

- His People (Ecc 8:12-13, Matt 1:21, Rom 3:10, 4:25)

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- **His People** (Ecc 8:12-13, Matt 1:21, Rom 3:10, 4:25)

Please open your Bibles to the Prophecy of Ecclesiastes, Ecc 8:12 (2X). Why do you preach from Ecclesiastes Pastor? Well today we are in the Christmas season, in which we remember the Lord Jesus when He was a little baby. And why was He born into this world? He was born “to save His people from their sins,” as we read in Matt 1:21. And who are His people? Now that is who I want to talk about today, and that is why we are here in Ecc 8:12. Today I want us to look at two verses in Ecclesiastes, because these two verses are contrasting one another. And when we see contrasts it usually helps to make us see the message of God clearer than without any contrast. Ecc 8:12-13

Ecc 8:12, “Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.

Ecc 8:13, **But** it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.”

The literal word by word translation of this passage is not much different from what you read here in the KJV. What is God saying to us in these two verses? We can sense that God is telling us about the righteous and the wicked. Verse 12 speaks of the righteous, and verse 13 speaks of the wicked. Therefore the title of this sermon is, “**The Righteous and the Wicked**” (2X). Who are the righteous? If we look for a righteous man in the absolute sense, we would search in vain, for God says in Rom 3:10, “There is NONE righteous, no not one!” Therefore when the Bible speaks of righteous people, it speaks of people who are righteous by imputation; God declares us righteous; we are blameless in His sight but we are not righteous in the absolute sense. We are called righteous because the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ has been imputed to us. The word “impute” is an accounting term. When the Lord Jesus was crucified for our sins, the guilt of all our sins was imputed to His account, and when He was raised from the dead the righteousness of Christ was imputed to our account (Rom 4:25). And this was done totally free of charge, for salvation is a free gift of God. Did God do this transaction for everyone in the world? No, He did not, for God said in Matt 1:21, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” And thus, when Christ bled and died on the cross He bled and died only for His people. Some say that “His people” refer only to the descendants of the patriarch Jacob, the Old Testament Jews. If that were so, then Christ did not pay for the sins of all of us Gentiles. That is not what the Bible teaches. Most certainly, when the Lord Jesus was crucified He was crucified for both Jews and Gentiles. The God of the Bible is not a tribal god who only cares for the tribe that came out of Jacob, but the God of the Bible is God over all the nations of the world. In fact, out of all the nations of the world God chose only a remnant to be saved; a remnant of the Jews and a remnant of the Gentiles. This is stated most explicitly in Ephesians chapter 1.

#1. Predestination (Eph 1:3-7, John 6:44)

Please put a sticker here in Ecc 8:12, and please turn in your Bibles to the Epistle to the Ephesians, Eph 1:3 (2X). God spoke to us through the mouth of the apostle Paul, and through His writings in all his Epistles. God speaks here about His plan to save only a fraction of mankind. And using only this fraction God is going to build a temple for Himself from the souls of all those whom He chose to become saved. We read in Eph 1:3-7,

Eph 1:3-7, “3 **Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 4 **According** as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 **Having** predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 **To** the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 **In** whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

And so, what is the great emphasis in this passage? The emphasis is that before the foundation of the world God chose for Himself a people who shall be holy and without blame before Him, not because they are such good people, but only according to the good pleasure of His will. And these people shall be holy and without blame before Him, because God has made us accepted through the cross of Christ, through whom we have obtained the forgiveness of our sins. This is a free gift of salvation, and anyone who claims to have to do some work for his salvation is not worthy to receive this gift, for they are worshipping another god who does not exist. What did Christ have to suffer to pay for our sins? Did He just have to bleed and die? Absolutely not! The righteousness of God, which is the justness of God as the Judge, demands that the payment that Christ makes on our behalf must be equivalent to the payment that we would have to make if we would have to pay for our own sins. That payment is an eternity in hell. And thus for each one of His elect the Lord Jesus Christ must make a payment that is equivalent to an eternity in hell. Now consider that the universalists demand that Christ would have to pay for every individual in the world. That would mean that hell would be filled with people for whom Christ suffered and died. That cannot be, for that would make Christ a very unsuccessful Savior, and it is not possible that God would be unsuccessful in anything. Christ cannot suffer the equivalent of an eternity in hell for all those who themselves go to hell. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the incarnation of God the Son, suffered and died only for those people whom God elected unto salvation, and He did not suffer and die for those whom He passed by before the foundation of the world. In fact, those whom He passed by, those who are the natural sons of Adam, those who are called the natural man, are so depraved in their soul that they absolutely cannot believe the wonderful Gospel of free grace that God has provided. And since the elect come into the world with the same evil tendencies, the only way they are going to believe the Gospel is when God will cause them to believe it by dragging them to the Lord Jesus (John 6:44).

