

## Ecclesiastes 7:13-18 "Crooked made straight"

**Ecclesiastes 7:13** CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD: FOR WHO CAN MAKE STRAIGHT WHAT HE HAS MADE CROOKED? **14** IN THE DAY OF PROSPERITY BE JOYFUL. BUT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER: SURELY GOD HAS APPOINTED THE ONE AS WELL AS THE OTHER. SO THAT MAN CAN FIND OUT NOTHING *THAT WILL COME* AFTER HIM. **15** I HAVE SEEN EVERYTHING IN MY DAYS OF VANITY: THERE IS A JUST *MAN* WHO PERISHES IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND THERE IS A WICKED *MAN* WHO PROLONGS *LIFE* IN HIS WICKEDNESS. **16** DO NOT BE OVERLY RIGHTEOUS. NOR BE OVERLY WISE: WHY SHOULD YOU DESTROY YOURSELF? **17** DO NOT BE OVERLY WICKED. NOR BE FOOLISH: WHY SHOULD YOU DIE BEFORE YOUR TIME? **18** *IT IS* GOOD THAT YOU GRASP THIS. AND ALSO NOT REMOVE YOUR HAND FROM THE OTHER: FOR HE WHO FEARS GOD WILL ESCAPE THEM ALL.

**Ecclesiastes 7:13** CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD: FOR WHO CAN MAKE STRAIGHT WHAT HE HAS MADE CROOKED? When Solomon speaks of things that are "crooked," he is not referring to something that is morally out of line, as if God could ever be the author of evil. Instead he is talking about some trouble or difficulty in life we wish we could change but cannot alter. Crooked things happen to all of us. Our bodies get crooked with disease. We suffer the loss of jobs and family members...

You know the occurrences of life that we wish did not occur.

We see this almost identical language in Chapter 1 verse 15 *WHAT IS CROOKED CANNOT BE MADE STRAIGHT. DON'T FORGET IN CHAPTER 1 SOLOMON WAS SEEING EVERYTHING "under the sun". LIFE WITHOUT GOD. LIFE WITHOUT ETERNITY IN MIND. NOTICE HERE SOLOMON BEGINS VERSE 13 WITH "CONSIDER THE WORK*

OF GOD”.

**BOTH THE CROOKED AND THE STRAIGHT FALL UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND.**

**RYKEN MAKES THIS SIMPLE OBSERVATION..** Some days are full of prosperity. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and all is right with the world. There is food on the table and money in the bank. If there is work to do, it is the kind of work that we enjoy doing. If we are taking the day off, we get to spend it the way we want to spend it, with the people we love. Every such day is a gift from God that calls us to be joyful. Here the Preacher celebrates the kind of meaningful hedonism that he has talked about several times already. Every fine day, every good meal, every financial windfall, every meaningful conversation, every pleasurable experience, every success in ministry - every blessing of any kind at all - is another reason to return praise and thanks to God. To be joyful is to find our fundamental satisfaction in God and then to receive every pleasure in life as a gift of his grace.

Not every day is like that, of course. Some days are full of adversity rather than prosperity. The sun is not shining, the birds are not singing, and nothing seems right with the world. There may be food on the table, but there is no money in the bank. Work is a chore, vacation is boring, and we may feel as if we do not have even one single friend in the world. Yet this day too is a day that comes from the hand of God, a day that is under his sovereign control. The Preacher does not have the

heart to tell us to be joyful on such a difficult day, but he does call us to a wise consideration of the ways of God. When adversity comes, recognize that this too is a day that the Lord has made. God is good "all the time". God's hand is in both the crooked and the straight.

**Reinhold Niebuhr, 1934 Adversity and Prosperity "Serenity Prayer": O God, give us serenity to accept what cannot be changed, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference. ()**

14 IN THE DAY OF PROSPERITY BE JOYFUL. BUT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER: SURELY GOD HAS APPOINTED THE ONE AS WELL AS THE OTHER. SO THAT MAN CAN FIND OUT NOTHING THAT WILL COME AFTER HIM. **Wisdom gives us perspective so that we aren't discouraged when times are difficult or arrogant when things are going well. It takes a good deal of spirituality to be able to accept prosperity as well as adversity, for often prosperity does greater damage** (Phil 4:10–13).

After Job's horrific loss and suffering... his wife told him to curse God and die! Job reminded his wife of this truth when: "HE SAID TO HER. "YOU SPEAK AS ONE OF THE FOOLISH WOMEN SPEAKS. SHALL WE INDEED ACCEPT GOOD FROM GOD. AND SHALL WE NOT ACCEPT ADVERSITY?" (2:10) **Job had said in his first chapter verse 21** "NAKED I



CAME FROM MY MOTHER'S WOMB. AND NAKED SHALL I RETURN THERE. THE LORD GAVE. AND THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY: BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD."

