

Ecclesiastes 4:1-6

Today on "It's a Good Life," we continue our study in the book of Ecclesiastes. If at all possible, please have your Bible open to Chapter 4. In Chapter 4, I believe what the preacher... this would be Solomon, David's son... I believe what he is looking at and what we're looking at here in this chapter is, first of all, to reflect upon the preacher's observations gleaned from his search for the purpose of life under the sun. That means upon the Earth. Then, I believe it's also to consider the vanity of skillful work, isolation and popularity, and also to appreciate the value of friendship and working together.

In verses 1-3 we see the oppression by men, and as we look at verse 1, it says, *¹So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.*

I believe in verses 1-3 we see the oppression by men, and then in verse 1 we see what the preacher reviewed. In other words, he's thinking back on what he has seen to this point. And in the second part of verse 1, I see that he's saying the oppressed had no comforter. No comforter, and as I think of that, I think of what our Lord said before He left this Earth to go back to Heaven in John 14:16, He said, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

And John 15:26, *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

And then in John 16:7, the Bible says, *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away... (and this is Jesus speaking. He said...): for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

He's speaking of the Holy Spirit. He's telling us that He's going to send us another Comforter. In other words, Jesus wouldn't be here in the flesh, so He wanted to send someone who was going to comfort each one of us who trusts Him as Savior. And I remind you that the Holy Spirit comes to live with that person who is a child of God.

In Romans 8:9, the Bible says, *But ye are not in the flesh....* In other words, we don't live after the flesh; we're not to seek the things that are pleasing to the flesh, although that happens; we're still human. He says, *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

We see in that verse the Trinity. It says "but in the Spirit." That is the Holy Spirit. And then we see the Spirit of God mentioned there, and then we also see the Spirit of Christ. If you trust Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, living within you, and Christ said that that Holy Spirit was going to stay with us until He comes for us as Christians when we go back to be with Him, when we go back in the clouds with Him. When He comes back for us, we will go with Him.

So, we do have a Comforter today as Christians, and that Comforter is the Holy Spirit. But these people that Solomon was looking at through his lifetime here, it says the oppressed had no Comforter. Well, the Holy Spirit did not come in the sense that He dwelt with man at that point.

He would come upon those whom He chose and He would leave and possibly come back and go and come back, but His ministry changed when Christ came to this Earth, was crucified, buried, and resurrected, and went back to Heaven, because Christ told us in those verses I've already read in the book of John how that He was going to send another Comforter. And we know that that was fulfilled in Acts chapter 1 and Acts chapter 2. And we see the evidence of the Holy Spirit coming and filling the believer and staying with the believer.

But notice now in the second part of verse 1 of Ecclesiastes chapter 4, we see that the oppressed had no Comforter. In the next part of that verse, the oppressors had control. You see, when we have the Spirit of God dwelling with us, we can have the control. We can have the control because the Spirit of God will lead us into all truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me... or but through me," and the Holy Spirit leads us into that truth, into all the truth, as we study the Word of God. We gain control. We have control not that we are doing it but the Spirit of God has the control through us that we are able to live the Christian life.

Don't get me wrong. We still have problems as Christians. We're still in this flesh. But one day those problems are going to be gone, and we don't have to worry anymore, because Jesus Christ has promised us that when we see Him we're going to be like Him, and everything of this life is going to be gone. We don't have to worry about it anymore.

But notice also in the next part of verse 1 of Ecclesiastes 4 there is a conclusion: The oppressed had no Comforter. He started out by saying the oppressed had no Comforter. In the second part of that verse, his conclusion was that the oppressed had no Comforter. The oppressed today we would say that that person

who has never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior has no Comforter. There is no real comfort for that person who is living outside of the Lord, who has never trusted Him as Savior.

Now notice verses 2-3 of Ecclesiastes 4, and this is what the preacher reasoned. It says there, ²*Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.* ³*Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.*

He seems to be saying here those who are dead are better off than those who are living, and we look at that next part of that verse, in verse 3, and we see that he's speaking of those who've never been born. Have you ever made this comment, "I wish I'd never been born"? Have you ever heard somebody say that? Or maybe you've said that. That's what Solomon is looking at. He's saying maybe it would be better if a person was never born to see what was going on in this life, that things that were taking place in life were just bad. Everything was bad, and maybe, "I wish I'd never been born."

Now, if you've said that, God's not going to hold that against you. We say a lot of things that we don't mean, but you need to understand that you need to be born again. And then you won't have to say that "I wish I'd never been born." You need to say, "God, save me. I want to go to Heaven. I want to be with You when this life is over."

But here in these verses, verses 2-3, it seems that what Solomon is saying here, the dead's oppression is over in verse 2. And then we see the living are oppressed and the unborn's oppression has not begun. You can look at that a couple of different ways. Once again, it's better not to have been born or you can look at it like this. The unborn's oppression has not

yet begun, but the person who's in the grave, their travail is over with and that is if they've trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And then we look in verses 4-6, and I believe that we see there the vanity of working hard and doing all of it right. In verse 4, the Bible says, *Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*

And I believe that what Solomon is saying here is that hard work... a person who works hard and people look at that and they see that person with things or whatever, they're successful, and I believe what he's saying here, that hard work and the things that we get in this life by working hard breeds envy in others. And envy produces nothing but frustration. And Solomon saw that the person who works hard and does it correctly is envied by others. They're looked up to, but at the same time, they're envied. Of course, envy is not right. We're not to envy someone because they're working hard. We need to work hard so that we can have those things that are necessary for this life.

But notice verse 5. We see the result of the fool's envy. It says, *The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.* In other words, he just sits back and the fool does nothing and he simply wastes away. Now, if you have gone on a diet at any time, and I've done that several times, and if you've gone on a diet and you start losing weight, the body starts consuming what we have in this body. The body itself starts living off of what we already have and we start losing weight.

Well, that's the idea here with the fool. The fool just sits back and folds his hands. In other words, he gets nothing because he's not doing what he's supposed to be doing. Rather than

doing what he's supposed to do, he sits back and complains about the person who has things because that person is working hard and doing what is right.

Notice verse 6 now. This is a proper response to verse 4. Let's read verse 4 and then we'll read verse 6. *⁴Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. ⁶Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.*

It's better to have a little in private, in quietness, than to be overcome, this travail, with frustration that produces nothing. I believe that's what Solomon is saying here through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Then we look on in verses 7-12, and I believe we're seeing in verses 7-12 the vanity of isolation, of being separated here. The vanity of being alone is seen especially in verses 7-8. It says, *⁷Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. ⁸There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.*

We'll continue this study the next time, but let me ask you. Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? You need to do that today. There is no great life than knowing Jesus Christ as Savior. There is no greater life than the Christian life. It's a good life, and if you've never trusted Him, you need to do that right now.

And if you are saved, you need to be living for Him and serving Him today.

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