

Ecclesiastes IV
The Oppression of the Righteous
and the Wicked
Ecclesiastes 4:1-6

- I. THE CONSIDERATION OF ALL OPPRESSIONS (Ecclesiastes 4:1; Malachi 3:18)
- a. Done Under the Sun
- i. The oppressed with tears (Psalm 18:6; Exodus 2:23)
1. Oppressions – the root word being *oppress*.
 1. *Oppress* defined – “To load or burden with unreasonable impositions; to treat with unjust severity, rigor or hardship; as, to oppress a nation with taxes or contributions; to oppress one by compelling him to perform unreasonable service.” – From *Webster’s 1828*
 2. Etymology of *oppress* – “mid-14th century from the Old French *opresser* ‘to afflict; torment, smother’” – From www.etymonline.com
 2. The oppression of the Children of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1:8)
 1. Taskmasters to afflict (Exodus 1:11)
 2. Made to serve with rigor (Exodus 1:13)
 3. Lives made bitter by hard bondage (Exodus 1:14)
 4. Male children killed (Exodus 1:16-17, 22)
 5. The Children of Israel were oppressed in Egypt because it was a part of God’s plan to move them out of the land (Genesis 15:13-14)
 6. To the land He had promised them (Exodus 3:8)
 3. The oppression of the Children of Israel in the land (Judges 10:6-9)
 1. Oppressed because of their disobedience (Judges 10:6)
 2. The anger of the LORD was hot against Israel (Judges 10:7) (Judges 10:8-9)
 - i. Sold into the hands of the Philistines
 - ii. And into the hands of the Children of Ammon
 3. They cried unto the LORD (Judges 10:10)
 4. Their cry refused (Judges 10:11-16)
 5. Because they had forsaken the LORD (Judges 10:13)
 6. Note: There are many other times of oppression for the people of Israel and Judah during the times of the Kings.

4. The oppression of the Children of Israel in captivity
 1. The Ten Tribes (Samaria) (Israel) (2 Kings 17:6, 23-24; 18:9-12)
 2. The oppression of Judah (2 Kings 25:1-3; 21)
 - i. The oppression of Judah in Babylon (Psalm 137)
 1. Unable to sing the songs of Zion
 2. Because of the oppression
 - ii. No comforter – We see from many of the above passages that there were times where God’s people (the Jews) had disobeyed so much that the Lord let the oppressors have their way with them. It was as if there were no comforter available.
 1. The value of a comforter
 1. *Comforter* – from the root word *comfort*
 2. *Comfort* –
 - i. Etymology – “*from the Latin, intensive prefix (com-)[com -, usually means “with, together”], plus fortis “strong”*
 - ii. Above info from www.etymonline.com
- b. The Lack of a Comforter (Ecclesiastes 4:1)
 - i. Nationally –
 1. God’s people (Israel) had many times of oppression because of their disobedience. While there were times where they faced oppression without the disobedience being a factor (ex. their time in Egypt), many times they brought the oppression upon themselves.
 2. Yet the Lord shall in the future put away all oppression for His people (Israel). (Isaiah 52:1-6)
 1. The baring of His holy arm (Isaiah 52:10)
 - i. The holy arm is Christ (Isaiah 53:1)
 - ii. He has rescued all mankind by His death (Isaiah 52:13-15a) (Isaiah 53:10) (Ephesians 3:5-9)
 - iii. He will rescue His people (Israel) by His holy arm (Isaiah 52:10, 15) (Revelation 11:5)
 3. This is true for the nations of today; if they do not acknowledge the Lord God, they have no comfort. Our modern nations have not the understanding that their strength is given from God. True comfort can only come from the LORD. (2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 1:18-19)

- ii. Personally – The Comforter (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26)
 - 1. The children of God
 - 1. Has a Comforter (John 15:26; 16:13)
 - i. To teach all things (1 Corinthians 2:9-11)
 - ii. To help in the time of need (Romans 8:26-27)
 - 2. Has a hope (Romans 8:24-25) (Romans 5:1-5),
 - 3. Has a hope in the comfort of the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
 - 2. The children of the world
 - 1. Has no comforter (John 14:17)
 - 2. Has no hope (Ephesians 2:12)
 - 3. Cannot understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-14, 16)
 - i. Natural man has not the Spirit of God (v. 10), therefore the Spirit is not searching things out for him.
 - ii. The natural man has the spirit of the world (v. 12)
 - iii. Therefore he speaks man's wisdom (v. 13)
 - iv. The natural man cannot understand the things of God, because he does not have the Spirit indwelling him (v. 14)
 - v. The saved have the mind of Christ to instruct them (v. 15), but the lost have the mind of this world.
 - 4. Therefore, we see that it is no wonder that this world is without hope, and degrading more and more.

II. THE PRAISE OF THE UNBORN AND DEAD (Ecclesiastes 4:2-3)

- a. Better is the Dead, than the Living (Ecclesiastes 4:2; 2:17)
 - i. Solomon hated life (Ecclesiastes 2:17)
 - ii. Job wished to die (Job 3:20-26; 6:8-9)
- b. Better is the Unborn (Ecclesiastes 4:3; Ecclesiastes 6:3)
 - i. Job wished that he had not been born (Job 3:1-17)
 - ii. For then they would not see the evil that is done (Ecclesiastes 4:3)

III. THE ENVY OF ONE OTHER (Ecclesiastes 4:4)

- a. The Envy of What One Does and Has
 - i. Two things the world will not forgive you for:
 - 1. Being a success
 - 2. Being a failure

- ii. Envy can be a great hindrance to the gospel
 1. Rachel envied her sister Leah (Genesis 30:1)
 2. The selling of Joseph into slavery (Acts 7:9)
 3. The Jews against the word of God (Acts 13:45-50)
 4. Envy named with other gross sins (Romans 1:29; Titus 3:3)
 5. David and Solomon warned the reader to not be envious against the wicked (Psalm 37:1; [Psalm of Asaph] – Psalm 73:3; Proverbs 14:30; 24:1, 19)
 - b. The Vanity and Vexation of it All (Ecclesiastes 4:4)
- IV. THE WORKING OF THE HANDS (Ecclesiastes 4:5-6)
- a. The Fool and His Hands (Ecclesiastes 4:5)
 - i. The fool has no desire to get wisdom (Proverbs 17:16)
 - ii. The sluggard will not plow (Proverbs 20:4); we are admonished to open our eyes and labour (Proverbs 20:13)
 - iii. Drowsiness is listed with drunkenness (Proverbs 23:19-23)
 - iv. The fool will eat up all that he possess and then will have nothing (Ecclesiastes 4:5b)
 - v. A man should provide for his own, and eat his own bread (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)
 - b. The Balance of What One Has (Ecclesiastes 4:6)
 - i. Better is an handful
 1. Better than a stalled ox (Proverbs 15:17)
 2. Better is a little..., than great revenues (Proverbs 16:8)
 3. Better is a little that a righteous man hath (Psalm 37:16)
 4. Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6-8)
 - ii. Than both hands full with travail
 1. He that oppreseth the poor will come to want (Proverbs 22:16)
 2. He that getteth riches by unrighteousness will want in the end (Jeremiah 17:11)
 3. He that loveth silver will not be satisfied (Ecclesiastes 5:10)
 4. He that loveth riches will fall into temptation and a snare (1 Timothy 6:9-10)