

Ecclesiastes 4:1-6
Oppression of God's People and Envy from Others
Anomalies do not deny God's plan—3:16-4:16
Understanding God's all-encompassing plan—3:1-5:20

Introduction: from 4:1-10:20 Ecclesiastes looks very similar to Proverbs

- 1) Oppression does not deny God's all-encompassing plan—4:1-3
 - a) Observation of sin—4:1a ¹ *So I turned again and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun.*
 - b) An apparent absence of comfort for the abused—4:1b
 - i) The hopeless abused—*And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one comforting [nacham] them;*
 - ii) The unrestrained bully—*and on the side of their oppressors was power, and there was no one comforting [nacham] them.*
 - iii) But remember:
 - (1) The Triune God comforts His people—Acts 9:31; 2nd Corinthians 1:3-7
 - (2) God cares for the abused—Psalm 9:9; 10:17-18; 103:6; 146:7
 - c) Manward response to oppression—4:2-3
 - i) Death trumps living—4:2 ² *And I commended the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living.*
 - ii) Better to have never been born—4:3 ³ *But better than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has not seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.*
 - (1) He is not advocating suicide. He is simply saying that, from a manward perspective, non-existence is better than suffering unrestrained oppression.
 - iii) Cf. Job 3:3-19; Jeremiah 20:14-18
- 2) Envy from others does not deny God's all-encompassing plan—4:4-6
 - a) Extreme # 1: miserable competitor—4:4 ⁴ *And I saw all the toil and all the skillful activity is due to a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is illusory and striving after wind.*
 - i) Cf. Saul with David—1st Samuel 18:7-8
 - b) Extreme # 2: self-destructive dropout—4:5 ⁵ *The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.*
 - i) Cf. Proverbs 6:10; 24:33
 - c) Balanced contentment—4:6 ⁶ *Better a (open) handful of quietness [nachath] than two (clenched) hands full of toil and a striving after wind.*
 - i) Cf. Proverbs 15:16-17; 16:8; 17:1; Philippians 4:10-13; 1st Timothy 6:6