

## The Injustice of It All – *Eccles 3:16-22*

**Introduction** – “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). This verse summarizes the passage before us. Solomon has declared that God makes all things beautiful in its time and that He does so perfectly (3:11). But he refuses to sugarcoat the kinds of situations many find themselves in with shallow, pious talk. Here, he sounds like the Psalmist crying out in Psalm 73:1-16. If God is truly in control of all things, and if all things really do work together for good, how come the bad guys seem to win so much of the time? Life is not fair.

Let’s remember where we’ve come in the book and where we’re going. The first section taught that no one can find any ultimate satisfaction or meaning in life under the sun, that is, within his or her own power or resources; but that, like faith, a deep-seated rest and a profound joy is simply a gift of God (1:1-2:26). Solomon is now arguing that God is sovereign over everything, including His giving of this good gift (3:1-5:20). What we learned in the first sub-section here is that God is exhaustively sovereign over absolutely everything and that He has promised that it is all beautiful in its time, but that we must rest in faith because we cannot see this here (3:1-15). Solomon handles several discrepancies between what we are to believe and what we actually see. The end of chapter 3 handles the first two.

**Tyranny and Death** (3:16-21) – Remember, we experience life under the sun as “*this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised*” (1:13). Because of the Fall, life in the world is experienced first as curse and not blessing (Rom 1:18). And so, even though we have seen that God predestines, ordains, and controls it all, and that His inscrutable ways are given to draw us to Himself to fear and rest in Him, even so, we find there are outrageous inequities all around us.

**Injustice** (v16-17) – Is justice preserved “*under the sun*”? Do we find marriage protected, the unborn defended, private property preserved? Whether in the civil or ecclesiastical courts, tyranny is the history of the world because of our innate selfishness and sinfulness. We try to cover the horrors around us with “God will work it all out in the end,” but (especially when the event is very personal) we honestly do not know why God allows the tyranny nor how or when or if God will rectify some specific unrighteousness in this life. But like the beginning of chapter 3, Solomon reiterates that there will be a time of final justice, and declares v17 by faith, not necessarily by experience.

**Why the Delay?** (vv18-20) – “God is testing them,” he says (v18), that we might see that we, like the animals, all die and decompose. What is the ultimate test? We are all going to experience death and no one will escape it. One day, we will be no different than that road-kill you drove by on the way to church. All of this is mist, vapor, futility. It drives us to find answers, but as v21 points out, we only find more fearful questions.

**The Horror of Death** (v21) – Under the sun, there is no experiential verification, no science-project, whereby we can discover the final solution to the absurdity of injustice and death. When you sit at a graveside, how do you know (scientifically) where the soul of that body now is? How do you know “they are in a better place”? We grasp for answers: annihilation, reincarnation, limbo, purgatory, paradise, heaven, and hell. Uncertainty leads to despair, and despair to chaos.

**The Gift of Our Portion** (v22) – Martin Luther summed this up, “*This, then, is the portion of the righteous: to enjoy the things that are present and not be afflicted by the things that are in the future.*” Under the sun, there is only today’s toil and work - and the enjoyment of it - that is ours. “*For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?*” (v22b).

**Beyond Solomon: Our Greater Solomon** – If it is true that the Fall brought upon mankind the primacy of the curse, it is even more true for us to remember where we are in this story of God for we have the benefit of living after the Cross, where “*the Death of Death in the Death of Christ*” (John Owen) took place. The curse of death has been overturned to resurrection life in Jesus Christ. We see the cross, we see Jesus, and we receive by faith that the tyranny and death that we now suffer is no longer evidence of God’s wrath but of His love – just as it was in the death of Jesus Christ. Hear the testament of the True Solomon, Son of David.

**Faith in What is Not Seen** (Heb 11:1, 32-12:2) – What has Jesus done? Enduring tyranny and death because of the joy set before Him, Jesus put death to death. Where do we see this? It is interesting to note that Hebrews 12 is all about the assembling together of the saints, that Psalm 73:17 declares the answer to all the doubts in the sanctuary of God and His people, and that Solomon will speak of this gathering in Ecclesiastes 5 as well. It is in the faith-wrought worship of God with His people that we are promised solace, vindication, and resurrection life.

**Union With Christ** (Phil 3:10) - The injustice, suffering, and even death we experience is done in union with Christ. We suffer loss as a part of our union with the power of His resurrection. This is how the glory of Christ is revealed (1 Pet 4:12-13). We are to follow Jesus (1 Pet 2:19-24) – “*...by whose stripes you were healed.*”

**In A Moment of Terror** – Have you really considered your own death? Will your body simply go to the ground and decay like the animals? Do we have any empirical evidence of the post-death existence of those who have died? No, we don’t. What we do have is the Word of God, the promises of the One who has experienced death and resurrection for us. He tells us that there is no suffering that He will not vindicate for His people (Rom 8:18, 35-37).