

Ecclesiastes (Part Seven)

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One of the difficulties of studying Ecclesiastes is that unlike the vast majority of modern books, there is no one clear sustaining theme that runs from beginning to end. My emphasis is on the word “clear.” It does have several themes, all of which point toward promoting the growth and development of making right choices, but Solomon’s pattern of writing, or lecturing, sometimes takes sudden turns in the material that is seemingly unrelated to what just preceded it. It is though his mind jumped into another thought, and he wants to mention *it* before it slips from his mind, almost out of the fear that if he does not, he is going to lose that thought. It is one of the minor evidences that he did Ecclesiastes when he was old, because that is often the way old people converse.

I am a little bit familiar with this. John Reid told me a joke this past week, and I am going to pass it onto you. It has to do with old people, and maybe you who are older will relate to this. Anyway, two old people were conversing. One was a woman and the other was a man. It does not say they were husband and wife, but the older woman decided she would like to continue to play golf, and she expressed this to the old man, and he said, “What’s wrong? Why *can’t* you play golf?” And she said, “Because I can’t see very well. I hit the ball and I don’t know where it went.” The old man said to her, “Well, go ahead. I can see pretty well. You hit the ball, and then I will tell you where it is, and you can go to the ball and hit it again. And so *whack!* She hit the ball. She did not hit it all that far, being that she was an old lady, but she said to the man, “Where did I hit it?” And he said, “I don’t know. I forgot.”

That kind of reminds me of me, because I am getting more and more like that, and Evelyn of course says she is like that, and I see smiles on a lot of these old people here, because they go to do something and they forget why they went to do what it was. That is kind of the way Solomon is from time to time. He suddenly makes a jerk to another subject altogether, and that is

what he has done here toward the end of Ecclesiastes 3. We are going to read from verse 16 on to chapter 4, and verse 3.

Ecclesiastes 3:16-22 Moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. I said in my heart, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals.” For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth? So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter—On the side of their oppressors there is power, but they have no comforter. Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, more than the living who are still alive. Yet, better than both is he who has never existed, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

At a cursory glance, what we have just read in that paragraph seems to inform us that it has nothing to do with the previous chapter in which time is a major factor in our relationship with God. This is another chapter or paragraph that is easily misunderstood, but it contains a truth or two that we must deal with in life, sometimes directly, mostly indirectly, but in either case it is something discouraging. The reality he addresses is not necessarily about some weakness in us as individuals; rather it concerns an ignorance and weakness in mankind in general, combined with God’s apparent slowness in acting to correct it.

This social problem gives us, I believe, an unsuspected insight into Solomon's governance of Israel if we just ask a question about what he is saying here implies.

Again the overall subject of Ecclesiastes deals with the meaninglessness of life without God as evidenced by Solomon's use of the phrase "under the sun." If you go back to verse 16, you see he uses that phrase once again. When we attach it to more of what he said there in that paragraph, that phrase deals most directly with mankind's consistent inhumanity in dealing with each other. And even more specifically, Solomon's diversion here deals with mankind's inhumanity being practiced where one would hopefully desire that it would not exist at all.

In addition to these factors, playing around the edges of this brief diversion is a very important reality that the converted, through faith, must exercise patience and trust in God's sovereignty all the while having to live through the circumstances that he briefly describes.

Let us look again at verse 16.

Ecclesiastes 3:16 Moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there.

The circumstance that he laments first, in a general sense, is correction in government, and most specifically corruption in the court of law—the place of judgment.

The courts are an area of community life where righteousness is especially needed in order to promote peace, security, and justice in the community, but as Solomon observed, in verse 17, righteousness in the courts is in short supply, and he concludes that men can do very little about it. That is kind of interesting. His only answer, at this point, is that only God can correct it, and He will, but in the meanwhile God is nonetheless faithfully judging these corrupt activities taking place in the courts.

Remember, Solomon is talking about Israel primarily. That is where he had the ability to draw information from, and here he is, the king, and he is able to look down, you might say, from his throne and rule, and see that there are things going on in the courts that he does not approve of.

I want to show that what he is talking about here is really not a minor diversion. Brethren, we are called to learn to be just. I will expand on this comment just a little bit later, but we are called to learn to be just. A judge functions in a critical position in life. The chief justice in a nation is its king or the highest functioning member of the government. We will just comment on a couple of verses. The first will be in Romans 2 where Paul takes on the subject that Solomon just mentioned ever so briefly there in Ecclesiastes 3.

