

Living by Faith in a Broken World

Text: Ecc 3:16-4:8

Introduction:

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1. It only takes a few minutes of world news to realize we live in a broken world

Pandemics, Wars, Oppression, Corruption...

2. Ecclesiastes is showing us two ways to respond to living in a broken world

- FIRST: To live in Denial—by chasing the wind trying to find happiness apart from God
- SECOND: To Live By Faith—despite the frustrations of a Broken World,

Knowing that God is Working out His Plan
and will make all things Beautiful in His Time

3. Solomon is reflecting on the frustrations of this broken world,

And Calling us to Live By Faith—Even in a Broken World

I. THE FRUSTRATIONS OF LIVING IN A BROKEN WORLD

(1) CORRUPTION / INJUSTICE (3:16–17)

1. There is so much corruption and injustice in the world that if you could see it all it would bring you to tears

a) We actually try to maintain our happiness by NOT thinking about it—but it's real

2. But Corruption and Injustice Are NOT New...

- The Israelites were enslaved for 400 yrs by power hungry Pharaoh's...
- Daniel was Set Up and Entrapped by corrupt officials...
- Joseph was set up by his own brothers...

and falsely accused by his bosses' wife and sent to prison!

3. Many People live in a Predatory State of Self-Absorption

- They try to achieve power or happiness through rigging the system
and think they are getting away with it!
- You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people
all of the time, And you can't fool God any of the time! (v.17)

4. Even though the world is run by corrupt leaders and unjust court rulings
Those Who Fear the Lord Will be Spared in the Final Judgement (8:11-13)

(2) OPPRESSION (4:1–3)

1. Most Rulers Don't take the time to see the tears of the Oppressed—
Solomon Did & was deeply troubled by it

- Notice their Tears — they're real and raw... and they have no comforter
- Notice their Oppressors — they Only Care About Themselves and their Power

2. The corruption & injustice of the world is enough to make us weep—but
the cruelty of man's inhumanity to man is enough to make angels weep.

- a) Israel was not only Enslaved in Egypt—but the Pharaoh ordered that all male children be killed... Thrown in the river...
- b) Moses survived and saw the Oppression of an Egyptian whipping an Israelite slave
- c) After they were Free, God Gave them Laws to Protect the Weak...
Children, Widows, Orphans, and Those in Poverty... (**Ex 22:21–24a**)

3. And Yet Oppression is Found in Every Culture, on Every Continent, in every corner of the world

- a) **Headline: 416 Million Christians Live in ‘Lands of Persecution’**
→ **Africa, Middle East, N. Korea, China.**
- b) Sadly, Some in America Claim to be Oppressed When they Don’t Get their Way...
Or If people Disagree with them...
- c) Some Celebrities claim to be oppressed—but make millions \$ off of tennis shoes made by forced labor in sweat shops in China!
- d) Who are the Truly Oppressed? — God Knows Who They Are

4. Do You Hear their Cries? Do You See their Tears? God Does (Amos 2:6–8**).**

(3) ENVY & RIVALRY (4:4)

- 1. Good for the Economy—but bad for marriages, families & your well-being**
 - a) This Person Cannot Rest, Cannot Find Contentment, Cannot find Peace
 - b) They’re Grasping at the Wind—but Willing to Destroy Others for What is Empty
- 2. This is a Temptation for God’s People...**
 - a) who take the narrow road and go the extra mile,
 - b) But see sinners ‘living the life’ in the world (**Proverbs 23:17–18**)

(4) LAZINESS (4:5)

- 1. Some React to the Rat Race of Envy and Rivalry with the Opposite Extreme**
 - a) Answering the problem of working out of envy to — not working at all.
- 2. Some think Hard Work is the Problem and Laziness is the Answer**
 - a) But Now they Have 2 Problems—Poverty & Dependency (**Prov 6:10–11**)

(5) COVETOUSNESS (4:6)

- 1. The wise live in peace: They enjoy their labor & the fruit of it**
 - a) The wise man is balanced: he is productive in his work,
but he was also careful to take time for quietness.
 - b) He isn’t caught in the rat race, but neither is he trying to run away from the normal responsibilities of life.
 - c) Better is a handful with peace than two handfuls with striving after wind
- 2. The covetous have no peace: They are chasing the wind—emptiness**
 - a) Covetousness is a Terrible Slave Driver—That Won’t Let You Free
 - b) Even As Your Gaining—Your Loosing... It Can Cost Your Marriage, your Children, Your Health, Your Peace of Mind, — Even Your Soul

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? (Mt 16:26)

3. Covetousness can take down a servant or a king...

- a) From **King David**—coveting another man's wife...
- b) To **King Ahab**, coveting a poor man's vineyard
- c) To **Gehazi**, the Servant of Elisha who lied to obtain gifts from Namaan who had just been healed of leprosy

Covetousness Promises Happiness but in the end it destroys

(6) LONELINESS (4:7-8)

- 1. Loneliness is one of the Saddest Conditions we experience...**
 - a) The Compulsion of Envy and Covetousness eventually leads to loneliness
Due to broken Marriages, Broken Families, Broken relationships...
 - b) But Loneliness can be felt even in a crowd...
As a result from loss of relationships or loved ones.
 - c) The Grief of Loneliness is Heartbreaking
- 2. On a Societal Scale — As Western Civilization Drifts Away from God, it's experiencing an epidemic of loneliness.**
 - a) It's so devastating that The U.K. just created a Loneliness Minister

3. But God calls us to a relationship with Him, to walk and talk with Him

(7) POWER & POPULARITY (4:13-16)

- 1. Power and Popularity Carry A Lot of Influence—**

—But Attract All the Wrong People!

