

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR TWO

We Reap What We Sow – The Consequence/Chapter Three: Life's Futility (continued)

In addition to the *reality of death*, King Solomon was also frustrated with a second factor, the *necessity of delay*. He was acutely aware that the reap/sow dynamic doesn't consistently produce the immediate and appropriate result, even prior to our encounter with death. The wicked aren't always promptly punished for their crimes. Some escape punishment altogether. The righteous are not always immediately rewarded for their good works. Sometimes, it even seems as if the very opposite takes place. Under the curse, the moral mechanism of reaping what we sow has been corrupted by the quirk of a "delayed response." Notice how Solomon expresses its negative impact in Ecclesiastes 7:15 and 8:14 –

"I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness."

"There is futility which is done on the earth, that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I say that this too is futility."

Solomon's observations about the undermining effects of death and delay are accurate. His conclusions about the meaninglessness of this present life are appropriate. We can be certain of this because Solomon, like every other human author of Scripture, was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit when he wrote. Yet to his credit, he did not allow the morally out-of-order world in which he lived, to turn him cynical toward everyday life. Solomon arrived at a point of resolution that left him realistically optimistic, rather than permanently pessimistic, about functioning in the here and now. He proclaims his optimism in Ecclesiastes 3:22 –

"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?"

How could Solomon maintain this positive attitude and avoid the cynical despair that has plagued so many? He tells us how toward the end of his discourse in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 –

"The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

The emphasis in Solomon's conclusion is upon God's judgment, giving us insight into the perspective which molded his attitude. His sense of optimism in the midst of life's futility arose from a firm belief in the God of Israel as a God of justice, whose *final* judgment would resolve all the obvious inequities and blatant disparities of this present life.