- **No More Sin** (Rom 4:8, Ecc 8:12-13, Rev 6:1-8, Deut 4:25)

These people, who are called the elect of God, have all their sins removed at the time they are Born Again, and thus no more sins can be added to their account. That is why we read in Rom 4:8, Rom 4:8, “Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Now this gives us enough information to continue in Ecc 8:12. Let us return to Ecc 8:12-13, Ecc 8:12, “Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.

Ecc 8:13, **But** it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.”

But what exactly did God say? Let us look at the details of verses 12 and 13.

The person in verse 12 is identified as one who is at peace with God, because God said so:

- #1, God shall prolong <0748> his days,
- #2, he fears God, together with them that fear before God,
- #3, and God says that it shall be well with him.

The person in verse 13 is identified as the wicked, because God said so:

- #1, God shall not prolong <0748> his days,
- #2, his days are like a shadow,
- #3, he does not fear before God,
- #4, and God says that it shall not be well with him.

The first question that stands out is this: What does God mean when He speaks of “prolonging <0748> someone’s days?” Does God mean that He will cause the man to live a long life on this earth? Is it one of God’s goals to make His children to live a long life on this earth? We sense that this cannot be the real objective of God, for the saints die at the same rate as the wicked die. We are all struck down by sickness and by disease, and by cancer, and by heart attacks, and by strokes, whether we are believers or not believers. In Rev 6:1-8 the four horsemen of the apocalypse ride together, and they afflict both the saved and the unsaved people alike, without any distinction of class and of age and of wealth and of religion. Both old saints as well as young saints die at the same rate as the wicked people die. And so, what does God mean when He speaks of “prolonging someone’s days?” Let us look at a clump of verses in Deuteronomy. Please turn to Deuteronomy, Deut 4:25 (2X) where we read about people insulting God by making graven images, or by doing evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger.

#2. To Prolong Our Days (Deut 4:25-26, 4:40, 5:16, 5:33, 6:2, 11:9, 17:20, 22:7, 25:15)

Here is one verse that tells us that God will not prolong our days. What days is God referring to? He refers to the days that we dwell in the Kingdom of God, of which the land of Canaan is only a picture of. Let us look at ten verses in Deuteronomy which refer to prolonging <0748> our days.

De 4:25, When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt *yourselves*, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any *thing*, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:

De 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong <0748> your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

De 4:40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong <0748> thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **for ever**.

De 5:16 Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged <0748>, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

De 5:33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong <0748> your days in the land which ye shall possess.

De 6:2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged <0748>.

De 11:9 And that ye may prolong <0748> your days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

De 17:20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong <0748> his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

De 22:7 But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong <0748> thy days.

De 25:15 But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened <0748> in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Here are eight verses that speak about prolonging the days in the land that the Lord giveth thee. Six of these verses speak of a single individual, indicated by the singular thee and thou, and two verses speak of the nation as a whole, indicated by the plural ye and you. But what is the land that the Lord giveth thee? Deut 4:40 tells us that this is a land that God gives to His children **for ever**.

- **In the Kingdom of God** (Deut 4:40, Ecc 8:12)

What does that mean? It means that God does not have the land of Canaan in mind, for this earth shall be destroyed and then the land of Canaan will disappear forever. And so, the land of Canaan was only a picture, or a type, of the spiritual kingdom of God, for this is the kingdom that will last forever.

Presently, while we are on this earth, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the spiritual kingdom of God on this earth. But after the rapture of the saints the kingdom of God will continue as a glorious physical Kingdom in the New Heaven and the New Earth. The land of Canaan only symbolizes the kingdom of God, and therefore this is the land that the Lord our God has prepared to give unto us **for ever**. This is the land in which the Lord shall prolong our days, all the way into eternity. This is what we should understand when we read such verses as:

De 4:40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong <0748> thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **for ever**.

What earth is this that we read about it here? It is not this earth, for this earth will be destroyed, but it is the New Heaven and the New Earth; it is the new universe that God will give us to rule over when we are brought into the New Creation, which already exists but presently it is still empty.

And so, when we read in the Old Testament about God “prolonging our days” we should keep our eyes and ears open to the spiritual interpretation of these words, so that we are not going to be trapped in contradictions. The literal meaning will work sometimes, but if we focus only on the historical aspects of the words from God we shall be snared in contradictions and in challenges from the heathen, for the heathen only know the carnal historical meaning of the words in the Bible.

