

# Being Fair In An Unfair World

Selected Ecclesiastes

We are continuing tonight in this series entitled *Life's Values*. Tonight we are going to look at *Being Fair in an Unfair World*.

As I studied this week and looked at the different verses in the Bible about fairness, it occurred to me that you really don't need any teaching on how to be fair. You probably learned that in preschool or kindergarten - share your games, share your dolly, cut the pie in correct pieces so that everybody gets an equal amount.

But as adults, we really need to deal with the issue "Why?" Why be fair? When everybody else is living for himself or herself, why shouldn't I just look out for myself?

The Bible is very clear that life itself is unfair. It does not hide it at all. Life is unfair. The Bible is very specific. This is not heaven; it is not a perfect world. It is an imperfect place and because of sin in the world, there is injustice. There are things that are unfair.

If you ever want to do any in depth study on this subject, you need to go study the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon takes this journey through life and looks at everything. Then he comes back and says, "Here's my conclusion. Life is unfair." Then he gives five little snapshots of life that show typical, common occurrences of unfairness in the world.

First, he says he has noticed that *Criminals go unpunished*. Ecclesiastes 3:16 says, "Throughout the earth justice is giving way to crime and even the courts are corrupt." **Nothing changes in 3000 years!** People get off and the criminals do not get what they deserve.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "When crime isn't punished, people feel it is safe to do wrong." I do not know how this could be any more

relevant than it is today. For criminals, they really have no fear if they read the newspapers. Just watching what happens in the world you can figure out three or four things:

1) If you commit a crime, it is very unlikely that you are going to go to jail for it. Given enough money, you can beat any indictment today. All you have to do is hire the right attorney and they will find some technicality to get you off the charge.

2) Often it is going to be years before you go to trial. A crime is committed and then you find out the verdict five, six years later.

3) During that time you can sell your story for book and movie rights - particularly if it is a heinous crime.

4) If you do get convicted, you probably will not serve a full sentence because of the likelihood you will get off in a few years on parole and you can go out and do it again.

Solomon says I see all this happening that criminals go unpunished and at the same time the victims and the victim's families suffer and that's not fair. And he is right.

Secondly, he says the oppressed are unhelped in the world. Ecclesiastes 4:1 says, "I saw all the injustice that goes on in this world. The oppressed were crying and no one would help them. Their oppressors had power." If you know anything about history, you know that history is a record of the fact that it is human nature for human beings to try to dominate each other. You can see it throughout the history of the world. One nation tries to dominate another nation; one color tries to dominate another color; the rich try to dominate the poor; the powerful try to dominate the weak; men try to dominate women. It is all through history.

**Solomon says, nobody is helping these people.** And that is not fair. And he is right.

**Number three, he says politicians are unethical.** Do I need to give an illustration of this point? Influence peddling, illegal fund raising, cover ups, scandals. **It is nothing new.** One of the things I love about the Bible is that it always tells the truth. It does not matter whether it offends you or not. It just tells it like it is, tells the truth whether it is popular or not.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 says, "If you see miscarriage of justice throughout the land, don't be surprised! For every official is under orders from higher up. So the matter is lost in red tape and bureaucracy." Ecclesiastes 10:5 says, "Here is an injustice. Stupid people are given positions of authority."

**The Bible says when ungodly people hold positions of authority they are going to abuse it and Solomon says that is unfair.** And he is right.

**Fourth, he says good people go unrewarded while evil people often prosper.** Ecclesiastes 8:14 says, "Sometimes righteous people suffer for what the wicked do, and wicked people get what the righteous deserve!" He is talking about, "Why is it that good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people?" It does not seem right. Does it bother you that unscrupulous corporations often succeed while corporations that try to maintain good standards do not? Does it ever bother you that unethical salesmen often get the job done and the deal signed while a salesman with ethics does not get it? Does it ever bother you that dishonest people get promoted while honest people are overlooked? Does it ever bother you that people like drug lords and Mafia bosses and live in luxury while honest people sometimes are barely making a living?

Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 7:15, "It's unfair that some good people die young while some wicked people live on and on and on." And it is true.

**Fifth, he says capable people are often unsuccessful.** Just because you have talent does not mean you are going to succeed. The good guys do not always win in this world. Ecclesiastes 9:11 says, "In this world fast runners do not always win the races. Wise men do not always earn a living, intelligent men don't always get rich, and capable men do not always rise to high positions."