 - a) Here is an Old and Foolish King Who Won't Listen to Advise or Correction—but He Has All the Appearances... and the Connections of a King
 - b) Here is a Poor but Wise Youth—Who Carries None of the Appearances or Connections of the Establishment...
- 2. But Eventually All Leaders Fall Out of Favor with the People!**
Life Goes On, One Generation Comes and Goes
- 3. A King May Spend Years Establishing His Power, and a younger Generation simply doesn't buy it—and his influence fades**

II. LIVING BY FAITH IN A BROKEN WORLD

A. TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF LIVING IN A BROKEN WORLD

- 1. Solomon was a King—but he still had a compassionate heart**
 - a) He Saw the Tears of the Oppressed and it Troubled His Soul
- 2. But Solomon was not the only royalty to leave the Palace and see suffering**
—500 yrs after Solomon was a young man named Gautama Siddhartha,
 - a) he was a prince, the son of a wealthy king... who was preparing him for the throne by shielding him from everything ugly.
 - b) Against the wishes of his father the king, he snuck outside the castle walls
- 3. He came upon “Four Distressing Sights” that unnerved him...**
 - a) **A Sick Man; An Old Man; A Dead Man; and A Seeking Man...** one who wanted to unravel the mystery of suffering.

- b) He was so sheltered from suffering, and so shaken by seeing it, he decided to make it his life mission to understand it and solve it.

4. After Much Time and Meditation on it — He declared he was Buddha and He decided on “Four Noble Truths” that make up the core of Buddhist teaching

- a) **FIRST: Life is Suffering:** There is always, in everyone’s life, a gap between desire and reality. That Gap is suffering
- b) **SECOND: The Cause of All Suffering is Desire:** People suffer because they want what they do not have or experience. It is not possible to have everything you desire. therefore if you desire, you will suffer.
- c) **THIRD: The Way to End All Suffering is to End All Desire.** Want nothing, then nothing can disturb you. A person without dreams will never suffer the pain of seeing them shattered.
- d) **FOUTH: Spend your life learning to eliminate all desire.** The “eight-fold path” of Buddhism is supposed to show you how to deaden all desire.
(Adapted: Larry Crabb, Shattered Dreams p.70-71)

5. The same philosophy of Greek Stoics—just turned into an eastern religion

- a) The Stoics Believed the same premise—to achieve peace and contentment... Stoics abolished all desires and eliminated all emotions.

- b) Love was rooted out of life, and caring was forbidden.

‘The Stoics made of the heart a desert, and called it a peace.’ (T.R. Glover)

6. The Problem is Bigger Than Eliminating Desire and Emotion!

- a) The World is Broken by Human Sin — it cannot be solved by a Human Solution!

B. JESUS LEFT THE GLORY OF HEAVEN TO ENTER THIS BROKEN WORLD

1. Unlike Any Other King, or Teacher or Leader or Philosopher...

Jesus Left the Palace of Heaven to Provide the Way Back to God!

- a) **Truth 1: Life Includes Suffering, but Life is a Gift from God who is Good.** All experience suffering, both the good and the bad, but Jesus has made a way for us to find our peace in God (not in self).
- b) **Truth 2: The Cause of All Suffering is Separation.** We are separated from God by selfishness and sin— deceived into seeking happiness apart from God, causing us to spend our life chasing the wind!
- c) **Truth 3: The Way to Handle Suffering is to Draw Near to God**—Seek His Help and Strength and Forgiveness. Not to Cope with it through denial, but through seeking God and His help.
(Adapted: Larry Crabb, Shattered Dreams p.70-71)
- d) **Truth 4: Only Jesus’ blood can bring peace between you and God and give New Life in Him. (Romans 5:1–2)**

“God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.” (C.S. Lewis)

C. GOD SENT HIS SON TO PAY OUR DEBT IN FULL AT THE CROSS!

1. So We Can Be Born Again—Set Free by His Grace! Healed to Become a Whole Person in a Broken World!

2. There is NO Grace in the Religions of the World... NONE!

- a) There is No Grace in Buddhism, or Hinduism, or Islam,
No Grace in New Age beliefs, or Man-Made Belief Systems
- b) There is Judgement, or Karma, but no grace, no forgiveness, no reconciliation

“The only God I believe in is the One Nietzsche ridiculed as 'God on the cross.' In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in Godforsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross that symbolizes divine suffering. – John Stott

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Jesus Suffered for us!**
- 2. He Paid the Terrible Cost of Our Debt in Full at the Cross**
- 3. So That We Could Be Saved By His Grace!**

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:14)