Romans 2:3-10 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

I am reading this just to add to the layer of judgment that I have already spoken of to you. We are going to add one more layer a little bit later about “you.” You are part of this layer of judgment that Solomon is complaining about in Ecclesiastes 3, but I took you all the way up to the chief judge in any nation. That chief judge is the highest ranking authority in government, and in Ecclesiastes 3 that would have been Solomon.

In Romans 2 I have taken you there from Solomon to the Judge of all the earth, and that is God. So Paul is telling us here, just as Solomon said, that God is judging all that is going on. The Judge of all the earth is God, and He is overseeing the lives of everybody.

Turn now to Romans 14. Paul brings this right into the church.

Romans 14:10-11 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

I think this is far enough for us to see that there are many layers of judgments that can be involved in what Solomon says there in Ecclesiastes 3: 16-17. So we have the chief judge in a nation, who is its highest ranking authority, and we have God, who is over all, and then there is Jesus Christ, to whom all judgment has been given, but most especially we in the Church have to answer to Him.

Acts 17:30-31 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, [Because He is judging sin] because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Even though the Father is Judge over all, the authority to judge all of mankind has been given to Jesus Christ. What we see here in Acts 17:30-31 is both a statement of fact and a promise at one and the same time.

Despite the reality that this world is indeed overflowing with injustices virtually everywhere one looks, we can be assured that these injustices are not overlooked by God. God is a God of justice. They will be taken care of in *His* time. In this we get back to the main subject material of Ecclesiastes

3. There is a time and a place for everything, and in an overall sense, the time and place for judgment of all is going to take place under the authority of Jesus Christ, and He will begin doing it after He returns.

Now let us get to *us*, because Ecclesiastes 3 applies to us as well, so we must understand that judgment must be made in everyone's life within the area of yours and my responsibility. We are required to make judgments in the area of our responsibilities. For example, parents must judge the conduct of their children so that the children learn proper conduct and gain maturity. That is something parents cannot just slough off to somebody else.

Here we are, talking about where judgments are to be taken. That is the subject of this brief section that Solomon wrote there in Ecclesiastes 3. We tend to look at judgment in its bigger size, but judgments have to be made by you and me right in the home, and so as parents we must not be judges like the judges Solomon mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:17. In a place where there should be righteousness, it is not there, he said. We do not want to fit that description, and so we cannot allow ourselves to be careless with God's standard within our own families.

A second area of responsibility is one that is a little bit more vague, but it is important concerning what is going on in the United States of America right now. The second area of responsibility is that in the United States, the reality is that legally, according to the Constitution, the people are the government. Do you understand that? The people are the government. Now much awareness of this responsibility has been lost. This is why John Adams, for one, said that this form of government was made only for moral people. Moral people are required to make judgments within their family.

Moral people under the government—the Constitution of the United States—are to make judgments regarding the affairs of what is going on *in* the United States. In such, a citizen of the United States has a moral and civic responsibility to fight injustice to a limited degree within the nation, not just in the family. This is something our brethren in America have not done. That is why we have the kind of government we have now. Legally, the real government, according to the Constitution, has allowed these people to get away with what they are doing.

Now to destroy the nation, what an enemy must do is destroy the standard of morality, and this brethren, has been accomplished because the citizenry in the United States has permitted it. We are getting what we deserve as a people. Our failure to carry out our civic responsibility is coming back to bite us. There are an awful lot of people to throw arrows at, and this includes me too. I have not done mine whatever is required of me. I know that I have not lived up to it.

The result of all of this is that we have a huge percentage of citizenry that does not have the foggiest notion of their civic duty as part of the government because they have been taught to live by getting basic needs from the government—that is, from the rest of the citizenry, and that, brethren, is its major injustice. Many of these people have unwittingly become leeches at the instigation of the peoples' representatives who promote what is commonly called socialism, or called communism. By either name, though it definitely is not godly, it greatly limits individual liberties.

I am old enough to remember what life was like back in the 40s and 50s, and maybe even out into the mid-60s. Life has changed so much in the United States. We have lost so many liberties, it is incredible! They are gone forever until Christ returns.

How is this injustice accomplished? I will tell you how. It is actually very easy to explain. It is by severely limiting the citizen's ability to make choices between alternatives. The elected representatives—the politicians—make the choices for them, because *they* make the choices and set them by laws which they call regulations, and they have made regulations for *virtually everything*. And now you can hardly do anything on your own property except bow to the will of the government.

This is part of the injustices that Solomon is talking about. That little subject there begins to encompass concepts that are very large, and when he said there was unrighteousness in the place where there *should* be righteousness, and he names the courts, you begin to see the drift of what he is talking about.