Missler astutely said, "So the Lord balances the blessings in our hands with burdens on our backs. That helps to keep us steady, and as we yield to Him, He can even turn the burdens into blessings. Job's friends were wrong: they tried to use an old road map to guide Job on a new journey, and the map didn't fit. No matter how much experience we have in the Christian life, or how many books we read, we must still walk by faith."

Jon Courson adds... "In the day of adversity, rejoice because the Father is just

as involved in the day of adversity as He is in the day of prosperity. So embrace your time of trouble and say, “Thank You, Lord. You’ve ordered this, as well.” So often in adversity, we think our world is collapsing and that everything is going wrong when, in reality, the Lord is birthing a whole new understanding within us.”



And In his comments on this verse, Martin Luther gave the following pastoral advice: “Enjoy the things that are present in such a way that you do not base your confidence on them as though they were going to last forever ... but reserve part of your heart for God, so that with it we can bear the day of adversity.”

**SOLOMON TELLS US TO CONSIDER THIS... PONDER IT... KNOW THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORKING AND ACCEPT THIS IS HIS WILL AND WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU.**

**15 I HAVE SEEN EVERYTHING IN MY DAYS OF VANITY: THERE IS A JUST MAN WHO PERISHES IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND THERE IS A WICKED MAN WHO PROLONGS LIFE IN HIS WICKEDNESS. I have seen everything in my days of vanity:** Solomon complained that in his meaningless life he has seen the good suffer (**a just man who perishes in his righteousness**) and the wicked prosper (**prolongs his life in his wickedness**). Solomon mourns,

**If there is one problem in life that demands a mature perspective, it is “Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?” The good die young while the wicked seem to enjoy long lives, and this seems contrary to the justice of God and the Word of God.**

Jesus did not open the Sermon on the Mount with **“Blessed are the rich in substance”** but **“Blessed are the poor in spirit”** (Mt 5:3, and see Luke 6:20). **The wicked appear to prosper only if you take the short view of things. This was the lesson Asaph recorded in Psalm 73 and that Paul reinforced in Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:16–18. “They have their reward” (Mt 6:2, 5, 16), and that reward is all they will ever get. They may gain the whole world, but they lose their own souls.**



Besides one of God’s greatest tools of shaping us is the use of “crooked” things. Remember this life is

the only heaven the wicked will ever know... for us this life is the only hell we will ever know.

**16 DO NOT BE OVERLY RIGHTEOUS. NOR BE OVERLY WISE: WHY SHOULD YOU DESTROY YOURSELF? 17 DO NOT BE OVERLY WICKED. NOR BE FOOLISH: WHY SHOULD YOU DIE BEFORE YOUR TIME?**

“Don’t be too good because no one will like you, but don’t be too bad because you’ll die too soon.” What Solomon espouses is basically the philosophy the Greeks called “The Golden Mean”—which is simply, “In everything, moderation.” Don’t be too good, don’t be too bad. Just be somewhere in the middle.

“The Golden Mean” as taught by many ancient Greek and Roman philosophers would say, too much piety or too much iniquity will lead to an early grave. So many think and live this way today. They know better than to live a life of total wickedness because deep down they believe that God will judge people for their sins. Yet secretly they suspect that trying to be holy will take the *fun out of life*. Generally speaking they try to be good, and they hope they are good enough to get by on the Day of Judgment. But their consciences are troubled too little by their sins. As long as they are not overly righteous or overly wicked, they are happy the way they are.

Many in our world still believe this way. But what does the Truth teller (Jesus) say? Revelation 3: 15 ***“I KNOW YOUR WORKS. THAT YOU ARE NEITHER COLD NOR HOT. I COULD WISH YOU WERE COLD OR HOT. 16 SO THEN, BECAUSE YOU ARE LUKEWARM, AND NEITHER COLD NOR HOT. I WILL VOMIT YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH. JESUS IS EITHER LORD OF ALL OR NOT LORD AT ALL.***

**18 *IT IS GOOD THAT YOU GRASP THIS. AND ALSO NOT REMOVE YOUR HAND FROM THE OTHER: FOR HE WHO FEARS GOD WILL ESCAPE THEM ALL.***

WHEN WE HAVE A PROPER FEAR OF GOD WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE **“GREAT SINNERS”** IN NEED OF **“GREAT FORGIVENESS”** FROM A **“GREAT SAVIOR”**. A PROPER FEAR OF

## GOD UNDERSTANDS OUR SINFULNESS AND OUR INABILITY TO SAVE OURSELVES.

No doubt the fear of God is on the great themes of the second half of Ecclesiastes, as the book moves from the “*vanity of life*” to the **fear of it’s Creator**.

When we get to the very end of Ecclesiastes, Solomon our “Preacher” will tell us to “**fear God and keep his commandments**” (Eccl. 12:13). Here he tells us to fear God and escape the coming judgment.



