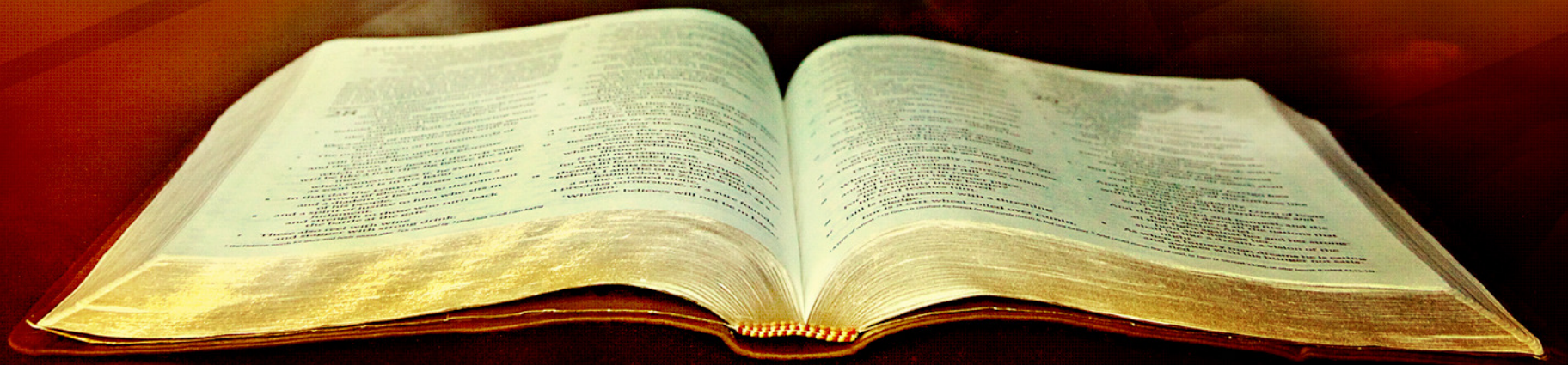


ECCLESIASTES

Eccl. 4:1-6



Eccl. 4:1 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done **under the sun**: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter.

2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

3 Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

4 Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.

5 **The fool foldeth his hands together**, and eateth his own flesh.

6 Better *is an handful with* quietness, than **both the hands full with** travail and vexation of spirit.

This evening, we continue on a wonderful, spiritual journey through the Book of Ecclesiastes, known also as “The Preacher.”

I. THE PREACHER’S SUBJECT, 1:1-11

- A. The Preacher, 1:1
- B. The Problem, 1:2-3
- C. The Process, 1:4-11

II. THE PREACHER’S SERMON, 1:12-10:20

- A. Things He Had Sought, 1:12—2:26
- B. Things He Had Seen, 3:1—6:12
 - 1. The Problem of Time Without Eternity, 3:1-11
 - 2. The Problem of a New Leaf Without a New Life, 3:12-17
 - 3. The Problem of Mortality Without Immortality, 3:18-22
 - a. A Low View of Man’s Dignity, 3:18-19
 - (1) Man is a Beast Constitutionally, 3:18
 - (a) As to His Being, 3:18a
 - (b) As to His Breath, 3:18b –



(2) Man is a Beast Comparatively, 3:19

b. A Low View of Man's Destiny, 3:20-21

(1) A Conclusion, 3:20

(2) A Complication, 3:21

c. A Low View of Man's Duty, 3:22

(1) Investing in the Here and Now, 3:22a

(2) Ignorance of the Hereafter, 3:22b

In chapter 3, Solomon's perspective "under the sun" was that there is no justice in the courthouse and no righteousness in the church house. In chapter 4, begins with "everything is hopeless."

In this [fourth] chapter, "The Preacher" deals with **four areas of life he observes that reinforce his view that all is enigmatic:**

1. oppression (vv. 1-3),
2. rivalry as the motivation for work (vv. 4-6),
3. isolation in work and life [lack of community] (vv. 7-12),
4. the problem of government (vv. 13-16).

