

ECCLESIASTES SERIES
Chapter 3 Turn, Turn, Turn

The Byrds were right- "to everything, turn, turn, turn; there is a season, turn, turn, turn, and a time for every purpose under heaven"

and the Rolling Stones were wrong – Time is not on my side; The Sands of Time are Sinking.

We have different approaches to time:

Some very guarded and structured, but reality is that we can't control it – stuff will happen outside of our plans.

I like time structure and "good timing" EX: meeting Beka at store in Dalton at 2pm one day. We both arrived about 7 minutes early, at the same time . "Perfect timing"

If only life were always like that.

Ecclesiastes 3 is a bit like Charles Dickens Tale of two cities where he says "it was the best of times it was the worst of times" and his editors want him to change it but he refused.

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven-

2 A time to give birth and a time to die;

A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.

3 A time to kill and a time to heal;

A time to tear down and a time to build up.

4 A time to weep and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn and a time to dance.

5 A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;

A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.

6 A time to search and a time to give up as lost;

A time to keep and a time to throw away.

7 A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;

A time to be silent and a time to speak.

8 A time to love and a time to hate;

A time for war and a time for peace.

9 What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? 10 I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

11 He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime;

13 moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor-it is the gift of God. 14 I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has sowed that men should fear Him.

15 That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by.

16 Furthermore, I have seen under the sun *that* in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. 17 I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.

18 I said to myself concerning the sons of men, "God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts." 19 For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. 20 All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.

21 Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth? 22 I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?

If you're new or have missed a week, I want to give a quick review of this wisdom literature – ch 1&2: Chapter 1 points out that life marches on, seemingly routine and mundane, and our aspirations for greatness are met with death. The “preacher/teacher” of the book refers to all of this as “hebel” – smoke, mist, transitory, vanity, and enigma. Life goes off script and we don't know why, and we wonder “What's the point”?

Chapter 2 – the preacher explains that our pursuits and pleasures don't solve the enigma and they too slip out of our hands. Yet in the midst of this there is comfort in knowing that God is there and He is still in control.

Ecclesiastes also shows that God is the one who puts that factor of consistency in the world. While there is “hebel” and confusion, we can take comfort in knowing that there is also stability.

God is the FIXED POINT that gives meaning to everything else – Tozer

In chapter 3 the preacher brings together the seasons of life, the good and the bad. While we as creatures come and go, God does not. He remains the same.

The first lesson here is that Wisdom rests in the fact that God is in control – Rom 8:28 of OT.

Chapter 3 underscores how Ecclesiastes is a book of faith. Our lives and the seasons of our lives are not in our control, but they are in the hands of God.

EVERY moment is a God moment, no matter how it appears to us. Godly Wisdom rests in that.

There is a time for everything and we, made in the image of God, have a sense of eternity in our hearts. Because of our creaturely limitations we are not able to take it all in.

It is by faith that we can submit to and embrace that “He made all things beautiful / fitting in their time.” The way of Biblical wisdom is to recognize this and to walk by faith.

Human wisdom is exemplified by the poem INVICTUS. You may not recognize the title or the first part, but you'll know the last two lines.

BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

**It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.**

That is a Gen 3 kind of attitude.

Biblical wisdom acknowledges that “I am NOT THE CAPTAIN OF MY OWN SOUL.” We all learn that at some point – either in life, or in death.

This poem of Ecclesiastes 3 tells us to learn now, today, that there really is a time for everything. Learning now that the current season I am in will NOT always be the season of my whole life can at least help to prepare me for the chapters of my life God has yet to reveal. It does not mean that giving up or throwing away is going to be any easier when it comes, but it may help me not to be taken by surprise. – David Gibson

As Zack Eswine says, “Many of our frustrations rise from unmet expectations”, and I would add that our Expectations are a form of premeditated resentment.

A SECOND TRUTH is that...

Wisdom takes comfort in knowing that God knows even when we don't. He has set eternity in our hearts, but He controls it. We don't.

