

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 <sup>1</sup> *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; 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup> *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 <sup>3</sup> *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 <sup>4</sup> *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—1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 18:7-8
  - b) Extreme # 2: self-destructive dropout—4:5 <sup>5</sup> *The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.*
    - i) Cf. Proverbs 6:10; 24:33
  - c) Balanced contentment—4:6 <sup>6</sup> *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; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:6