- Tonight, as we begin chapter 4, we are confronted with "gloom and doom."

5. The Problem of Might Without Right, 4:1-3

a. Gloomy Consideration, 4:1

(1) The Anguished of the Oppressed, 4:1a “So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done **under the sun**: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter;

- Welcome to life under Fascism, Communism, Nazism, and Socialism.
- “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”

This is a proclamation by the pigs who control the government in the novel *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell.

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/all-animals-are-equal--but-some-animals-are-more-equal-than-others>

(2) The Arrogance of the Oppressors, 4:1b
”...and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter.”

Elizabeth Bathory – The ‘Blood Countess’ (1560-1614) Hungarian Countess

She murdered and tortured many young girls and reportedly, used their blood to fill her bath tub for bathing in order to achieve immortality.

<https://www.amazon.com/Bloody-Countess-Atrocities-Erzsebet-Bathory/dp/1840680563>

Shaka Zulu (1787-1828) – murdered his mother, every newborn son, and over 2,000,000 people during his reign.

http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/people_shaka_zulu.html

The Armenian Massacres in 1894-1896 were the first near-genocidal series of atrocities committed against the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. They were carried out during the reign of Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909), the last sultan effectively to rule over the Turkish state...Estimates of the dead run from 100,000 to 300,000.

<https://www.armenian-genocide.org/hamidian.html>

All in all, the Germans deliberately killed about 11 million noncombatants, a figure that rises to more than 12 million if foreseeable deaths from deportation, hunger, and sentences in concentration camps are included. <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2011/01/27/hitler-vs-stalin-who-was-worse/>

Studies regarding Chairman Mao in Communist China estimate 35-45 million were murdered. One, in 2008, is by the Chinese journalist Yang Jisheng, who estimates that 35 million died. Hong Kong University's Frank Dikötter has a higher but equally plausible estimate of 45 million. <https://www.chinafile.com/library/nyrb-china-archive/who-killed-more-hitler-stalin-or-mao>

100 Years of Communism—and 100 Million Dead

The Bolshevik plague that began in Russia was the greatest catastrophe in human history.

By *David Satter*

Nov. 6, 2017 6:43 pm ET

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/100-years-of-communism-and-100-million-dead-1510011810>

- History is replete with mankind murdering mankind.

b. Gloomy Conclusion, 4:2-3

(1) Praising Those the Tomb Has Received, 4:2

Eccl. 4:2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

- The fatalistic pessimism of Solomon is...if you're dead, you're better off than the living.

(2) Praising Those the Womb has Refused, 4:3

Eccl. 4:3 Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

- Solomon praises the barren womb – that it is better never to have been.
- Job and Jeremiah lamented the same sentiments:

Job 3:3 **Let the day perish wherein I was born**, and the night *in which* it was said, There is a man child conceived.

4 Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.

5 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.

6 *As for* that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months.

7 Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein.

8 Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning.

9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but *have* none; neither let it see the dawning of the day:

10 Because it shut not up **the doors of my mother's womb**, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

11 **Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?**

12 Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?

13 For now should I have lain still and been quiet, **I should have slept: then had I been at rest,**

Jer. 20:18 **Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow**, that my days should be consumed with shame?

6. The Problem of Prosperity Without Posterity, 4:4-12

a. The Resentful Man, 4:4-5

- Solomon expressed the humanity perspective of the futility of life by two examples:

(1) The Lusting Fool, 4:4

Eccl. 4:4 Again, I considered all travail, and **every right work**, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. **This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.**

- “Again, I considered all travail...” = he is thinking about the first three verses and continuing thinking about it → perhaps “over-thinking” it.
- Notice the subtle refutation of relativism – there is no “right” or “wrong” work.

Relativism, roughly put, is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them. The type of dependency relativists propose has a bearing on the question of definitions. Let us take some examples.

(a) Justice is relative to local norms.

(b) Truth is relative to a language-game.

(c) The measurement of temperature is relative to the scale we use.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/>

- Is it hot? Well...it is relative to the scale we use.

