

Ecclesiastes– Strength in Wisdom

Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and saturated in His word.”

We can see in the writing of the Teacher that death will come to all regardless of whether we choose wisdom or folly. However, wisdom is a far greater choice and path. It is a reminder to us that we should focus on the long game of eternity versus the temporal of the moment. This text covers the fact that the Teacher has searched and sought after meaning through many things. He shares with us a warning and some examples regarding wisdom but in the end points out that we should fear God. The Teacher drives home the point that we were all created by God, but we have all schemed and rebelled against him.

Discussion Questions* -- *do not feel the pressure to cover them all

1. The Teacher points out that just because one is righteous does not mean that he will experience long life. In the converse, one who is evil may live a long time. Some false religious belief systems like Hinduism and Buddhism have a belief that current experiences come from a person's actions in this life and a previous (life) state of existence. We know that is not biblical; however, we all tend to have a belief that people should get what they deserve. The Teacher points out this is not the case in this temporal life. The “good” can die young. The evil may live a long life. He is pointing out the long game of eternity. How does this reality impact your view of God and suffering? How would you explain this to someone who struggles with a loving God allowing evil and suffering? How does the gospel impact this reality?
2. The idea of being “overly” righteous is the reality of adding to Scripture the manmade legalistic requirements for being righteous. It is a pride filled expectation one places on others in order to truly be “righteous.” This is a warning against being so good in our own eyes that we become self-righteous. It is Pharisaical and oftentimes comes from good intentions with a pursuit of purity. The issue is it moves us away from grace and is really self-focused. What are some ways that as Christians we become “overly” righteous and self-righteous today? How does this impact a faith family and true worship? When does your heart look around and think you are better than others in the faith? How might we guard against or fight against this?
3. The Teacher makes a strange warning to not be “overly” wicked. This is not permission to be somewhat wicked or just sin a little. This is a warning against a philosophy of embracing evil as a way of life or else one will be destroyed by it. How have we seen this play out in our history and in our culture today? What are some of the driving forces behind this?

4. Wisdom gives us strength to be able to walk in the Lord and to enjoy life regardless of what we are having to experience in this broken world. The Teacher gives a couple of examples about how even with wisdom we are not sinless.
 - a. First example is speech. We are encouraged not to take to heart all the things that people will say about us because honestly, we have many times done the same to them and to others. It could be in the form of gossip, slander, cursing, lying, course joking, etc. This is extremely difficult. How have you been guilty of this in the past? The Bible says that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. How does our speech reflect our heart? Are there any areas in your heart right now that are producing bad speech? Is there anyone you need to forgive for what they said or didn't say to you or about you?
 - b. Second example is about relationships. The Teacher (presumably Solomon - a man) points out that he could not find a woman whose heart was not a snare or nets or whose hands were not chains. This could be true of a woman searching for a man as well. Solomon had a thousand ladies, so his pursuit was not for wise and God-fearing ladies. We are all tempted to pursue relationships that may not be wise. What can we learn from this text on how to deal with this temptation? Wisdom will lead us to search and pursue God-fearing relationships. Where do we see this being such a struggle today? How can the gospel impact this?