

EVIL, ALIENATION, AND OUR NEED FOR CHRIST

Pastor Lucas Almeida—Central Baptist Church—February 4th, 2024

ECCLESIASTES 4

(ESV)

[1] Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. [2] And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. [3] But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

[4] Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

[5] The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.

[6] Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

[7] Again, I saw vanity under the sun: [8] one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

[9] Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. [10] For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! [11] Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? [12] And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

[13] Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice. [14] For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor. [15] I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. [16] There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 6:5—[5] *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Believers will suffer under the wickedness of this world; but those who are in Christ do not suffer alone, and will not suffer forever.

THE EVIL OF OPPRESSION AGAINST THE WEAK

The phrase “under the sun” for the preacher, refers to that which is material, not eternal.

Sometimes when we see oppression, instead of running to God, we run to fatalism.

Sometimes when we see oppression, instead of running to God, we run to idolatry.

Micah 6:8

*[8] He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

THE EVIL OF BUILDING A KINGDOM FOR SELF

God is not simply concerned that we work, and that we work hard; but God is concerned with the motivation behind our work.

Coveting is desiring to have something the Lord has not granted you.

When we covet after what God has not given us, this desire becomes our god.

Colossians 3:5—[5] *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

Luke 12:16–21—[16] *And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, [17] and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ [18] And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my*

barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. [19] And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." [20] But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' [21] So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Notice that the solution for an idolatrous approach to work is not idleness.

Colossians 3:23–24—*[23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

THE EVIL OF NOT HONORING THE GOOD THAT WAS DONE IN THE PAST

Wisdom is not something that comes guaranteed to us because of age; instead, the Bible depicts wisdom as a virtue that must be pursued.

Psalm 119:100

*[100] I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.*

Proverbs 12:15

*[15] The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
but a wise man listens to advice.*

Proverbs 13:10

*[10] By insolence comes nothing but strife,
but with those who take advice is wisdom.*

Proverbs 19:20

*[20] Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom in the future.*

Exodus 1:8—*[8] Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*

ALIENATION AND CHRIST

Psalm 13:1

*[1] How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?*

The reason behind the alienation we experience is sin.

Isaiah 59:2

*[2] but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.*

Ephesians 2:12–13—*[12] remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*