

## Ecclesiastes - Chapter 4

### Oppression (4:1-4:3)

Next under the sun, Solomon looks at oppression. Similar to his earlier look at injustice. Both show the futility of life from a purely under the sun approach (Job 3:1-5, Jeremiah 20:14-18). He's not saying that life is worse than death, but that looking at life we can see it isn't what it ought to be. It was meant to be better (Genesis 1:31).

- Why is there no comforter (v1)?
- Is power a temptation?
- In what sense are the dead better (v3-4)?

### Toil and Idleness (4:4-4:8)

Toil and idleness can both lead to problems. We can focus on getting ahead, climbing the ladder, not minding who we hurt on our way up (Prov 16:8). We can be idle and unable to help ourselves, much less anyone else (Ephesians 4:28). We often focus on one or the other, but there are warnings against both (1 Timothy 6:9).

- Is some toil done to be envied (v4), does it accomplish anything?
- Does idleness accomplish anything (v5)?
- Can toil for only ourselves be pointless (v8)?
- Will getting what we want ever satisfy us (v8)?
- Can a focus on toil and attaining harm us (v8)?
- Under the sun, is there any real satisfaction from doing things just for ourselves (v8)?

### Value of a Companion (4:9-4:12)

No man is an island (John Donne). We are responsible for our effect on others (Rom 14:7,12,15). We need each other to complete ways we are incomplete (1 Cor 12:12-26). We need others when we fall (Galatians 6:1-2). Our society seems to be emphasizing the ideas of isolation and self-reliance in an increasing way. God didn't make us to be that way.

- How are two better than one (v9)?
- Can we say, "it's their own fault" when others fall (v10)?
- Can we withstand adversaries easier when not alone (v12)?

### Popularity Fades (4:13-4:16)

We tend to think that the rich and powerful have it made, but all things happen in God's time.

- Can you think of a poor, wise (shepherd) boy who trusted God and a king who followed his own ways and didn't listen to correction? What was the result?
- Under the sun, is there a permanent answer?
- In what way is seeking power, like grasping for the wind?