**Solomon says, the bottom line is life is not fair.** Capable men do not always rise to high positions. Neither do capable women. You may have bumped up against that glass ceiling where you did not get that promotion because of the color of your skin or your gender and that's unfair and it's wrong.

**Why does God allow unfairness to go on?** The Bible says that God allows injustice in the world for four reasons.

**1. Because He made us in His image.** In the very first chapters of the Bible where we have the story of creation, God says, "I am going to make man in my own image." **That means you, as a human being, are different from the animals.** The animals in the world were not made in God's image, but human beings are. We have the ability to worship, to have a personal and intimate with Him!

**2. Because God gives you the freedom of choice.** Deuteronomy 11:26 says, "I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse." God says I am going to let you choose what you do in life.

**That is the good news.** The bad news is there are consequences to our choices. And we often make dumb choices. **I have done some dumb things.** I have made some dumb choices. I have made some

selfish choices. When I do that, innocent people get hurt and that is unfair.

**3. Because God is going to settle the accounts one day.** He is going to settle the score. Ecclesiastes 3:17 says, "In due season God will judge everything a man does." Notice the words, "In due season." **Today is not the end of the story.** The final chapter has not been written. The books have not been closed.

**4. Because it shows we need a Savior.** It shows what we are really like on the inside. Ecclesiastes 3:18 says, "God is letting the world go on its sinful way so he can test mankind (notice the word "test" - injustice is a test; it reveals human nature, it shows what we are really like inside) and men will see [God already knows] that they are no better than beasts." **Human beings without God tend to start acting like animals.** We hear all the time the shocking stories of gang rape, abuse, violence, children killing parents, senseless acts of violence in society against innocent people who have no reason to be hurt. We hear about these gangs doing things called wildings where they go on wild sprees through the city and find anybody who looks innocent or helpless or weak and kill them and take everything they have.

**We live in a world that needs a Savior!**

**4. Because it can build character.** Character is never built when things are easy. Character is built in the tough times of life. The Bible says, "Suffering produces character." In the phrase, "It can build character" notice the word "can." **I am not saying it does build character; I am saying that it can build character.** Suffering does not automatically produce character. It only produces character when you choose to respond to it in the right way. **I know a lot of people who have suffered a tremendous amount and they have no character at all.** They are bitter, cynical, dried up, shriveled heart human beings. **Why?** Instead of becoming better through the suffering, they have becoming bitter through the suffering. It only builds character if you choose to respond to it in the right way.

**The point is that everybody has his or her own story of unfairness.** What does God want you to do when you face in inevitable injustices of life? He wants you to do three things:

**1. Accept it gracefully.** Do not be surprised when people treat you unfairly. Jesus said, "In the world you will have trouble." The Bible tells us this, "Don't be surprised at the terrible trouble which comes to test you. Don't think that something strange is happening to you. But be happy that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings so that you will be full of joy when Christ comes again in glory."

**He is simply saying you cannot prevent people from hurting you.** You are going to be hurt. But you can choose your response.

**2. Respond lovingly.** Respond lovingly, particularly to the people who hurt you. Jesus said it like this in Matthew 5, "Love your enemies and pray for those who hurt you." **Why do you do that?** Because God tells you to and because it keeps them from controlling you.

**3. Wait for God's help expectantly.** 1 Peter 2 says, "A person might have to suffer even when it is unfair, but if he thinks of God and stands the pain, God is pleased." When you are going through an unjust period, and you are seeking to live with a Christ like attitude, remember, God is on your side. He hears your cry and He sees your pain and He knows you were shafted, hurt, and put down.

**So what does God want me to do while I am waiting on Him to settle the score?** 1 Peter 4:19 says, "If you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you."

**You are never going to get an explanation for a lot of things that have happened in your life that you feel are unfair - at least not in this life.** When you get to heaven you can understand what is going

on. But God does not owe you an explanation why one person gets one thing and you get another.

**The good news is, I do not need an explanation to enjoy my life.**  
All I need to know is God loves me, God has my best interest at heart, God has a plan, God is going to settle the score one day, If I trust Him and maintain a right attitude, He is going to reward me eventually.