Our lives are a bit like a jigsaw puzzle that has all the pieces; we don't have the picture to go from, but God does. The picture that we should consider in our minds is Christ likeness and we don't know what it's going to take to get us there, but God does. He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

We want the pieces of the puzzle with straight edges – they make sense; they are clean, and we know what to do with them. We want the seasons of dancing, laughing, embracing, but the puzzle includes the weird shaped pieces that we don't know what to do with. Wisdom acknowledges that God does know, and that we can trust Him, not because it's all coming together before our eyes, but because of who He is.

EX: **Joseph Gen 45:8; 50:20.**

Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God;...

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

You may say “but Joseph had a happy ending. My life isn't there.” Joseph obeyed by faith even before seeing the result. He didn't know how things would turn out when he was sold into slavery, but he kept trusting and obeying God.

We enter seasons where it is hard to move forward: there are reversals in relationships in marriage or friendships, betrayal, health fades, money disappears. “That's not the season I want”.

EX: Job chapter 1 he loses wealth and family – chinnam- “no cause; unseen cause” that Job never sees. 9:17 “He multiplies my wounds without cause.”

The movement of faith is one of trusting God in those hard times.

Ecclesiastes 3 gives 14 couplets of seasons- we want the good ones, but the less favorable will come as well. We want to “let the good times roll” – the Motto of New Orleans is “Laissez rouler les bon temps”

Key verse is 9- “What is the point? What gain is there?” this echoes ch 1 and 2

A THIRD LESSON is that Seasons come that need to be rectified and God will do that one day.

We long for eternity and to know the big picture, but we don't have access to it. God does. v. 11, 15-17

We are bound by time, but God is not. We may think that we must “even the score now, or get back at someone”, but in reality, we can leave such things to God. Sins committed against us may be in the past and we may be frustrated that we can settle things, but the walk of wisdom is to rest in the fact that God can “search them out.” V. 15 He “seeks” what has passed by. God can and will unlock the past and make things right.

Our longing for justice is hardwired, but it's never perfect in this life. But justice will come.

God will retrieve every single injustice, and every single time, and every single activity. Every single deed that has ever broken his holy law and tarnished his beautiful world and damaged his image bearers—every one of those moments will be answerable to God. – David Gibson

There is freedom and rest from not having to be God, but rather trusting in the One who is.

ON GOLDEN POND – the mother to her grown daughter (K. Hepburn to Jane Fonda)

The message by itself isn't biblical, but in the context of knowing that God will bring all wrongs to the light of His justice, this advice does have some merit.

(I say this in the context of a meeting next week with 4 of my siblings as we explore some of the “hebel” and “chinnam” of our lives growing up.)

Ethel: [to Chelsea] Don't you think that everyone looks back on their childhood with a certain amount of bitterness and regret about something? You're a big girl now. Aren't you tired of it all? Bore, bore. It doesn't have to ruin your life, darling. Life marches by, Chels. I suggest you get on with it.

It's not real comforting or validating by itself, but in the context of Ecclesiastes 3, we, like saints of old, can move past the regret and trust the God who is in control. We aren't expecting to have it all here and now. Reliving and rehashing the hurts of the past is not just “a bore”, it is a prison for our souls if we face them apart from God.

EX: Victor Marx – abused as a child, got converted, learned about forgiveness and the freedom of letting go of bitterness.

There is a FOURTH LESSON from this chapter

There is a season for death, which God has appointed, but we don't know when it will be. Are you ready?



<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-the-ambassadors>

The painting depicts two wealthy educated men with their implements of knowledge and instruments for studying the heavens and for understanding time. In the foreground is a distorted image of a skull, which becomes clear when seen from a vantage point to the right of the painting.

The message is clear: Death is looming in the foreground for all of us.

Parable of Rich Fool. Luke 12:20ff

What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry." 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' 21 So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Last week we saw the death of Billy Graham, and in his sermons, he was bold and clear about the biblical truth that death comes to all of us and we will stand before God, either covered with our own righteousness (which has no value) or covered with the righteousness of Christ that comes by faith.

The bible tells us that God has appointed seasons and times and that in the fullness of time he sent His son.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

When the time comes for you to stand before God, will you know him as a son/daughter or as an enemy?

The good news is that Christ died for his enemies, and when we come to Him by faith, we can become beloved children of God.

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