

#5 God in the Tough Times

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:16 (ESV)

Vanity of Vanities... All is Vanity and Striving after Wind!

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3 Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. ¹⁷ I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. ¹⁸ I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. ¹⁹ For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. ²⁰ All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. ²¹ Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? ²² So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

Ecclesiastes 4:1 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. ² And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. ³ But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

1. God uses all the **TROUBLE OF LIFE** to show us that we're **NOTHING SPECIAL** and then **YOU DIE**.

Ecclesiastes 4:4-8 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. ⁵ The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh. ⁶ Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind. ⁷ Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸ one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

2. God uses **WORK** to build in us a need to **TRUST IN HIM** but we've turned it into a point of **SELF-IDENTIFICATION**.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him--a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

3. God uses **THE TROUBLE** of life to create the need for **FELLOWSHIP** but we resist it and try to do things **ON OUR OWN**.

Ecclesiastes 4:13-16 Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice. ¹⁴ For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor. ¹⁵ I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. ¹⁶ There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

4. God allows **TIME** to create **CONFLICT** but we refuse to **LET GO**.