

Ecclesiastes: Solomon's Journal (Slide 1) Cause and Results of Oppression!!

Reading: Luke 11:37-54

Solomon's observations lead him to recognize that all men are not treated equally. In fact, he observes that distress (**oppression**) is caused by the hand and mind of others. However, as we will see, we can cause our own distress.

Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 (Slide 2)

1 Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. (Slide 3) 2 So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. 3 But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

How did the **oppressed become oppressed**? It seems in this short paragraph that Solomon recognizes the driving force causing **oppression is the hunger for power**.

Power for the oppressor increases and the oppressed is without power to stop it!! The result is a sad circumstance for those that fall prey to the evil of the thirst for power.

God is fully aware that people with charisma or wealth will exploit the vulnerable. He spoke in:

Deuteronomy 15:7-9 (Slide 4)

7 "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 8 but you shall freely

open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him (Slide 5) sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. 9 Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.

Pause just for a moment for an explanation of verse 9. Verse 1 & 2 read:

Deuteronomy 15:1-2 (Slide 6)

1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts. 2 This is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD's remission has been proclaimed.

At that time the **debt owed is forgiven**. Here in verse 9, the lender cannot, as he sees this time of remission approach, think within himself to **withhold helping the poor**, thinking the debt will be forgiven and he will never be paid back. In that frame of mind, he sins!!

I also think it's interesting that God says that there won't be any poor.....if:

Deuteronomy 15:4-5 (Slide 7)

4 However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, 5 if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today.

God knew they wouldn't remain faithful. The greed within them caused them to oppress their own kin, countrymen and even foreigners who would travel through their land.

Returning to:

Deuteronomy 15:10-11 (Slide 8)

10 You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. 11 For the poor will never

cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'

In the Gospel of **John chapter 12**, when **Mary anointed Jesus**, He makes a statement that reflects the idea that the **state of the poor is a perpetual cycle of life**. That is simply because there would always be **people like Judas** who had an **insatiable appetite for money**.

John 12:4-8 (Slide 9)

4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, (Slide 10) but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

Solomon observed the result of oppression in the poor. He notes that the poor will have few supporters but the oppressor will be loved by many.

Proverbs 14:20 (Slide 11)

The poor is hated even by his neighbor,

But those who love the rich are many.

James, writing on showing partiality, says that even the oppressed can dishonor themselves by becoming captivated by the rich and holding them in high esteem.

James 2:5-7 (Slide 12)

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. (Slide 13) Is it not the

rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

Young and old hold-up celebrities of our day, elevating them beyond what they deserve not realizing the kind of oppressive people they can be!

Young people will endure all manner of abuse from a verbally oppressive popular person just to fit in! It is a recurring situation that we must educate our children on how to avoid that is; that feeling of missing out because they cannot fit in!

Proverbs 14:21 (Slide 14)

He who despises his neighbor sins,

But happy is he who is gracious to the poor.

Proverbs 22:9 (Slide 15)

He who is generous will be blessed,

For he gives some of his food to the poor.

I'm throwing this **insightful truth from Solomon** in because it reflects a faithful person enduring extreme circumstances, content and not willing to sacrifice their integrity for personal gain.

Proverbs 19:1 (Slide 16)

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity

Than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool.

Paul says:

Philippians 4:12 (Slide 17)

12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

His circumstance does not change what he says, feels, nor what he knows to be true. He is true to himself and more importantly, to God!

Proverbs 19:17 (Slide 18)

One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD,

And He will repay him for his good deed.

Solomon conveys a message that when we help support a poor man it is the same as doing it for God.

Matthew 25:31-40 (Slide 19)

31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, (Slide 20) and the goats on the left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; (Slide 21) 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, (Slide 22) and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

If I borrow money the expectation is that I will pay it back! If I lend and in this case to the poor the expectation is that God will pay it back! That is the principle behind lending and borrowing.

However, the Christian with integrity will lend with no expectation of return. It is with a heart fully intent on serving God!!

Finally

Solomon says from his observations:

Ecclesiastes 4:2-3a (Slide 23)

2 So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. 3 But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed

Seems the oppressed are better off dead or it would have been better that those who become poor wouldn't have been born!!!

If Solomon felt that way, why didn't he do something? He was the king!! He could have passed a law forcing those who had means to help the poor!!

He was rich beyond our wildest dreams!! He could have given a great deal to the poor!!

I believe he did just that but it simply wasn't enough. The oppression was too great!! Oppression caused poverty and distress!!

I had a co-workers who said one time if we want to solve the homeless crisis and help the poor, the government should just give everyone **\$1,000,000.00**. My response to that was:

"How long would it be before many would **gamble it away, drink it away, throw it away on riotous living, or spend it all on material possessions?"**

In other words, they cause their own oppression because of the ***"lust of the flesh and lust of the eye and the pride of life."***

Or-

“How long would it be before someone who is **manipulative and cunning** takes it away from them?”

Oppression causes poverty from the hand of others and at times and too often, from our own hand!!

Invitation

Oppression in one form or another can cause spiritual poverty. The surrounding elements cause one to feel **hopeless and helpless**. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the **same attitude as Paul**. No matter the circumstances I can be content.

He felt that way because of his faith in God and his service to Him. At the close of his life he said to Timothy;

2 Timothy 4:7-8

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Anyone who is oppressed and poor can have such confidence but it is only found by putting on Christ. Reenacting the **death, burial and resurrection** of our Lord through **Baptism**. Have you been Baptized into Christ Jesus? If not, don't delay! Do it today!

Perhaps you are poor in spirit today, not because you haven't obeyed the Gospel, but because you haven't lived up to it. Can we help restore your spiritual walk by praying for you and with you?

Please let us know how we can help you.

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Reading:

Luke 11:37-54

37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table. 38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. 39 But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. 40 You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places. 44 Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."

45 One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too." 46 But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. 48 So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah,

who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.' 52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."

53 When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, 54 plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.