

## **Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 Continued**

**Ecclesiastes 7:13 "Consider the work of God: for who can make [that] straight, which he hath made crooked?"**

In the last lesson, we saw Solomon complaining that things were not as good as they used to be.

God does not like complaining.

We cannot change God, or the things He has established.

We must accept the things we cannot change.

We may need to alter our lives to conform to the things God has done.

We must change, not God.

Ephesians 1:11 "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"

Man should consider God's activity because God is sovereign, decreeing and controlling everything under the sun (1:15).

**Ecclesiastes 7:14 "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."**

"Prosperity ... Adversity":

God ordains both kinds of days and withholds knowledge of the future.

When things are going well, we should be happy and full of praise to God.

When we are having troublesome times, we should just do the very best we can and not be disappointed.

If we wait, better times will come.

Behind every dark cloud, there is a silver lining.

We would not appreciate the sunshine, unless there were cloudy days.

Acts 14:22 "Confirming the souls of the disciples, [and] exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

It is as if God has given good and evil for us to compare.

At the end of life, we would be able to look back over our lives and realize we had experienced both.

It is our attitude toward the good days and the problem days that make us what we are.

#### Verses 15-22

The focus on the nature of righteousness is made clear in the statement (in verse 18), “for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all”

Be not righteous over much ... be not over much wicked (verses 16-17), does not apply the “golden mean” to morality, nor does it constitute a warning against excessive observance of religious ritual.

Rather, it warns against self righteousness or the idea that one has actually achieved righteousness.

Verse 17 does not mean that moderation in wickedness is acceptable!

It is an accommodation to human frailty.

Solomon is saying, avoid the extreme of self righteousness and, at the same time, hold in check your wicked nature (verse 20), so it does not run its natural course to spiritual and moral ruin.

**Ecclesiastes 7:15 "All [things] have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just [man] that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked [man] that longeth [his life] in his wickedness."**

Solomon is thinking on the things that seem to be unexplainable about life.

Sometimes, it seems that those who live for God have the most problems in this earth.

The reward promised for righteousness, is long life and prosperity.

Sometimes, that does not happen in this life.

“Perisheth ... longeth”:

The fact that some righteous men die young and some wicked men live long is difficult to understand (8:11-12).

The wicked seem to live on and on and to prosper.

The only answer I might have for that is the fact that God is longsuffering.

He gives the sinner ample time to repent.

The true rewards for the righteous are the rewards they receive during their eternal life in heaven.

**Ecclesiastes 7:16 "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?"**

Being "righteous over much" is, possibly, speaking of the formality of religion.

God does not appreciate us keeping rituals in the church.

He wants a relationship with us.

To make oneself wise, is to appear to others to be arrogant and conceited.

These things are not wise at all, because they turn God and man against us.

Matthew 6:1-7

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."

"Therefore when thou doest [thine] alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:"

"That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites [are]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Solomon has already exhorted his readers to be righteous and wise.

The warning here is against being self-righteous or pharisaical.

**Ecclesiastes 7:17 "Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?"**

Solomon had warned, in the previous verse, about the danger of having a form of righteousness.

He now is saying, that is not a license to go out and sin.

"Dying before their time" would indicate God killing them for their sins.

James 1:21 "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

**Ecclesiastes 7:18 "[It is] good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."**

This is expressing again, that they should live as near a righteous life as possible.

They should not be a follower of God in form only, but should be a believer in their hearts.

It is wrong to sin.

It is also wrong to be a Christian in form only.

Luke 1:50 "And his mercy [is] on them that fear him from generation to generation."

Luke 11:42 "But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

**Ecclesiastes 7:19 "Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty [men] which are in the city."**

Wisdom coupled with fear of God is one of the mightiest forces upon the earth.

Godly wisdom is more help to a person than the help of ten mighty men.

Colossians 1:9-11 "For this cause we also, since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;"

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;"

“Wisdom strengtheneth”:

The measure of wisdom is its ability to bring good outcomes in life.

**Ecclesiastes 7:20 "For [there is] not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."**

Solomon gave great emphasis to the general effects of sin and also pointed out the universality of personal transgressions.

Paul may have recalled this passage when he wrote Romans:

Romans 3:10 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:”

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

1 John 1:10 "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

We can see from all of the above Scriptures that it is the nature of men to sin.

At some time or other, each of us has sinned.

The wonderful thing is that Jesus took our sins upon His body on the cross.

He became our substitute.

When we receive Jesus as our Savior, we are free from sin.

He washed us in His precious blood, and we became righteous in the sight of God.

Jesus put us in right standing with God.

**Ecclesiastes 7:21 "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:"**

We must be careful not to hear accusations others make about our servant, or anyone else.

Most of the time, they are not true.

