

Dr. Terry E. Zebulke, Pastor
Grace Community Church
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HOW DO WE RESPOND TO GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAYS?

(Ecclesiastes 7:15-29)

...There is so much we cannot understand in this life. God is sovereign and He rules His world. Yet, often His ways seem perplexing, confusing, and unjust to us.

...Even this past week: Steve Curtis Chapman's 5 year old daughter was killed, having been run over by her brother. Also, Gary Drayer, a friend of some here, died at just 51 years old. Deep in our hearts, we want to ask God "Why?" Why did you allow it? Why did you not stop it? It's not fair!!!!

...Solomon tells us how to live in a world that seems up-side-down...He calls us to holiness and humility.

TWO GREAT TRUTHS HELPING US TO DEAL WITH THE MYSTERIOUS-UNKNOWABLE WAYS OF GOD.

...We are so small, limited, and sinful that we are not able to grasp what God is doing.

I. We Must Strive For Holiness, Which Results From Fearing God, As We Cannot Understand All That God Is Doing. (vv.15-19)

...In other words: Don't let you cannot understand negate what you can do right now!!!!

- A. Solomon tells us what he has seen: a righteous man dying young, and a wicked man living long.(15)
...You cannot identify the righteous by long life. Forget appearances. We have already seen:
 - 1. That prosperity is not always good for us...
 - 2. That adversity is not always bad, for hard times shape us.
- B. Do not think that your self-righteousness, nor your limited wisdom will deliver you from hard times. (vv.16-17) Often, pride can masquerade as righteousness.
 - 1. This verse is often twisted to mean...live in moderation. No! (v.16)
 - 2. Moreover, we must not "chuck it all" and live in sin. (v.17) If you do choose to let loose and live in sin, you will suffer the consequences. "die before your time."
- C. Solomon summarizes: Don't be wicked, foolish, and blow life, rather be holy and wise. (vv.18-19)
 - 1. He tells us, that life is filled with unfairness. In such a world we need to live in godly fear of the Lord. Such a "fear" will cause us to strive to obey Him, and this will produce holiness and wisdom in our daily lives.
 - 2. This wisdom is good. It makes one more powerful than "10 rulers..." (v.19)
 - 3. So, obey Him in what you know, and trust Him in what you don't!!!! This is the key!!!!

II. We Must Be Humble, By Never Forgetting That We Are Still Sinners, No Matter How Much We Have Grown In Grace. (vv.20-29)

..."if you knew about me what God knows you would not have bought this book. And, if I knew about you what God knows, I probably would not let you read it." (Nelson)

- A. Notice our condition: "none righteous." (v.20) We are all born totally depraved.
- B. We all struggle with a fallen nature that will show itself at any possible moment of weakness, frustration, or anger. (vv21-22) We all have the same problem.
..."don't pay attention to every word people say about you...for you have done the same."
- C. Solomon's own experience is recounted: In all his wisdom he could not understand God's ways.
 - 1. He sought to be wise...(v.23) But the explanation of things was beyond him. Such a thing humbled him, and it should us as well. "it is too deep for us."
 - 2. However, he was able to see that foolish choices led to pain and enslavement.(24-26)
...when we sin it enslaves us... "chains us." Doing this leads to bondage not freedom.
...it is only by God's grace in our lives that we "can escape sin." (v.26)
 - 3. God will do his job of running the universe. The question: will you do your job?
...ours is to be: honest, holy, loving, righteous, and eventually to die well.
- D. Even though we seek righteousness, we need to remember we are sinners. (vv27-29)
...Don't ever forget who you really are before God!!!! We must be humble.

Remember: God will not let your life get so solid that you can trust in your: family, health, talent, friends, and church. Not completely. He wants you to enjoy those gifts, BUT to put your trust completely in Him.

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: