

One Righteous Man – Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

Read Ecclesiastes 7:15–18

15 In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. 16 Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? 17 Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.

- 1) What is Solomon's struggle with the way God's providence plays out in the world? In what ways have you struggled similarly?**
- 2) What does it mean to be too wicked? Too righteous? Where do these responses come from? Where do they lead?**

As Solomon continues, his initial assumptions begin to unravel. There is no one who is actually truly wise or rich when held up to the true definition of those things: God himself. Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-6:

19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. 20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. 21 Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. 22 Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. 23 All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out? 25 I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. 26 And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.

- 3) What do our righteousness and wisdom deserve? Why is our understanding of this so often differ from the biblical one?**
- 4) How does this affect your perspective on the difficult or unjust things you walk through? How does it shape the way you view those who sin against you? Does it change the way you see God at work in these sorts of circumstances?**

Understanding our position before God rightly is not enough, because on our own that position is bad. We need a righteousness that none of us have to merit a good ultimate outcome. God does more than explain our predicament. He fixes it in Jesus.

7:27 Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things— 28 which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. 29 See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

Philippians 3:4–11

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: [5] circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; [6] as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. [7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—[10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (ESV)

- 5) **What has been provided for us through the work of Christ that changes our situation before God?**
- 6) **Considering all of this, what does it mean to fear the Lord? How does the work of Christ guard us against pursuing wickedness and self-righteousness to fix our situation?**
- 7) **How does this shape the way we as a church walk with each other through hard things?**

PRAYER