work is more productive – synergy
2. How? Why?
 - a. Some projects are just bigger than one person.
 - b. Different talents and abilities that are brought together. (During the Civil War it is said the Union forces had an advantage over the Southern forces due to the diversity of backgrounds.) That is part of the lesson taught in **1 Corinthians 12** in dealing with various spiritual gifts and harmony among Christians.
3. Encouragement – **Hebrews 10.24** *let us consider how to stir up (stimulate, encourage) one another to good works.*

C) *Verse 10* For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.

1. Mutual care for one another. What happens if I do fall

down while alone?

2. Jesus sent out His disciples in groups of two's and not one's.
3. ***Galatians 6.2*** ***Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.***

D) *Ecclesiastes 4:11* ***Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone?***

1. Warmth is offered- there is a closeness in relationships that cannot be replaced.
2. ***Proverbs 27:17*** ***As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.***

E) *Ecclesiastes 4:12* ***Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.***

1. Safety and strength – in times of travel one person faced lots of dangers and challenges. Difficult roads, sickness, finding suitable lodging, food, robbers and thieves.
2. Think of the parable of the Good Samaritan in ***Luke 10.25-37***. One person was beaten up and left for dead, another came along, bandaged his wounds, and took care of him.
3. In life we need the strength others can provide and they need our strength, our words of comfort.