$200^{\circ}\text{F} = 93.33333^{\circ}\text{C}$

<https://www.metric-conversions.org/temperature/fahrenheit-to-celsius.htm>

$200^{\circ}\text{F} = 366.4833\text{K}$

<https://www.metric-conversions.org/temperature/fahrenheit-to-kelvin.htm>

- Is it hot? Well...it depends if you have common sense, regardless of the scale used.
- One man's achievement is another's man's envy. "...for this a man is envied of his neighbour..."
- The envy may motivate the wicked to greater wickedness:

1 Jn. 3:12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? **Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.**

Jn. 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, **lest his deeds should be reprov'd.**

21 But **he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.**

- Patents, intellectual material, etc. are too often stolen or “pirated.”
- Intellectual genius and productivity is vanity – “...**This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.**”

(2) The Lazy Fool, 4:5

Eccl. 4:5 The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

Isa. 9:20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: **they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:**

Amos 4:6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: **yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.**

2 Thess. 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that **if any would not work, neither should he eat.**

Luke 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ...

20 But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

b. The Realistic Man, 4:6

Eccl. 4:6 **Better is** an handful *with* quietness, **than** both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit.

Prov. 15:16 **Better is** little with the fear of the LORD **than** great treasure and trouble therewith.

17 **Better is** a dinner of herbs where love is, **than** a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Prov. 16:8 **Better is** a little with righteousness **than** great revenues without right.

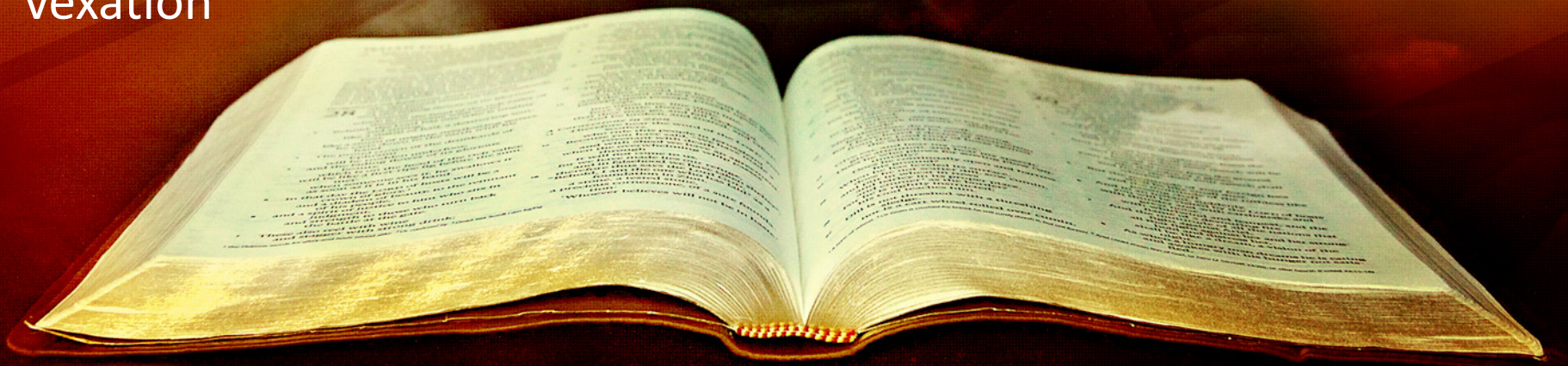
Prov. 17:1 **Better is** a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, **than** an house full of sacrifices *with* strife.

Conclusion

Eccl. 4:5 **The fool foldeth his hands together**, and eateth his own flesh.

6 Better is **an handful** with quietness, than **both the hands full** with travail and vexation of spirit.

- “folded hands” = emptiness from laziness
- “an handful” = something with quietness
- “both the hands full” = combination of something with futility and vexation



1 Tim. 6:6 But **godliness with contentment is great gain.**

7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And **having food and raiment let us be therewith content.**

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For **the love of money is the root of all evil**: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and **follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.**

12 **Fight the good fight of faith**, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

