

February 19, 2017

**“No One is Righteous”****Focal Passage: Ecclesiastes 7:13-29 (NASB)**

Cross References: 1 Kings 11:4; Job 38:1-42:6; Psalm 8; Romans 6:11-18; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Hebrews 4:14-16; James 1:5-8; 3:13-18

**Lesson Idea:** Solomon recognized that no one is righteous. We realize that righteousness only comes through Jesus Christ.

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

Feb 12 Numbers 3-4	Feb 13 Numbers 5-6
Feb 14 Numbers 7	Feb 15 Numbers 8-10
Feb 16 Numbers 11-13	Feb 17 Numbers 14-15
Feb 18 Numbers 16-17	Feb 19 Numbers 18-20

**Background:**

This is a great passage to celebrate the Gospel. Solomon recognized that no one is righteous and that all men sin. But Solomon’s observations came hundreds of years before the Messiah Jesus Christ came and lived a perfect life. Romans 3 serves as a great companion passage in Ecclesiastes 7.

**Ecclesiastes 8:1-17**

*13 Consider the work of God,  
For who is able to straighten what He has bent?  
14 In the day of prosperity be happy,  
But in the day of adversity consider—  
God has made the one as well as the other  
So that man will not discover anything that will be after him.  
15 I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility;  
there is a righteous man who perishes in his  
righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs  
his life in his wickedness. 16 Do not be excessively  
righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin  
yourself? 17 Do not be excessively wicked and do not be  
a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is  
good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the  
other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both  
of them.*

*19 Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers  
who are in a city. 20 Indeed, there is not a righteous man  
on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*

*21 Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken,  
so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. 22 For  
you also have realized that you likewise have many times  
cursed others.*

*23 I tested all this with wisdom, and I said, “I will be  
wise,” but it was far from me. 24 What has been is  
remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it?  
25 I directed my mind to know, to investigate and to seek  
wisdom and an explanation, and to know the evil of folly  
and the foolishness of madness. 26 And I discovered  
more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares  
and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to  
God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured  
by her.*

*27 “Behold, I have discovered this,” says the Preacher,  
“adding one thing to another to find an explanation, 28  
which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found  
one man among a thousand, but I have not found a  
woman among all these. 29 Behold, I have found only  
this, that God made men upright, but they have sought  
out many devices.”*

**DISCUSSION:**

- v 13. What do you think about when you “consider the work of God?” Why can no one straighten what He bends, and what does that mean for your life? (see Job 38:1-42:6; Psalm 8)
- v 14. What truths should we stand on during days of prosperity and days of adversity? How should this bring perspective and comfort for your life?
- v 15-18. What truths is Solomon trying to teach in these verses?
- v 16. How can someone be “excessively righteous” or “overly wise,” and why does Solomon see this as something to avoid?
- v 17. What does Solomon say will happen to those who are “excessively wicked” or foolish? Why?
- v 18. How does the NIV translation clarify verse 18?  
*It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.*

**NOTE:** from David Guzik, *Ecclesiastes*:

This is a common approach to life, thinking that everything is good in moderation. This has some truth to it, but does not define a wise or good life. We

should remember that both Jesus and Paul (as well as many others) were not considered balanced individuals in their day. Their understanding of eternity and accountability made them – in the view of many – *unbalanced*.

- v 19. How does wisdom strengthen us?
- v 20. Who was the only person on earth who continually did good and never sinned? (see Hebrews 4:14-16) What should the knowledge that we sin and fall short of perfection cause us to do? (see Romans 3; 6:23)
- v 21-22. Why should we not listen too intently to the criticisms of others, especially those who work under our authority or management?

**NOTE:** from David Guzik, *Ecclesiastes*:

***Do not take to heart everything people say . . . even you have cursed others:*** Wisely, the Preacher knew that we tend to take the words of others about us too seriously. People often say unguarded things that are not deeply felt; we say such things about others and would not want them to take to heart what we said.

In his book *Lectures to My Students*, Charles Spurgeon gave a chapter to this verse, which he titled “The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear.” In that chapter he gave wise advice to pastors and Christian workers that they should sometimes (if not often) simply overlook unkind and thoughtless things others say and do. We would not want to be judged by our worst moments; we should not judge others by theirs.

“The fact that we often speak ill of others should make us less open to take offence at what is said of ourselves, and prepared to expect unfavorable comments.” (Deane)

- v 23-25. What did Solomon discover in his search for wisdom? Read James 1:5-8 and 3:13-18. What does James advise us about wisdom?
- v 26. What was Solomon warning against in this verse? How can this be applied to both men and women? (see 1 Corinthians 6:18-20) How does this message go opposite to much of what our society practices and teaches? How are we often “captured” by our desires? (see Romans 6:11-18)

**NOTE:** from David Guzik, *Ecclesiastes*:

In his unsatisfying search for wisdom, Solomon understood that a woman could be a danger and a trap. It was important to not let that happen; he who pleases God shall escape from her.

Knowing Solomon wrote this, it makes us wish we knew more about *when* Solomon wrote this; at what point in his life. We know from 1 Kings 11:4: *For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God.* Surely, Solomon himself was caught in these snares and nets and fetters.

Those who think that Ecclesiastes is the statement of Solomon’s repentance and evidence that he turned his heart back to *the Lord his God*, this section is Solomon’s way of saying, “I understood my error and turned from it.” Those who are unsure of Solomon’s repentance will place the writing of Ecclesiastes earlier in his life.

All in all it is a fascinating question, and one (in the mind of this writer) has no definitive answer: Was Solomon one who pleased God in escaping from this trap, or was he the sinner trapped by her?

“His fruitless search for a woman he could trust may tell us as much about him and his approach, as about any of his acquaintances.” (Kidner)

“He found that a harem did not provide the appropriate companion for man. How much better he would have been with one good wife, such as he speaks of in Ecclesiastes 9:9 and Proverbs 31:1-31!” (Wright)

**APPLICATION:**

- v 27-29 is translated in the New Living Translation this way:  
27 “*This is my conclusion,*” says the Teacher. “*I discovered this after looking at the matter from every possible angle. 28 Though I have searched repeatedly, I have not found what I was looking for. Only one out of a thousand men is virtuous, but not one woman! 29 But I did find this: God created people to be virtuous, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path.*”
- How would you summarize Solomon’s conclusion? What about his conclusion do you see reflected in our society today? How do you see it reflected in the church? How do you see it in your own life?

Lesson by Bro Stan