But when we look at these eight verses in Deuteronomy we should not come to the conclusion that our good behavior on this earth will earn us a seat in the Kingdom of heaven. This can never be true, for this will bring glory to the men who are obeying God’s laws. Instead, we should see that the child of God who has first been Elected before the foundation of the world, and secondly been Atoned for by Christ on the cross, and thirdly been “Born Again” in this life, will have an inherent desire to obey the law of God, for his only desire in this life is to do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Now that we know what the meaning is of the verb “to prolong the days” we can look again at Ecc 8:12-13, and see the meaning of these verses.

Ecc 8:12, “Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days shall* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:”

Here is a saint who in this example is temporarily called a sinner for the sake of the argument, for he sins a hundred times, but God calls him a child of God, for God says that his days shall be prolonged in the Kingdom of God. It shall be well with this man; and the sign that this man is a child of God is that he fears the only true God. We need to be well aware that not every man who fears his god is a saved man, for if he fears a god who does not exist, a god of his own inventions, then this brings on the extreme wrath of God, and he would have been better off not knowing anything about God in the first place.

#3. Sinners (Ecc 8:12-13, Rom 8:28)

How many times does a saint sin? God created man in His image, for the purpose that man will glorify God all his life, every minute of each day. For this purpose God has given man the concepts of spiritual things, such as worship, and prayer, and sin, and repentance, and retribution for sin, and the concepts of heaven and hell, and many such things. But God also said that “Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. And thus, if in our daily life we are not glorifying God a fraction of our time, we are sinning, and the stack of our sins reaches all the way to the moon. Is it then any wonder that our works can never contribute anything to our righteousness before God? That is why our salvation must be a totally free gift. And so, the one hundred sins in Ecc 8:12 is not at all an exaggeration, but rather a gross underestimation.

Ecc 8:13, But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall He prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

God shall not prolong his days in the kingdom of God. Are there wicked people in the kingdom of God here on earth? Certainly there are unsaved people in the church; every church has them. And God sees that the hypocrites enjoy the peaceful environment in the church, and they enjoy the comfort of spiritual safety in the church, and they enjoy to confuse the saints with their false gospels. But “God shall not prolong their days” refers to the principle that God says, paraphrased, “I will not prolong those days for you; I will make an end of your earthly peace; you have been a parasite to my congregation; I will bring unto you the turmoil of death, and I will bring unto you the turmoil of eternal damnation. I shall not prolong your days in the midst of my congregation.

Then God says, “Which are as a shadow.” What does that mean? Let us first apply this to ourselves. Are the days of the saints a shadow of something? Yes they are! Our days are a shadow of the wonderful days that are to come. Here on earth we will have tribulation from those who are not children of God. But we endure such tribulation and insults with patience, always looking forward to those glorious days when we shall be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Our days are as a shadow of things to come, because we have the peace that passes all understanding, which the wicked cannot understand. Clearly the Bible speaks to us in types and figures, or you could say in parables which the wicked cannot see. Therefore our days on earth are to us glorious days, blessed days, because we know that the Lord loves us. In anticipation we enjoy already the future glory, and the mercy and grace of God in forgiving us all our sins, and in promising us an eternal glory which we have already received, totally by grace. For this we are eternally grateful for everything that the Lord will send our way, for we know that all these things will contribute to the well-being of our souls. All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

- **Gratitude** (Psalm 23:4, Num 32:23)

And the concept of gratitude is written in **BIG** letters upon our forehead. We are eternally grateful not only for the gift of eternal life through the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life and His soul as a sin offering on our behalf, but also for the continual cares and love for us during our entire lifetime, every minute of our days in this wilderness of sin. He loves us and He cares for us, and that is the joy and rejoicing of our heart.

Now look at the days of the wicked here on earth, of which God says that they are as a shadow of something. What are their days a shadow of? Please turn in your Bibles to the Prophecy of the Psalms, Psalm 23:4 (2X). The days of man are as a shadow of his future destination: Eternal glory or eternal damnation. The shadow of man's future is manifested in his lifestyle here on earth. God says it so profoundly in Psalm 23:4. We read in Psalm 23:4,

Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death <06757>, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

This earth is like "the valley of the shadow of death." It is filled with walking dead who do not fear God, and they make their own life miserable for they always accuse other people of causing calamities to come upon them; they never blame themselves for their errors; they always are on a witch-hunt in trying to find fault with others. Why do they do that? It makes them feel comfortable that they are not like that poor publican there on the sideline. Mentally they push themselves up by pushing down on other people so that they look good in comparison to other people. But God does not grade on a sliding scale; God grades on an absolute scale, it is His scale of absolute righteousness. And so, the wicked continue to walk in the valley of the shadow of death, ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Their life is a shadow of eternal damnation that is sure to come upon them. For a while they can make their life a little comfortable by playing the game of being nice. It is an evil game; for they are trying to fool all the people some of the time, but eventually their game will be exposed. Their lack of gratitude will expose their game and they are back in their valley of the shadow of death. You can fool all the people some of the time, and you can fool some people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