There is a third aspect within these verses that I feel we must consider because of the fact that Solomon was indeed king of Israel, and his conclusion seems to leave a number of unanswered questions as to whether he was meeting *his* responsibilities as king.

Let us go back to verses 16 and 17 again.

Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 Moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. I said in my heart, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”

Was there anybody in Israel—in the entire land of Israel—who was in a better position of authority to do something about the unjust courts than Solomon? And yet it seems as though he passes off all this major corruption as though nothing could be done about correcting these unmerciful, unfair injustices.

I do not know the exact reason why Solomon and his department of justice were not on the same page, or how extensive or how limited Solomon’s authority was in Israel. Has it not been your understanding, that as king, his authority over Israel was virtually *unlimited*? Who was going to say “no” to Solomon? That is just a rhetorical question, that is all, and yet he gives the strong impression of just passing his inaction off by saying essentially, “Well, the time will come when *God* will take care of it.”

Now are *we* doing any of this in our own family, in our own home where we are authorized by God with the responsibility to make judgments over our family—men, women, whatever? Do you do it, or do you just let it slide? You see, we are the kings and queens in our homes. We cannot do everything we might like to do to our children, but there are things that we *should* do, because they are things that are righteous in the eyes of God.

Let us ask a question. How far had Solomon’s sense of right and wrong fallen, that he felt constrained to the point that he could do nothing? Solomon had done a lot of things, and in a life of sin one’s understanding

begins to evaporate, and justifications begin to arise in order to vindicate a life of sin that we might be living. Solomon was a man who had 300 wives and 700 concubines. I cannot find any place in God's Word where that is a righteous act of a righteous king. Maybe he made these marriages to tie one nation to another, but did he tie one nation to another in order to get a political advantage, when, if he really had the faith, he did not have to worry about that? God above would make things go right.

You see, we can begin to examine these questions as to why *Solomon* is making these statements. Is it possible, though, that the king's authority in Israel was not really as all encompassing and straight-forward as we might have been led to believe? Is it possible that though Israel was overall *led* by a king that much of the king's function was as a figurehead and that the day-to-day governance of Israel was similar to the constitutional monarchy that exists in England to this very day? In it, Elizabeth is indeed queen, and she is titular head, but her day-to-day role is neither very active nor extensive in terms of governance.

I do not know the answer to that question as to whether Solomon and other Israelitish kings were like that. I tend to think that it is not at least to that extensive, but at the same time it teaches me that there was a clear governmental disconnect between the top—Solomon—and part way down the chain of command—the judges. I believe that there was something vital for those of us in the church to understand, because I know that God will not allow such a disconnect to take place in His family. So there is something that I feel is important to our growth, and that we must know this and activate it in our lives.

This knowledge teaches me why God's creative activities preparing us for life and responsibility in His Kingdom must be accomplished by Him in the church of God in a narrow and fairly precise way. I am going to give you a little background of something that happened in John Ritenbaugh's life, and hopefully it will be helpful to you.

As a minister in the Worldwide Church of God I often felt uneasy with its governance as done through the ministry, but I could never quite put my finger on why it was done as it was done. It was pretty authoritative, but I could not understand whether that was the best way for it to be within the

church of God. My understanding began to clarify a bit when during the final lecture I ever heard Mr. Armstrong give the ministry in a group meeting that I was part of somewhere in 1983 or 1984. Some of you who were in the church of God then, it was a ministerial refreshing program that the ministers went to.

In the lecture that I heard, Mr. Armstrong made a statement to the ministry—“You fellows have let me down.” I think that he meant in a way that the judges let Solomon down, as Solomon reports or describes there in Ecclesiastes 3. Mr. Armstrong went on to say, “It is my job to set the overall goals and standards, and *your* job [meaning the ministry’s job] is to expand on the teaching by filling in the details.”

To you that may not mean a great deal, but in the wider context of the whole lecture, it triggered a chain of thinking that enabled me to grasp something I believe I needed to understand, because Mr. Armstrong obviously believed that there was a disconnect between him and the ministry; otherwise, we would have followed through expanding on the truth he gave us to the extent that he believed we should have. In other words, the ministry was not on the same page as Herbert Armstrong.

One of the truths that he gave us was on church government. Now Mr. Armstrong was not implying that the ministry was rebelling. I do not believe that it was, but I later carried out thoughts of what he said to conclude that the ministry’s relationship with the members was not being applied as Mr. Armstrong would have applied if *he* were pastoring the congregation. In other words, even though we all believed essentially the same things doctrinally, we were not really on the same page regarding understanding in actual practice. Remember, the subject here was government.

