

## **Ecc 4:1-16      OPPRESSIONS + FALSE MOTIVATIONS!**

PRELIMS. Sol has been pointing out that life is meaningless without God. Even in the place where justice and righteousness should reign, he has found that even there, there is injustice! Its the same today!

### **The EVIL of OPPRESSION**

Sol now considers the **evil of oppression!** Oppression means: ‘To Take Advantage of, and Gain Profit from, Someone’s Weak Position’! We live in a cruel world! You need to have your ‘wits’ about you - the world is full of predators and charlatans! It is a great sin before God, to take advantage of a person’s weak position! To ‘force’ a person to accept your offer for something **lower** than its **true value**, is breaking the **8th Commandment** - you are **stealing!**  
Story: I heard of a **businessman** who wanted to buy a business where the owner had died and left his widow in need!

He persuaded a colleague to make an extremely low offer so that **his offer** would **appear** good - but it was below it was away below its real value! Because of the **widow’s extremity** and need, he took **advantage** of her **weak position!** Now, part of her weak position was what Sol talks of here! She had **no advisor** or to help her! *Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun...behold the tears of the **oppressed** and they have **no one to comfort them** [1]*

Sol finds it bad enough to have misfortune, but to have **no helpers** to comfort you in such times, its tragic! Oppression is **not** just an inevitable misfortune but something which is not necessary; but because of the **evil** in man oppression is **created!** Israelites in Egypt!

There was an additional element in this grievance which made it **more painful**. In providence ***On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them** [1]!* This seems so unfair! But it is a **fact** of life. Sol is saying ‘Get real’ we are vulnerable. Those who have power will **exploit** it!

In the 1930s the employers held **employees to ransom!** They took advantage of the fact there were no jobs so they **threatened workers,**

if you do not produce more, you will be sacked - and there was no other work. In the **1970s the Unions** held the country to ransom (strikes re coal, electricity, transport, etc) - because they had the **power** - they also held the country to ransom! \*Whoever has power will make the best use of it for their **own benefit** - even to the disadvantage of **vulnerable innocent** people! Man is cruel! **God hates it!** Israel is guilty too, *seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless and plead the widow's cause* [Isa 1:17] Jeremiah also was called to preach *Thus says the Lord 'Do justice and righteousness and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed...do no wrong/violence to the resident, alien... fatherless,...widow* [Jer 22:3] Help those vulnerable people.

It is not just **spiritual** things that God gets furious at! God is troubled by all **social injustices!** Taking advantage of **power** - the power to **control** people! The **NT writers** *you have dishonoured the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?* [Jam 3:6] One of the **characteristics** of God's people is that **pitiable** conditions **affect** them. It **makes** God's people **engage\assist\support** the needy! Jesus *When I was hungry you gave Me...thirsty you gave Me...when I was stranger you took Me in* John = *if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?*

Look at **prime example** under oppression *He was oppressed... He was afflicted...yet He opened not His mouth!* **Why?** Because, as Sol has been saying all along 'everything has a **purpose** and there was a time appointed **for judgment**'! X had **faith to wait** until judgment day. So someone being **alone** and having no one to advise them or comfort and guide them is something that Sol felt was a great evil. In fact he said that some oppressions were so evil that it was **better to be dead** - or even *he who has not yet been born?* [3] How could Sol say **that?** This: when you are dead, or not born, you do not feel the **pain** of even **witnessing oppression and evil!**

## **FALSE MOTIVATIONS**

Motivated by **Envy!** **Two extremes regarding work!** Sol sees

people working away for the **wrong reasons**! Spending their time working hard - for very little! *Then I saw **all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbour...vanity and striving after wind*** [4] The **economic problem** of our nation is **not** the 'cost of living'! It is the cost of **high living**'! Someone said, 'The basic necessities of life - 'food, warmth, clothing, roof' - everything else is **luxury**'! We have forgotten what **are the real necessities** of life!

We are **motivated**, much more than we think, by what **others** have! By *man's **envy of his neighbour*** [4]! We want what other's have. Most of the things we have, we saw others with them first! We think, 'That's cool, I must get that too'! Here is what a man must do. A man should **provide** for his **family**; and **improve** and **build** upon what he started of with, so that he leaves **more** than he inherited! That should be his goal! But if he is working day and night, **injuring his health**, **injuring family relationships**, just to **gratify** his carnal **desires** and his **pride** - he is **sinning**! Man is **not** like the beast. Man has wisdom and knowledge - and **responsibilities**! As we noticed last week, life is **not a circus**! It is *fool who has **two hands full of toil** and has **nothing to show for it** - it is *striving after wind*[6] So that is one extreme - **motivated by other people's standards** and slogging away and at the end of the day - nothing to show for it! Such people are compelled to ask '***For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?***' *This is also vanity and an unhappy business* [8]*

The **other extreme** 'There is no point in work. Do as little work as possible - do all you can get away with'! *The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh* [5] Elsewhere Sol says *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest...**poverty** will come upon you like a robber* [Pro 6:10] Some people have **no intention** of working or **earning** their living. Very difficult actually for someone whose **father** never worked or whose **grandfather** never worked, to **seriously look for work** when they are provided with the necessities!

Many people believe not simply 'Life **owes** me a living', rather 'Life owes me a **good** living'! Not at all! Friends - we **forfeited** all our rights at the Fall of man! We have **no rights**! Life does **not** 'owe' us

a living. We must work, as God told Adam immediately after the Fall *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread - for **how long?** till you return to the ground* [Gen 3:19]!

There is this **contrast** in life - some men work hard and struggle to keep alive . And some men do very little or nothing and get away with it and seem to lack nothing! The **workaholic** and the **lazy man!**

## **BENEFITS of COMPANIONSHIP**

At the beginning God said *It is **not good** for man to be **alone!*** God Himself is a **community of three!** One benefit is **increased production!** You see Sol is very **practical** - life is not just meditation on spiritual things! We glorify God in our **work** and in **creativity** and **work!** *Two are better than one because they have a **good reward** for their toil!*[9] Actually truth is two people can produce **more than** double one! God gave us **one** mouth but **two** hands to work with! Every man can produce **double** what he needs for himself! If he is healthy and well)! The **‘division of labour’ principle** was behind the great **increase** of production during the Industrial Revolution!

Another benefit of companionship (marriage) is: **Breakdown Assistance!** *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* [10]! In marriage, God very often **strengthens one partner** when they are going through a trial when the other one is weak! That is why it is so important for married couples to be in things **together** and be a **help meet** for each occasion in life when the Evil One assails us! **Loneliness** is a real threat to stability! A faithful and caring and loving partner is worth more than gold! Ask **divorcees!**

Another benefit: **Warmth/Protection** ‘Safety in numbers’! *how can one keep warm alone?...a man might prevail against one who is **alone*** (but he goes on) ***two will withstand him*** [12]! **Three** is even better still! God **invites all** to come into **His Community** of Faith! To come into **His Family** where there is **eternal security!**

This man Sol, wrote: *there is a **friend that sticketh closer than a brother*** **That** is the **companion** who we all need!! Faithful!