God says, "Be sure your sin shall find you out" (Num 32:23)

Now gratitude is an essential part of the Gospel. If a person shows that he is not grateful for a kindness shown to him, then this is a tipoff that this is a wicked person; he is not saved. He does not know what gratitude is, and therefore he will also not be grateful for the gift of God in the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person has a response of ingratitude, we should turn away from him, for sin breeds more sinners. This applies especially when we are dealing with a mature individual, such as a person past the age of 50 years. Selfishness in children can be pointed out to them, and with some training they can learn to be more grateful. But if a 50 year old is still ungrateful, his selfishness has been at the heart of his life all the time, and he is more or less incorrigible.

- **The Shadow of Death** (Isa 9:2, Psalm 23:4, Heb 13:5-6, John 14:18, Psalm 89:32)

Now “the valley of the shadow of death” mentioned in Psalm 23:4 is not a literal valley. That we need to interpret this expression spiritually is indicated by 17 other verses containing this expression “the shadow of death.” For example, please turn to the Prophecy of Isaiah, Isa 9:2 (2X). This is a well-known verse which churches have used at Christmas time, as if this verse would refer to the heathen nations out of which the wise men came to visit the baby Jesus. Those heathen nations dwelt in “the shadow of death”, referring to their unsaved condition. However, those heathen nations died in their sins, for they were not evangelized; they never heard the Gospel. God is not concerned about heathen nations who never come to the knowledge of the truth. God is concerned about saving souls. Therefore, when we look at Isa 9:2 we should not see there a message about the heathen, but about salvation. This is a salvation verse. We read in Isa 9:2, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death <06757>, upon them hath the light shined. Who are those that walk in darkness? The heathen walk in darkness, but the elect of God also walked in darkness before they became saved. We all walked in darkness sometime in the past. But if we are among the elect of God, then God the Holy Spirit will make us Born Again at some point in our life, and then we are no longer walking in darkness. God changed us from sinners to saints. We are then no longer guilty of our sins, for the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the full price for the guilt of all our sins. Now we understand that we, who walked in darkness have seen a great light. However, this enlightenment by God the Holy Spirit in making us hear and believe and understand the Gospel did not come at the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus, but it came when He purchased us body and soul at the time that He hung on the cross, and when He rose again from the grave. Isa 9:2 is not a Christmas verse, but it is a verse glorifying the Lord Jesus for being crucified and died on our behalf, and being raised again the third day.

But look now also at the second half of Psalm 23:4. “I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” There is a hidden message here concerning the blessings for the saints. Why is it that I will fear no evil? It is because Christ will never abandon me. I am His forever, and He will not allow anyone to snatch my soul away. The Lord said in Heb 13:5-6,

Heb 13:5-6, *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*”

The Lord Jesus said in John 14:18, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Literally the Lord said, I will not leave you as orphans.

Then we read in Psalm 23:4, “thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” What do the rod and the staff represent? This is the rod in the hand of God. Let me just give one example of the rod of God.

Psalm 89:32, “Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.”

In other words, the rod is the rod of reproof. It is the rod of chastening to remind that we are going astray. And what a blessing it is to have the rod of God to teach us what is right and what is wrong. We need discernment, and the sooner we learn it the better it is. And what does the staff represent? The staff of God is a shepherd's staff, for the Lord is my Shepherd. His staff has a hook. If anyone of His sheep has gone astray the Shepherd takes His staff with the hook, and pulls us back into the fold. That is why we read with joy, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." And how does God apply His rod and His staff. We can say that God will move heaven and earth to bring to pass that all His loved ones will be brought into the fold of Christ. Therefore we read that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:28) And when they all have come in, then the objective of the Lord is fulfilled and He will do away with this sinful world. But all the wicked shall inherit eternal damnation, whatever that is. Now we can understand what God is saying in Ecc 8:13 about the days of the wicked that they are as a shadow.

Ecc 8:13, But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall He prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

In fact, the days of the wicked are as the shadow of death that hangs over them. It shows in all their actions, and it shows in all their lifestyles. Pray to God that we may recognize some of the signs if we are on the path of the wicked. Pray to God that His rod and His staff may comfort us, even though it may be painful. And pray to God that He will let us know if we belong to those whom God has chosen, for this will be the joy and the rejoicing of our heart.

AMEN.