Governance in the Worldwide Church of God was fairly stern. The overall object was slanted toward keeping people from sinning by means of a very watchful oversight by the ministry. Now I do not mean to imply that this governance was oppressive, but in other words, we (meaning the ministry) were more often perceived as policemen than as an older brother, a guide, and a teacher.

My line of thinking eventually led me to understand that in actual practice within a congregation, God's creative effort works best in each converted person, but each converted person has to know that he is free to sin, but deliberately and voluntarily chooses *not* to do so. He must be self-governed. Now why? Because he is motivated *not* to sin by something of far greater importance to him than fear of a minister.

Now consider this line of reasoning. I want you to turn with me to Psalm 8. Psalm 8 is a very familiar psalm to us, but I want to begin to pull something out of it. We will begin in verse 3 and work through verse 9.

Psalm 8:3-9 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen—even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!

In this psalm David is extolling the greatness of God's generous wisdom toward mankind by comparing man with God's glorious angels. Man has a mind much like the angels, but with less capacity. The Bible shows me that God has already tested angels in a way similar to His testing of mankind. Let us see a couple of statements. The first one is in Job 4. This statement is made by Eliphaz, so I take it then to have been general knowledge to people at that time, and he brought this out in his argument regarding all the differences he had with Job.

Job 4:17-19 'Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth?

“If He charges His angels with error.” God did charge His angels with error. Man is a little lower than an angel, and yet an angel, being on a higher realm of creation, a higher body of a being of creation, and yet God charged them with error. Is He not going to do the same with man? That is my thought here. Of course He is, and so we go back to II Peter, to pick up a New Testament scripture.

II Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.

Even though angels are a higher level of creation than man is, God found reason for Him to put them to the test, and to judge what they did, and so they had to answer to Him. Well, the testing of angels began when pride arose in Satan, and he began his rebellion against God. Those stories are in Isaiah 14 and in Ezekiel 28. But that rebellion, which began with one angelic being, reached out to envelope, according to Revelation 12, one-third of the angels.

What I am getting at here, getting back to this thing about government, is God clearly allowed this sinning by angels to occur. In God’s governance of His creation, He allowed the sin of Lucifer and of one-third of all the other angels to occur. So why did He not stop the rebellion immediately by limiting it solely to Satan? Well, actually the answer is fairly simple. If disloyalty arose in the greatest of His spiritual creation to that time—Satan—it was highly possible it would also arise in the rest; thus God had to test every single one of them in order to assure that they would never be disconnected from Him, that they would always think along the same pattern, along the same line as God had allowed them to do so within His creative activity of them. And so God had to test them all.

In like manner, when Satan came to tempt Adam and Eve, did God prevent *them* from sinning? No, He did not, just as He did with the angels. The Bible shows clearly that He did not *want* them to sin, but He purposely let them do it. God does everything in love. God does everything purposefully, and even though a person may not think that what He allows to happen as being good, as being love, in God’s mind it *is* love, and in the long run it is going to produce the best for His purpose, the best for His creation.

Begin to tie this with what the conclusion was that I came to. We have to be in congregations where we feel free to sin, and we choose *not* to sin because of a higher, greater reason. This is *very important* to our salvation.

We could go on. Just as He did with Adam and Eve, God did not stop Cain from killing Abel either. By the time we get to the Flood, people were sinning, murdering all over the place. The earth was filled with violence, and God let it happen, for His purpose.

I have no doubt whatever that God gave Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel a level of teaching so that they were prepared to face the test that Satan would throw before them. They failed. God is just according to His purposes. That is what we always have to remember. Solomon said, ‘Well, God is going to put an end to it eventually,’ and he was right in saying that. God will put an end to it in His good time, and all along the way, because He is monitoring what is going on. It is going to end and add to the glory that is going to come to Him and to His Kingdom when things are finally drawn together like they are going to be.

God is continuing this. He does not allow us to face the enemy totally unprepared, but He is determined to see what our nature reveals in the face of a test, and thus we see a pattern begin to arise. And so, like angels, the loyalty of all of God’s human children will in like manner be tested, and thus all of God’s converted children must grow to understand clearly that the responsibility to willingly choose correctly to not sin must be entirely on us as individuals regardless of the situation. This does not mean that we will always respond to each situation perfectly, but God’s pattern is purposeful, and God is filled with mercy and forgiveness, and He extends grace to us time after time after time as He patiently works with us to build into us the kind of character that will truly trust Him in every situation.

Turn with me to Genesis 18. I said earlier we are going to see a place that we are called to learn to be righteous judges.