If we are dead in Christ, ugly things said about us will not harm us.

Look, with me, at a description of those who are in right standing with God.

This is speaking of love.

1 Corinthians 13:5-7

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;"

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;"

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Since you have many offensive words to be forgiven, don't keep strict accounts of other's offensive words against you.

**Ecclesiastes 7:22 "For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others."**

How can a person blame someone else for the same sin he has committed himself?

If you are honest with yourself, you know you have done a similar thing to what your servant said about you.

God will forgive you, if you forgive others.

God judges us with the same measure, we judge others.

James 3:9 "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."

Verses 23-24

"I will be wise ... who can find it out?"

The already wise king resolves to be even wiser.

But upon further investigation, the limitations of wisdom become apparent.

Some things are unknowable.

This realization quickly dampens his enthusiasm.

Solomon is known as the wisest man who ever lived, but even his wisdom was insufficient to understand life fully (7:23).

In his search for wisdom Solomon found many sinful people (7:26), but few righteous (7:28; Proverbs 31:10).

In spite of the failures of wisdom, it is still the most attractive virtue since it helps bring inner happiness (8:1).

**Ecclesiastes 7:23 "All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it [was] far from me."**

The wisdom in these lessons has to do with the way things are on the earth.

Solomon did have much wisdom pertaining to these things.

We remember God gave Solomon wisdom to rule his people justly.

He knew practical rules of living, but the deeper things of the Spirit of God, who can know?

1 Kings 3:11-12

"And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;"

"Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

Solomon did not have enough wisdom to keep him from worshipping false gods.

1 Corinthians 1:20 "Where [is] the wise? where [is] the scribe? where [is] the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

**Ecclesiastes 7:24 "That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?"**

Perhaps, this is speaking of the things of God.

Not anyone, including Solomon, truly understands the depth of God.

Just the fact of Him being eternal, is more than man of few days can understand.

Romans 11:33 "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable [are] his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

1 Timothy 6:16 "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom [be] honor and power everlasting. Amen."

**Ecclesiastes 7:25 "I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason [of things], and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness [and] madness:"**

Man, through all of his efforts, cannot figure out the things of God.

It seemed that Solomon was overwhelmed with the desire to know the secrets of life.

He applied himself to the fullest.

He knew more than any mortal man, yet he did not know the secrets of God.

We really cannot please God by gaining head knowledge about Him.

He wants our hearts.

He wants us to have faith in Him.

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

**Ecclesiastes 7:26 "And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart [is] snares and nets, [and] her hands [as] bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."**

This is the seductress about whom Solomon warns young men (in Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:1-14; 6:24-29; 7:1-27).

Elsewhere, Solomon exalts the virtues of man's lifetime companion (Eccl. 9:9; Prov. 5:15-23; and 31:10-31).

Solomon makes this statement, possibly because his 700 wives have turned him to worship false gods.

1 Kings 11:3-4

"And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, [that] his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as [was] the heart of David his father."

His love for these women caused him to turn from God.

Solomon calls himself a sinner here.

In verses 27 to 29, Empirical acquisition of knowledge, that is man seeking righteousness through his many schemes, fails.

Only God can make man upright.

**Ecclesiastes 7:27-29**

**"Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, [counting] one by one, to find out the account:"**

**"Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found."**

**"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."**

Solomon has looked back over his life, and found there are very few men (perhaps 1 in a thousand), who are totally upright.

In all the women he married, he did not find one who truly loved God.

His wives were heathen women.

Solomon is saying "very few truly are saved".

## **Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 Continued Questions**

1. We must accept the things we cannot \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What is one thing that is not predestined for us?
3. In the day of prosperity be \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What should we do in troublesome times?
5. What really makes us what we are?
6. What are some unexplainable things about life?
7. When do the true rewards for the righteous come?
8. What does "righteous over much" mean?
9. When you make yourself wise, how do you appear to others?
10. What is Solomon saying in verse 17?
11. We must not fear those who can kill the body, but whom?
12. It is wrong to sin, but it is also wrong to do what?
13. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than \_\_\_\_\_ mighty men.
14. What is one of the mightiest forces in the earth?
15. There is not a just man upon the \_\_\_\_\_.
16. It is the nature of men to \_\_\_\_\_.
17. What is the wonderful thing that Jesus did for all of us?
18. We bless God, and curse men who are made after the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
19. What kind of wisdom did Solomon have?
20. Where had Solomon gotten this wisdom?
21. Who truly understands the depth of God?
22. Who has seen God?
23. We really can not please God by gaining \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge.
24. What does God want from us?
25. What is faith?

26. What had Solomon's wives caused him to do?
27. How many men, in a thousand, did he find totally upright?
28. How many of his wives truly loved God?
29. What is Solomon saying in this?