

LESSON 16

GODLY WISDOM IN RELATIONSHIPS

CENTRAL TRUTH: Godly wisdom is needed in our relationships.

MEMEORY VERSE: Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.

----- Ecclesiastes 7:19.

LESSON TEXT

Ecclesiastes 3:16-17; 4:1-12; 8; 1-5, 11-13.

Ecclesiastes 3:

16. And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment — wickedness was there, in the place of justice —wickedness was there.

17. I thought in my heart, “God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.”

Ecclesiastes 4:

1. Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed — and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors — and they have no comforter.

2. And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive.

3. But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

4. And I saw that all labour and all achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbour. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

5. The fool folds his hands and ruins himself.

6. Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

7. Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

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8. There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless — a miserable business!

9. Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

10. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up!

11. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

12. Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 8:

1. Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.

2. Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God.

3. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.

4. Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

5. Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

11. When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.

12. Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

13. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

INTRODUCTION

The writer of Ecclesiastes appeared to be describing an upside-down world. He sees wickedness and iniquity in the very place where correct judgment and justice should be found. When we look for morality and righteousness to prevail, we often discover immorality and evil. This study outlines by believer's continuing responsibilities to respond to life positivity by promoting justice, respecting authority, and building relationships.

LESSON

God has established His laws regarding right and wrong, and He will call everyone to account in the end-those people who commit themselves to His ways, as well as the ones who choose to follow their own path. God's desire is that people live together in love and offers forgiveness and redemption to all who come to Him in faith and accept His grace.

Ecclesiastes uses figures of speech to point out evil's pervasive presence even justice is promoted and unless we rely on God's grace and exercise His wisdom justice cannot be truly promoted. **Ecclesiastes 4:1** shifts attention from human authority to everyday people who have no authority. Here we see the oppression and injustice of the impoverished multitudes who endure the evil acts of the rich and influential.

In this regard, the writer of Ecclesiastes indicated that things are so bad in human society that the dead have a better situation than the living. Those who have never born are better off because they have never experienced life's injustices. Even those who are diligent and legitimately achieve success do encounter the envy of those around them.

The intended effect is for us to ponder what is really worthwhile in life. We are not called to retreat and do nothing. Rather, we are to pursue lives of contentment and inner peace.

The writer of Ecclesiastes portraying the injustice and oppression in society insisted that authorities are to be recognized and obeyed. Our motivation to obey authority should be our recognition of the source of authority-God himself.

Likewise, Ecclesiastes counsels us to live wisely. Wisdom as taught here is not merely intelligence but the outworking of godly principles in life. Wisdom provides a godly perspective that makes life more bearable and enjoyable (**Ecclesiastes 8:1**). Chapter 8 strongly connects this

call to wisdom with a call to obey human authority as a demonstration of one's obedience to God (**Romans 13:1**). Taking notice of oppression in society, Ecclesiastes also considers its opposite. Evil can result when those in authority do not adequately punish wrongdoing (**Ecclesiastes 8:11**). The evidence of widespread moral breakdown in society can discourage believers. Therefore, Ecclesiastes counsels us to look beyond current circumstances and refocus on God and His eternal purposes. Even when people appear to avoid all consequences of evil, they will still face God's judgment but those who put their trust in God can look forward to His sure reward. Every person who has accepted God's gracious offer of forgiveness and redemption must share that truth with the lost and urge them to turn to God before it is too late. We must have God's heart that takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We are also reminded that the real value of our labour in life is the help we offer to others. The joy we receive from contributing to support others enhances the satisfaction we find in our work.

In contrast, if all our labour is directed at our personal benefit, we can become focused on wealth for wealth's sake and develop an unending hunger for worldly things in a futile search for fulfillment and purpose.

Ecclesiastes 4:8 describes a lonely, hard-working yet a wealthy man who achieves success but realizes that he is living a meaningless life in a relational emptiness. His constant work deprives him of joy. He has no one in whom to invest himself or from whom he can receive love and gratitude.

On the contrary, Ecclesiastes points to those people who rely on each other and enjoy prosperity and protection. The immediate benefit of such mutual concern is increased productivity (**Ecclesiastes 8:9**). Working together will bring about greater returns. Partnership can also bring about a quicker recovery when difficulties arise. This holds true in the spiritual realm as well. As followers of Christ encourage each other in their faith, they are better able to deal with temptation, discouragement, and spiritual oppression. The power of agreeing together in prayer is an example of the benefits of spiritual companions.

LIFE APPLICATION

When followers of Christ see injustice, they are to be a voice for God's standards and prayerfully seek to promote the just treatment of others. As Christians submit themselves to God's will they are to recognize human authority as being established by God and as members of the body of Christ, Christians are to look out for the needs of one another.

----- DAILY BIBLE READING -----

Monday: Cry Against Injustice. (Psalm 43:1-5).

Tuesday: Respect of Royal Authority. (Proverbs 20:2, 8, 26, 28).

Wednesday: Sweetness of Friendship. (Proverbs 27:5-6, 9-10).

Thursday: Confidence in a Friend. (Luke 11:5-8).

Friday: Hope in Divine Justice. (Acts 24:10-16).

Saturday: Submission to Government Authorities. (Romans 13:1-7).

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