Genesis 18:16-19 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,

since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, [I have called him, I have revealed Myself to him, I have shown him My purpose for I have a relationship with him], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

Notice the mention of “justice” right in there. We are called to learn what justice is in God’s eyes. We are called to pass these things on to our children so that they are prepared in a way that we never were when we were young, so that they are prepared as best as they possibly can be under our governance of them.

Let us go to Genesis 22. If God called Abraham for that reason, you know that He called His children for the *same* reason.

Genesis 22:10-12 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

Abraham did what he did—*almost did*—in slaying his son, because he respected, he revered, he loved God. He thought so much of God he was willing to give up the one most loved by him to the One he feared, respected, honored more than anybody in the world. The “father of the faithful” had to show God directly this very thing was in him. What was driving Abraham was not just faith. It was faith and fear. He did not just believe that God existed. He believed God, and he knew God’s power. He knew God’s purity. He knew God’s character, and he so highly respected it he did not want to bring anything on that name to dishonor it.

There is the pattern that God is looking for in Abraham’s spiritual children. The “father of the faithful” was used by God to show what we are to shoot for, that we obey, not just because we believe God exists. We believe Him.

We do what we can to obey Him, but we *fear* Him. We are not terrorized by Him. We just respect Him so highly that we will do whatever He says, because we trust His Word, and we do not want to bring any badness, any flaw upon that name.

I went through this because it was part of the pattern that I feel I was led for myself. I do not mean that others never saw this before me. I do not mean that at all, but I began to see much more clearly why self-government is absolutely necessary to God's purpose, and it is a major part of the solution that there be no disconnect between God and His children.

It is very helpful within a congregation if an atmosphere can be established in which each person feels at liberty to make up his own mind and submit to God not out of fear of the ministry, not out of fear of other people, but solely out of fear of God flowing forth as a fruit from the relationship that the person has with Him.

Back again to Genesis. We can begin to see why the fear of God is a vital part of this.

Genesis 20:10-11 Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?" And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife."

Of course Sarah was probably a very beautiful woman, and Abimelech, as king in that area, would have liked to have had her as part of his harem, and Abraham told a half-truth. "She is my sister." Actually, she was a half sister. They had the same father, but different mothers, and so he did not completely lie, but when he was nailed down by Abimelech—"Why did you say that?"—Abraham had to confess, now basically, "It was to save my own skin."

The instruction for you and me is this. When Abraham was saying, "The fear of God is not in this place," he connected the possibility that he would be murdered to the fact that he could detect that the fear of God was not in that place. In other words, where there is no fear of God, sin follows right on its heels. It is the fear of God, not just faith, that stops us from sin.

Proverbs 16:6 In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.

You begin to see a clear connection between not sinning and the fear of God.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

Here it defines fear as the action that it produced—the thought, the emotion. If the fear of God is there, it will lead a person to hate evil, and that is an emotion there.

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.

The fear of the Lord points the way toward departing from evil because it instructs us in the action that we should take. The fear of the Lord gives righteous direction.

Proverbs 16:17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul.

There is much, much more regarding “the fear of the Lord” in God’s Word, but I think it is very clear that the problem of injustice that Solomon is talking about is motivated, or exists, because there is no fear of God in the people. It is not that the people do not believe that God exists. About 80% of people in the United States, according to polls, say that they believe God exists. How many of those 80% actually fear God? The number I am sure is so tiny by comparison.

It is not just that we *believe* God, we believe Him coupled with *fear*, and that is a deep abiding, continuing, respect for Him that helps us to see we do not want to bring any black blotch on His name. We want to maintain the relationship that we have with Him. We do not want to see any of that relationship broken off in any way, shape, or form. We want to bring honor to Him in everything because we fear Him.

This is not a bad thing. It has nothing to do really with being terrified. It has everything to do with a mountain of respect for what He is in terms of His character, of His mercy, of His kindness, of His grace, of His love, of the gifts that He gives to us, and on and on and on.

So what did we learn today? We learned that God will not allow a disconnect between Himself at the top and His children at a lower level. In order for us to be in His Kingdom He is going to test us. He is not going to stop us from sinning. He could do it, but He will not do it that way because that ruins the test that He is giving to us.

He directs us into tests where the fear of Him is going to be tested to the level of which He knows that our heart is capable of resisting, and even then it says He always gives us a way of escape. His tests are not meant in any way to destroy us, but rather to reveal to us the kind of level we are at so that we know, in a sense, what our grade is. At the same time He is learning whether we, put under an unusual circumstance, really fear Him and are willing to obey regardless.

Are we driven, not just by faith, but faith, fear, and the love for God? That is my holy trinity. The Catholic Church has theirs, but we believe that God exists. We respect Him so highly that we fear him, and we love Him so much we want to honor Him, and so we do.