*Hughes notes: To fear God is to revere God. It is to know that he is God and we are not. It is to hold him in awe for his majestic beauty. It is to have respect for his mighty and awesome power. Having the true and proper fear of God sees us as we really are, and this will teach us not to pretend to be something we are not. The fear of God will also keep us from living a wicked life, because when we understand his holiness, the last thing we will want to do is fall under his judgment.*

So many wonderful lessons Solomon has taught us. Most importantly he has taught us that life without God is **meaningless**. It’s vanity, chasing bubbles. Life without God means “**NOTHING MATTERS**”. On the contrary life with God has purpose... it has meaning. When we have God in our lives “**EVERYTHING MATTERS**.”

Solomon began our section of study today with one of life’s toughest lessons. Learning to look beyond our present difficulties and see the work of God, accepting all of the crooked things in life until the day He chooses to make them straight.



On the other side of the cross James will give us incredible insight to the crooked things in life. **James chapter 1 verse 2** *MY BRETHREN, COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU FALL INTO VARIOUS TRIALS* The New English Bible says it this way “**count yourselves supremely happy**” *WHEN YOU FALL INTO VARIOUS*

**TRIALS.** My brethren, **count** (Think forward... fast forward and see the end of what God is doing. Faith that works) **As Corrie Tem Boom said, "faith is seeing through the fog"...** **Jesus** did it too when he saw you and I as He counted the joy of obtaining you and I as He endured the cross...) count it all joy **WHEN (WHEN ... not if, but when) cause you will!** count it all joy you fall into various trials, It is said you are either going into one, in the middle of one or coming out of one

**Anthony Pabovano said it well...** "Pain is a part of the process... From the shedding of blood that initiates birth to the last gasp of astonishment in the face of death, we are encircled in suffering. The biography of a human being is also a history of anguish. The way one reacts to the suffering of life matters more, in creative and human terms, than the suffering itself. We become the people we are through the disadvantages and conflicts we prefer to more comfortable alternatives."

**Joy... deep settled confidence that God is in control...** Do you really believe it? Do you believe that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose? **No promise you will ever see it, you** may never know why the crooked things remain or have occurred.

**Verse 3 James continues with... KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES PATIENCE.** <sup>3</sup> **knowing** Present active participle of ginôskô Knowing from experience... **experiential knowledge.** **4 BUT LET PATIENCE HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK. THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE. LACKING NOTHING.**

going through them with endurance and patience produces maturity... *practice doesn't make perfect... perfect practice makes perfect.*

**Job...** though he slay me yet will I trust Him...

**Facing the Giants...** We will praise Him when we win and we will praise Him when we lose



God knows the crooked things test our faith... this produces patience and then we become complete, lacking nothing.

Think of Job, for example, who was afflicted with many painful trials in order to prove the genuineness of his faith. Our own sufferings have the same purpose: by the grace of God, they confirm that we are holding onto Christ. Or perhaps they reveal exactly the opposite, that we have never fully trusted in Christ at all but still need to trust him for our salvation.

### Suffering is part of our preparation for eternity.



Crooked things remind us this earth is not our home. We will suffer tribulation on this earth.

**7 PETER 4 VERSE 12** BELOVED, DO NOT THINK IT STRANGE CONCERNING THE FIERY TRIAL WHICH IS TO TRY YOU, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING HAPPENED TO YOU: **13** BUT REJOICE TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU PARTAKE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. THAT WHEN HIS GLORY IS REVEALED, YOU MAY ALSO BE GLAD WITH EXCEEDING JOY.



*Crooked things can convict us of our sin... correct us in our sins... can keep us from spiritual complacency.*

As I list the possibilities for why things are crooked I am not trying to suggest that we can always figure out why God has put some particular crook in our lot.

The point rather is that God knows why he has put it there. When something in life seems crooked, we are usually very quick to tell him how to straighten it out. Instead we should let God straighten us out! In his sovereignty over our suffering, God is hard at work to accomplish our real spiritual good, not just in one way but in many ways. Therefore, we are called to trust in him, even for things that seem crooked.

Dearest loved by God. Here is the greatest truth of all... **IN THE END GOD WILL MAKE ALL CROOKED THINGS STRAIGHT.** This is the fulfillment of the outplaying of my life verse...



**Romans 8:28** AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD. TO THOSE WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO *HIS* PURPOSE.

CROOKED THINGS...

Disease... BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT... RADIATION: SALIVA GLANDS. SWEAT GLANDS. TEAR DUCTS. STERILE. STUNS GROWTH... ALL CROOKED BECAUSE GOD WANTED ME STRAIGHT.

I HAVE LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE... I HAVE A PHD IN PAIN... AGAIN I JOIN WITH PAUL WHEN IN HIS LETTER TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER 8 VERSE 18 HE SAYS. "FOR I CONSIDER THAT THE **SUFFERINGS** OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY *TO BE COMPARED* WITH THE GLORY WHICH SHALL BE REVEALED IN US."

**SOLOMON SAID. "CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD" IN THE END HE WILL MAKE ALL THAT IS CROOKED STRAIGHT!**