Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

I’ve Seen It All

I. Slide1 Announce:
   B. Slide4a/b Thrive -

II. Intro:
   A. Listen in on a very old man’s wisdom. He has been through a lot. Studied much. Experienced women, wealth, & the world...basically, he’s seen it all!

III. Slide5 I’VE SEEN IT ALL (15-20)
   A. (15b) David answers this in Psalm 37 as Asaph does in Ps. 73.
   B. But I love God’s answer when Jeremiah asked it in (12:1-5) Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? (1)
   C. Slide6a Jeremiah struggles w/a couple problems. He was troubled… but teachable.
   D. His 3 questions?
      1. (1b) Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
         a) Why does a Holy God permit false prophets & unfaithful priests to prosper, while he, a faithful servant of God, was treated as a sacrificial Lamb?
         b) This has been asked by many...Job, Asaph, Hab, Mal, Jer., by you & me.
      2. (1c) Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? Why are evil people so happy? NLT
      3. (4a) How long will the land mourn/lie parched?
   E. Jeremiah gives his suggested answer in vs.3...Make your sheep into roasted mutton or lamb chops. Then GOD gives His answer (read 5)
      1. Slide6b Definitely not what Jeremiah expected...God’s focus wasn’t on the wicked but on His servant Jeremiah.
   F. We usually ask, like Jeremiah, How can I get out of this? Instead of, what can I get out of this?
   G. God’s servants don’t live by explanations but by promises.
1. **Slide6c Explanations** satisfy *curiosity*, and make us *smarter* but do not heal.

2. **Laying hold of Promises** build *character* & make us better *servants*.
   
a) God’s promises are checks to be cashed, not mere motto’s to hang on our wall. (Vance)

H. auto God’s answers are never *philosophical* but *pastoral*.

1. auto They rebuke us, re-orientate us, or reassure us.

I. God reveals 2 important truths:

1. **Slide7a/b** Godly service isn’t easy (5a)
   
a) It’s like running a race. Hard work, *mental & physical, sweat & nerves*.

2. Godly service becomes harder (5b,6)
   
a) You’ve been running w/the *footman* (living in the land of peace/Jerusalem).
      The *horses* are coming (the thickets of the Jordan).
   
b) It will move from an outside attack to inside his own family(6). *The pace just quickened*.

J. Each new challenge will help develop our faith & help us to grow.

1. *The question isn’t* How long? (4) but How will you compete? How will you do?

2. **Slide7c/d** Hugh Black (Scottish Preacher) said about Jeremiah, *He needed to be braced not pampered*.

3. Remember, God is concerned with the development *within* us, not just the difficulties *around* us.
   
a) Stay in the Race – Accept new challenges – Mature in the Lord.

K. **Slide7e** (16-18) What’s this saying? Is it a warning against extremism? No. Is it saying play it safe & have the best of both worlds? No.

1. It’s not saying, *don’t be too holy, don’t be too wicked... just sin to a moderate degree*.

2. It is not cautioning against possessing too much *real righteousness*.

3. The *tense of the verbs* in Hebrew give the meaning, *do not claim to be righteous & wise*.
   
a) You are still on the way & have not arrived yet...
b) As Paul said, *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected;* but I press on, *that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.* *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended;* but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil.3:12-14

4. That’s why God balances our life w/trials & triumphs – to keep you from getting proud & set in your ways.

5. So, he was condemning the self-righteousness of the hypocrite & false wisdom of the proud, & he warned that the sins led to destruction (16b) & death (17b).

   a) 1 Cor.1:30 *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*

   b) Jesus is both Rt & Wisdom to the believer, don’t try to manufacture these yourself.

   c) Also note: do not be overly righteous (16) ...must line up w/ vs.20.

L. (18) Grasp both true righteousness & true wisdom.

   1. How? *Walk in the fear of God* (18b)

M. Slide8 (19) Power from w/in is needed more than advice from w/o.


   2. Swindoll defined wisdom as, *The God-given ability to see life w/rare objectivity & to handle life w/rare stability.*

N. (20) G. K. Chesterton, philosopher/theologian, was once asked, What do you think of civilization? Chesterton said, I think it's a great idea. Why doesn't somebody start one.

   1. Later on, after seeing a series of articles on "What's Wrong with the World?" Chesterton sent a short letter to the editor. "Dear Sir: Regarding your article 'What's Wrong with the World?' I am. Yours truly, G. K. Chesterton."

   2. All are guilty before God

      a) Ps. 14:3 *They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.*
b) Ps. 16:2 *O my soul, you have said to the LORD, You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You.*

3. We are all guilty of the sin of **commission** (*commit sin*) **but** we are all also guilty of **omission** (from *omit, forget to do*). *eg.* [*I had bitterness in my heart for someone vs I didn’t show them love*]

IV. Slide 10a **EAR PLUGS** *(21,22)*

A. (21) Spurgeon told his students that they “**ought to keep one blind eye & one deaf ear. You cannot stop people’s tongues & therefore the best thing to do is stop your own ears & never mind what is spoken.**”

1. Who is more at fault in gossip, the **talker** or the **listener**.
2. It not only takes two to fight, it takes two to gossip also. *(and tango)*
3. Slide 10b Great minds **talk about ideas**; mediocre minds **talk about things**; small minds **talk about other people**.
4. **Satan** may want to use criticism as a **weapon** to **batter us**; **but** if we let Him **God** can use it as a **tool** to **build us**.
5. **Look beyond the critic!**

B. (22) Many times...we have cursed others ourselves - We are all **multiple offenders**.

V. Slide 11a **INACCESSIBILITY OF WISDOM** *(23-26)*

A. (23) **But it was far from me** - Even Solomon, in all his God-given wisdom, could not understand all that exists.

1. This wise man knows, that he does not know…**and** this is what helps to make him wise.

B. (26) Solomon had been snared by so many women... *he ought to know!* **Takes one to know one.**

1. Didn’t **he** go after **them**? *(yes his fault…but he thought he was stronger & smarter than to get snared into her trap of idolatry)*
2. Slide 11b So how do you flee from her? *Fear God*(18)& seek to please Him (26b)

VI. Slide 12a **THE SINFULNESS OF MAN** *(27-29)*
A. (28b) 1 man in a 1000 - This isn’t a literal statement, *rather*, an expression of the limitation of human righteousness (see vs.20). *Wisdom was scarce.*

B. Not one woman... This sounds like *Solomonic Chauvinism*. It wasn’t that women were *less intelligent*... 


2. Women in that day did not have the *freedom*, nor the *status*, to have learning equal to a man.

C. (29) This only I have found (6x’s/find or found)...the whole human race is bound by sin.

1. God made man/Adam upright/morally good – but *he disobeyed, fell and now all men are sinners who seek out many schemes.*

2. Slide12b But the good news...though *we are more sinful & flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe; yet at the very same time we are more loved & accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.*