



1867



1899



1905



1950



1974



2009

"The Evolution of Our Church Buildings"

First Baptist church

Established 1826

TOWNSEND-SMITH SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

A CARING CLASS

JANUARY STUDY THEME: Wrestling With Life's Mysteries

January 17, 2010 Lesson: "Wrestling With Injustice"

Scripture Passage: Ecclesiastes 3:16-17; 4:1; 8:2-13

No one has any authority over the wind to restrain it, and there is no authority over the day of death; there is no furlough in battle, and **wickedness will not allow those who practice it to escape.** [Eccl. 8:8]

WARNING FOR ALL GENERATIONS!

Nothing ever happens except that it is passed through God's permissive will. He either allows something to happen or else He causes something to happen. No matter what King Solomon has said, God has a reason for everything He allows to happen.

No generation has ever escaped injustice on the part of ungodly kings, dictators, or other rulers, past or present, who have been in control of countries. The Apostle Paul wrote that when a person offers himself to sin to obey it, he becomes the slave of sin [Rom. 6:16]. Evil is not neutral. God told Cain that sin desired to have him [Gen. 4:7].

Everyone who practices wickedness is the slave of wickedness. **What that means on a practical level is that wicked kings, dictators, evil rulers and other godless people who practice evil and never repent, eventually will self destruct.** Their own evil deeds will eventually become a snare. The example that King Solomon gave us was that even those who appear to be in control or authority actually have limited authority at best. **God will prevail in the end.** King Solomon has helped us to remember this while he was king in Israel, [971-931 B.C.]

When King Solomon was ruling in Israel, he would have not had any way to know that 3000 years after he spoke those words of Ecclesiastes that **Adolph Hitler** would be directly responsible for the horrible torture and death of 6 million of his fellow countrymen Jewish men, women, boys and girls. His quotation in the latter part of **Ecclesiastes 8:8 says, "wickedness will not allow anyone who practices it to escape."** {HCSB}

John Newton, [1725-1807], former ship captain of a slave ship, later, a clergyman and hymn writer, wrote the lyrics to perhaps the most famous hymn of all time, **"Amazing Grace."** Newton wrote this hymn from personal conviction from his experience as the captain of a slave ship that brought slaves from Africa to the Caribbean and the Southern United States. On one particular trip his ship encountered a storm so severe that he became frightened enough to call out to God for mercy, a moment that marked the beginning of his spiritual conversion. His career in slave trading lasted a few years more until he quit going to sea altogether and began to study theology. His repentance and the difference that God made in his life has allowed untold numbers of people to come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and turn to God for salvation through Jesus Christ. Only time will record how much influence this great hymn has made on the lives of so great a number of people when they sing, **"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found. Was blind, but now I see.**

THE PLACE OF INJUSTICE [ECCL. 3:16-17]

The Mystery of Injustice and Death

¹⁶ I also observed under the sun: there is wickedness at the place of judgment and there is wickedness at the place of righteousness. ¹⁷ I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, since there is a time for every activity and every work."

THE POWER OF OPRESSION [Eccl. 4:1]

Chapter 4

¹ Again, I observed all the acts of oppression being done under the sun. Look at the tears of those who are oppressed; they have no one to comfort them. Power is with those who oppress them; they have no one to comfort them.

THE PROCEDURE OF PROTEST [Eccl. 8:2-9]

² Keep the king's command. Concerning an oath by God, ³ do not be in a hurry. Leave his presence, and don't persist in a bad cause, since he will do whatever he wants. ⁴ For the king's word is authoritative, and who can say to him, "What are you doing?" ⁵ The one who keeps a command will not experience anything harmful, and a wise heart knows the right time and procedure. ⁶ For every activity there is a right time and procedure, even though man's troubles are heavy on him. ⁷ Yet no one knows what will happen, because who can tell him what will happen? ⁸ No one has authority over the wind to restrain it, and there is no authority over the day of death; there is no furlough in battle, and wickedness will not allow those who practice it to escape. ⁹ All this I have seen, applying my mind to all the work that is done under the sun, at a time when one man has authority over another to his harm.

There is wickedness in the place of justice. It even affects the legal system. Solomon asked how God's plan can be perfect when there is so much injustice and oppression in the world ([Ecccl 4:1](#)). He concluded that God does not ignore injustice, but will bring it to an end at his appointed time ([Ecccl 12:13,14](#)).

3:16ff Solomon reflects on several apparent contradictions in God's control of the world: (1) there is wickedness where there should be justice ([Ecccl 3:16,17](#)); (2) people created in God's image die just like the animals ([Ecccl 3:18-21](#)); (3) no one comforts the oppressed ([Ecccl 4:1-3](#)); (4) many people are motivated by envy ([Ecccl 4:4-6](#)); (5) people are lonely ([Ecccl 4:7-12](#)); (6) recognition for accomplishments is temporary ([Ecccl 4:13-16](#)). It is easy to use such contradictions as excuses not to believe in God. But Solomon used them to show how we can honestly look at life's problems and still keep our faith. This life is not all there is, yet even in this life we should not pass judgment on God because we don't know everything. God's plan is for us to live forever with him. So live with eternal values in view, realizing that all contradictions will one day be cleared up by the Creator himself ([Ecccl 12:14](#)).

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Oppression and sadness in life

Notes for 4:4-6

Some people are lazy while others are workaholics. The lazy person, seeing the futility of dashing about for success, folds his hands and hurts both himself and those who depend on him. The workaholic is often driven by envy, greed, and a constant desire to stay ahead of everyone else. Both extremes are foolish and irresponsible. The answer is to work hard but with moderation. Take time to enjoy the other gifts God has given and realize that it is God who gives out the assignments and the rewards, not us.

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Chapter 8

Notes for 8:1

Wisdom is the ability to see life from God's perspective and then to know the best course of action to take. Most people would agree that wisdom is a valuable asset, but how can we acquire it? [Proverbs 9:10](#) teaches that the fear of the Lord (respect and honor) is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom comes from knowing and trusting God; it is not merely the way to find God. Knowing God will lead to understanding and then to sharing this knowledge with others.

Those who fear God are better off

Notes for 8:10

This verse probably refers to how we quickly forget the evil done by some people after they have died. Returning from the cemetery, we praise them in the very city where they did their evil deeds.

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